

# The Czech Centre-Right Solutions to the Political Challenges of 2019

Ed. Lucie Tungul



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

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# Project partners



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**TOPAZ** was established in 2012 as an educational platform and think tank associated with the political party TOP 09. Its goal is to open up discussion with the public concerning conservative ideas. Its main activities are focused on social debates with independent experts, cooperation with TOP 09 expert committees, fundraising, presentation of alternative views on the work of public authorities and preparation of analytical and conceptual policy documents suggesting alternative answers.

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)** is a German political foundation closely associated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU). Its main principles are freedom, justice and solidarity. The goal of KAS is to support Christian-Democratic values in politics and society, foster democracy and rule of law, support European integration and intensify transatlantic and development cooperation.

**The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (WMCES)** was established in 2007 as the political foundation and official think tank of the European People's Party (EPP). The Martens Centre has four main goals: advancing centre-right thought, contributing to the formulation of EU and national policies, serving as a framework for national political foundations and academics and stimulating public debate about the EU. It promotes a pan-European mind-set based on centre-right, Christian-Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.



# Contributors



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# Foreword

Jiří Pospíšil, MEP, chairman of TOP 09



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TOPAZ, the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung present together a publication, which investigates some of the great challenges our societies face today. The proposed recommendations do not focus on the national and European levels only, but involve local specifics, and appeal to the need to educate active and responsible citizens who could effectively participate in public affairs in and out their most immediate environments. Only active, engaged and politically literate citizens are ready to address acute problems such as global inequality, climate change, rapid technological progress, labour market fluctuations, a failing education system, unsatisfactory family policy, cheap populism, and the danger of applying autocratic methods to the management of public affairs. The European Union and Czechia can offer and implement solutions to a great number of the problems which our societies face today. Yet, only a country with a critically thinking and confident public who have the knowledge and skills of democrats, who are sympathetic and responsible, can mature into a healthy strong democracy with long-lasting sustainable prosperity.



# Abbreviations



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CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCCTB	Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base
CEI	Central European Initiative
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSU	Christian Social Union
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party
ČŠI	Czech School Inspectorate
EEA	European Economic Area
EDA	European Defence Agency
EP	European Parliament
EPC	Energy Performance Certificates
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEP	Framework for Educational Programmes
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
FTT	Financial Transaction Tax
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GSA	European GNSS Agency
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ISF	Internal Security Fund
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
KDU-ČSL	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party
KSČM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NATO	North Atlantic Alliance

ODS	Civic Democratic Party
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party
PP	Percentage Point
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
P+R	Park and Ride
SEP	School Education Programmes
SPD	Freedom and Direct Democracy
SPÖ	Social Democratic Party of Austria
STAN	Mayors and Independents
V4	Visegrad cooperation
VAT	Value Added Tax

# Introduction

Lucie Tungul and Reda Ifrah



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The 2017 Czech parliamentary election and presidential election in January 2018 brought many changes to Czechia which can potentially threaten the stability of Czech democracy, the direction of its long-term foreign policy orientation, and economic stability. The fragmentation of the party system, the instability of democratic institutions, low interest in public affairs, growing pressure on the public media, relatively low trust in the European Union, and the government's irresponsible economic policy, which at times of economic growth approved a high budget deficit and has postponed key public policy and public administration reforms including education, health care, pension reform—all these factors threaten to destabilize the basis and stability of Czech liberal democracy, whose direction was set in the post-1989 era. Populism, the polarisation of society, the growing influence of “business-firm parties”, and the personalisation of politics lead Czechia into an era which is in many aspects similar to the developments in the neighbouring countries, but many features are specific for the local environment and depend on the local context.

This publication identifies currently debated issues such as the protection of European borders and direct democracy, and also issues which public debate has ignored despite their high importance, such as the negotiations of the next European multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the robotization and automatization of our economies. It also identifies some aspects of Czech public policy which have contributed to the current crisis of democracy in the country but receive only limited attention, namely in civic education.

Most people link the terms digitalization, modernization, and robotization with the modern economy, but the exponential growth of technologies has a strong impact on the changing labour market, bringing both opportunities and hazards. The chapter by Žiga Turk investigates this topic, arguing that highly visible media topics such as Uber and Airbnb are only a small part of this phenomenon; we are not paying enough attention to contingent jobs. The cooperation of humans and technologies represents a great advantage but labour law often disrupts the possibility of this cooperation and is not able to provide workers in contingent jobs with adequate social securities.

One specific application of new technologies in the local context is discussed in Josef Knot's case study of implementing the smart city concept in the Czech town of Písek. He shows that new technologies can make people's lives easier, increase public savings, and support the development of a low-carbon economy and a better environment in general. The opportunity for small towns to participate in European research projects funded by the Horizon 2020 programme shows that cooperation on the European level is possible and desirable. On top of that, it also shows how effective the principle of subsidiaries can be, if applied correctly, and the when the local government is pro-active.

While Žiga Turk analysed how the concept of work will affect the future labour markets, Klára Kalíšková analyses the labour market in connection with Czech family policy, respectively the effect it has on women with small children. The author identifies the inclusion of women returning to the labour market

from maternity/parental leave as the gravest problem. Her analysis shows that the current legislation and political party programmes focus too much on tax benefits and income support, limiting families' right to make a personalised decision on how they want to combine family and work life and re-enter the labour market when they see fit. The Czech system lacks support for flexible work, while support for greater participation by fathers in childcare and the provision of pre-school day-care opportunities are also limited.

Changing the organization of the labour market requires a reform of the education system to better correspond with the needs of a new economy. Alena Resl and Kateřina Semotamová focus on another aspect of education, i.e., the insufficient emphasis on responsible civic education, which would emphasize not only knowledge but also the ability to find information, think critically, and be engaged. The growth of populist movements in Czechia, the growing impact of fake news, calls for “simple” solutions such as introduction of more direct democracy features (especially referenda) into the Czech political system—even though renowned lawyers and political scientists warn against such steps—are linked to a low level of understanding and knowledge how the Czech political system works, to poor understanding about the importance of a stable party system, institutional strength and stability, rule of law, the protection of human rights, and fighting against discrimination. Other weaknesses include poor skills to find and evaluate resources and to engage in a factual debate.

Marian Kokeš's chapter acknowledges that representative democracy is in crisis but argues that the debate about introducing more elements of direct democracy is characterised by many misleading arguments. The salience of this topic has increased since a growing number of political forces in the Czech Parliament defend direct democracy and we have witnessed a rather vivid public debate. Populists often present referenda as a cure for the shortcomings of Czech democracy. They find this argument easier than drafting complex proposals on how to reinforce democratic institutions, which indeed do not operate as well as they should and are becoming instruments of manipulation and destabilization, which is a considerable threat to the immature Czech democratic society. Kokeš's legal analysis warns against referenda because rational decisions are often replaced with emotional reactions and against tyranny of the majority, which representative democracy helps to correct.

The substantial shortcomings in Czech civic education contribute to the high level of Euroscepticism. Both political elites and voters have limited knowledge about how the EU works, its purpose, the importance of European integration, and about the Czech purpose and role in the project. The chapter by Lucie Tungul examines the origins of this sceptical attitude to the EU, and how it has developed over time in Czech political party programmes. She finds that the party programmes of ČSSD, ODS and the movement ANO became more Eurosceptic, and only two parliamentary parties, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09, have Euro-optimist party programmes. Jaroslav Poláček applies these findings to the investigation of its consequences for the upcoming 2019 European Parliament election campaign, especially the populist, anti-European, and extremist forces, which could shake the basis of the European Union

and its institutional setting if they secure sufficient electoral support. The European Parliament has traditionally been a pro-integrationist and pro-European force but if these forces gain more strength there, the Council—the member state governments represented there—would have to assume a more dominant role and work towards deeper and closer European integration. Tungul and Poláček identify similar sources of Euroscepticism, namely the inactivity of pro-European elites, the EU communication strategy and the poorly chosen media focus on European topics.

Despite the actions of some Czech politicians who do not seem to understand the short-sightedness of some of their policy choices, Marek Ženíšek and Vít Novotný demonstrate the example of protecting the EU external border in the importance of EU membership for Czechia. Czechia politically and economically benefits from the existence of the Schengen area and from being a member of this group, but refuses to make to work on its reform a priority for its EU policy, and to play a more active role in promoting a joint approach to protecting the EU external border. This means the unwillingness to reinforce the Frontex agency by increasing its financial, human, and technical resources, which would make the protection of the EU external border and EU asylum and return policies more efficient and effective. The escalation of the political debate about migration in Czechia, which became dominated by populist voices who set the pace and direction of the entire debate, aggravates the possibility to rationally assess the importance of Schengen and its future for Czechia. As a heavily pro-export country in the heart of Europe and a country without an external EU border, it benefits greatly from the Schengen area.

Other countries in the so-called Visegrad group also have problems accepting responsibility for the rights which the EU membership offers. This bloc of countries has become a force that their European partners do not perceive as constructive. They not only reject a joint approach in issues crucial for European integration, where a united front and solidarity are needed, but they also fail to present alternative solutions. The rise of nationalism, populism, and political anti-liberalism in Poland, Hungary, and to some extent Czechia, with their divergent priorities and Polish attempts to dominate the Visegrad cooperation lead to thoughts about other forms of regional cooperation. Ladislav Cabada's chapter assesses alternative regional groupings, namely the Slavkov Triangle and The Three Seas Initiative, which could supplement or even replace the V4.

During negotiations about the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020, the V4 countries cooperated within the “friends of cohesion” group and successfully defended its interests. In May 2018, the European Commission presented its proposal of the post-2020 MFF and the member states expect long and complicated negotiations. Many problems remain, some have escalated, and some emerged. The reform of the agricultural and cohesion policies, the reform of the EU's own resources, the protection of the external EU border, migration policy, Brexit, a trade war with the USA—these are some of the issues that need to be addressed. Lubor Lacina presents an economic analysis of the post-2020 MFF by investigating the expected nature of the negotiations and the main five scenarios for future development in EU financing. The outcome will be determined by the result of Brexit negotiations, including the

structure of future relations between the EU and the UK, and by the member state's decision about the shape and direction of the European integration in the future.

This publication discusses political, legal, administrative, and economic topics which are directly and indirectly linked and as a whole significantly affect the state of the Czech political system and Czech society. The aim was to identify the issues, analyse them, apply the relevant concepts to the Czech environment and, where relevant, link them to the European level, and finally also to formulate proposals for short-term and medium-term recommendations to facilitate the formation of favourable developments in the future.

# Chapter 1: A Conservative or a Progressive Future of Work?

Žiga Turk



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**Summary:** Rapid progress in digitalization, robotization and artificial intelligence is expected to change the amount, the nature and the kind of work humans do. Some fear, but others hope, that the possible elimination of work will also eliminate the work-based society—a society in which success, wealth and wellbeing are determined by how good an individual is at work. It could be replaced by a society in which robots provide for everyone according to their needs. We have policy choices on two levels. The first level is about how we frame the issue politically, the second, about how we address the problem technocratically. Politically there is a choice between a society that “works to live” and one that “lives to work”; between seeing the world as a world of abundance and one of scarcity. This paper will argue that the latter conservative view actually leads to progress. The key policy recommendation is to preserve the social role of work and reject policies that eliminate work and encourage idleness. Countries should introduce policies to support technological leadership as well as social policy innovations that will result in a society flexible and resilient enough to respond to disruptions caused by technology.

**Keywords:** future of work, innovation policy, unemployment, ideology, universal basic income, social policy.

## ***Introduction***

Currently, technological change is fast and, moreover, is accelerating. The current revolution in communication technology supports the innovation process itself. Never before have so many people had such easy access to so much learning and knowledge. And never before has it been so easy to connect with other educated and empowered people. There is a fear that innovation is killing jobs faster than new ones are being created. The complicated term for this phenomenon is “machine induced human redundancy”. In connection, the idea of “the end of work” has been getting a lot of public attention. This is because we are afraid that humans will become redundant in the brave new world of robots and artificial intelligence just like horses became redundant with the invention of cars and trucks (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2016).

More often than not, “the end of work” is considered something to be feared. This is interesting because most of us look forward to weekends and holidays, and to going home from work. Moreover, fears about the end of work are being raised at the same time we are debating migration and ageing. Some say migration into Europe and the US is needed because, due to demographic trends, we will need more workers in the future. But if work is disappearing, our aging, non-active populations do not pose a problem and migrants are not needed. Do we need more work or less? And why does the possible disappearance of work make us so uneasy?

These questions are debated fiercely because work has been a defining element of human civilisation. Work used to mean food, and food meant survival. As a species we are the offspring of those who worked the hardest and smartest—and not of those who were happy with the living conditions in an ancient jungle. Not only did work provide for survival, it also structured society and justified inequalities. In meritocratic societies, those who worked the most and the most intelligently were rewarded and

were expected to lead others. The role of work therefore goes well beyond providing what is needed for survival.

The central question of this paper is, does work have inherent value beyond providing goods and services? Will work disappear, and with it the societal relations related to work and the inequalities that result from differing success at work? If so, what is good and bad about this? If the main issue is whether work has inherent value, what policy options do we have that are consistent with our values, and what proposals can we expect from others? This paper will argue that work is valuable in itself. It will briefly refer to studies which try to predict what the job market will look like in the future and which skills will be needed. These studies suggest that the dark cloud of job destruction has a silver lining. Indeed, some jobs will change or disappear, but plenty of work will remain to be done. How we choose to react will be a matter of political debate. The central issue in this debate will therefore be if we want to preserve the social value of work, and this paper argues that we should.

### ***Technological Background***

Three trends are affecting the work landscape (1) economic, political and informational globalisation, (2) the digitalisation of communication, information processing and production; (3) the development of machine intelligence.

**Globalization:** The world is so interconnected, the transportation of goods so cheap and the flow of capital so unrestricted that it is no longer possible to hope that one part of the world can keep jobs at the expense of another. We might try to comfort ourselves by saying that because we have a more educated workforce, we will work smarter and thus be better paid—but such a strategy would be short-lived. Studies by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reveal that good educational policies are no longer the domain of the West (Zhang et al. 2015). Competition is and will remain global. And, the same holds for the rewards.

**Digitalization:** Progress in many fields of science, technology and business is connected to the exponential progress of digital technology. Gordon Moore (1965) defined Moore law—that the number of transistors that could be integrated on one circuit would double every 24 months. Fifty years later Moore's law is still valid. Computing speed, data transfer rates and storage capacity keep doubling every two years or so.

**Artificial Intelligence:** This has been a particularly disruptive development. Here, machines exhibit the characteristics of which human beings are the proudest: our intelligence and rationality. In 1996, the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue beat a human champion in chess. In 2014, a computer passed the Turing test (Turing 1948). In order for a machine to pass this test, in a conversation of a human with another human and a machine, the human should be unable to recognise which is which. In 2017, Google's Alpha Zero self-taught itself chess. It was just told the basic rules of the game, such as how pieces can move. After four hours of self-play, it had reached the grand-master level, and after 24 hours it had learned enough to become the most powerful computer to play chess.

The Alpha Zero's capacity for self-learning is promising in that computers may develop intuition and gain tacit knowledge. Technology, such as the Internet of things (technology that connects everyday objects to the Internet), is connecting sensors to computer networks. Cameras and microphones, too, are connected, and are, metaphorically speaking, the hands and eyes of the networked computers. The idea that computers are isolated from the real world and thus lack the human touch with the real work could not be more wrong.

Exponential progress: Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) compared progress to the story about the reward the king promised to the inventor of chess. As far as the rewards of digital revolution are concerned we are still on the first half of the board. Moravec (1998) predicted that in the 2020s affordable machines would have a capacity comparable to that of the human brain. Kurzweil (2016) speculated that at some point in the third decade of our century machine intelligence would surpass human intelligence.

Machines are becoming capable in interacting and interfering with the real world. Self-driving cars are close to being available commercially. On the one hand, computers have a sufficient "understanding" of the physical world to drive a car. On the other hand, they have the ability to self-learn chess beyond the grand-master level. Hardware prices are halving every two years or so. The assumption that machines will be able to do everything between driving a car to playing grandmaster chess is well founded. But, does this and should this lead to end of work is an entirely open question.

### ***The Pessimistic View: The Third Job Extinction***

Human ingenuity has always tried to produce more by working less. However, smarter working was not always welcome. The most notorious historic example of concern about the future of work is the Luddite movement of the early nineteenth century. It was the culmination of protests against inventions which had put workers out of a job during the industrial revolution. The movement was also a reaction to a new socio-economic system called capitalism. Unlike the guilds, capitalism allowed competition and rewarded technological progress. The result was the loss of many jobs which were no longer required. But, they were replaced by new, better-paid ones. This was, in fact, a period some call "the great enrichment" (McCloskey 2016).

The second major "end of work" scare happened in the 1960s. Time magazine ran a story titled "The Automation Jobless" (*Time* 1961). However, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, labour participation rates (that is, the percentage of people who are either employed or are actively looking for work) rose steadily. Only in the last 25 years have we seen this rate decline in most developed economies (OECD 2018).

A third big job extinction is feared now. It will differ from that of the Luddites and that of the mid-twentieth century. The industrialisation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries replaced skilled workers and artisans with assembly-line workers who were organised to do smaller, simpler tasks. The automation of the twentieth century hollowed out middle-income jobs: those of secretaries, clerks, drafters and so on.

The coming wave of automation will destroy low-paying, low-skill jobs, preserving those that require creative or social intelligence. This could lead to the job market becoming polarised, with rather safe, high-income thinking jobs on the one hand and also safe but low-income occupations involving person-to-person interaction and manual work on the other.

### ***The Optimistic View: Man-Machine Teamwork***

The narrative that should ease fears about “machine induced human redundancy” has been that of man–machine collaboration: humans have one set of strengths, machines have another, and these two skill sets can be complimentary. A well-publicised example is freestyle chess. It was found out that the best chess is played by a team consisting of a human player cooperating with computer software (Cowen 2013). In the words of Gary Kasparov, “Human strategic guidance combined with the tactical acuity of a computer was overwhelming,” (Kasparov 2017). The Harvard Business Review wrote that Kasparov had discovered a new business model (McAfee 2010).

Man-machine teamwork will become the new normal. Skills such as creative and ethical thinking are expected to remain in the domain of humans while routine tasks can be carried out by machines. Automation complements human labour and contributes to higher productivity. IT-augmented workplaces will add handicapped and older workers to the workforce. Smart machines will compensate for their deficiencies. Digitalisation and networking is making working from home possible.

The future will also increase digitally enabled independent work. This is not just about services like Uber and Airbnb. This shift from stable occupations in relatively large organisations to contingent independent work is both directly and indirectly the result of technological developments. Indirectly it is a result of low-tech IT, such as spreadsheets and mobile phones. It has become much easier to find a worker on a part-time or per-project basis. Previously, a firm would ensure access to the workforce by directly employing people. Now, companies can go online or to an agency to find the workers it needs, when it needs them. These low-tech tools have by far contributed the greater part of the shift from stable to contingent occupations (Katz and Krueger 2016). High-tech platforms like Uber represent only a small part of the phenomenon. But, this may change in the future with talent platforms such as LinkedIn and TaskRabbit which are improving the matching-up of workers and work. Technology is creating a new breed of workers: digital nomads. They use IT to work remotely for anyone in the world. Labour legislation, however, often stands in the way of this sort of flexibility and fails to support social security for workers in contingent work.

Finally, a wide array of platforms do not support economically gainful work. Nevertheless, they connect people around a common project by creating a virtual company or connect the performers/suppliers (programmers, writers and musicians) with customers (software users, readers and listeners). One such platform is Wikipedia, where the common goal is to create an encyclopedia. Blogger, Medium and WordPress are used by people who want to publish and read blogs.

These platforms may not necessarily enable monetisation of the work. People do it for free. Nevertheless, they allow people to work and to be rewarded for their work—perhaps not with money but with other kinds of recognition. They demonstrate that an “economy” is possible where money is not the measure of things and where the goal of work is not subsistence.

### ***The Left’s View: The Elimination of Work***

“Laziness may appear attractive, but work gives satisfaction”, wrote Anne Frank (1989). Not everyone agrees, and the next two sections discuss two ways to frame the issue of the future of work in an ideological manner. The progressive frame sees work as something to be reduced and eventually eliminated—for it, “laziness is attractive”. The conservative lens sees value in work and working and agrees that “work gives satisfaction”.

On the left, one finds many thinkers who see the current technological revolution as a tool for the creation of a utopian heaven on earth. The idea is as follows: human labour will no longer be needed, as work will be done by AI and robots. As there will be no more work, work will not determine a person’s social status. All people can be equal if only we find a way to distribute the value created by machines in a “fair” way. To everyone according to his needs!

The left’s “end of work” narrative has been spelled out most clearly by Andre Gorz (2005). He claims that the “work-based society” is dead. This is a society in which a person’s position, future, security and usefulness is determined by the work he does and how he performs it. It is dead, Gorz holds, because the production of goods satisfying both necessary and superfluous demands requires less and less work and pays out less and less in wages. Gorz (2005: 72-73) has a solution for this: the remedy for this situation is clearly not to “create work”, but to distribute optimally all the socially necessary work and all the socially produced wealth. . . The right to a sufficient, regular income will no longer have to depend on the permanent occupation of a steady job. The need to act, strive and be appreciated by others will no longer have to take the form of paid work done to order. . . Let us make no mistake about this: wage-labour has to disappear and, with it, capitalism.

The abolition of capitalism is the ultimate goal of the “end of work” narrative promoted by the progressive left. They see computerisation and robotization as an opportunity to link technological modernisation with social progress. Not needing to work to live should, in their view, be a human right.

### ***The Right’s View: Work Is More Important Than Leisure***

The idea that work is not just an eighteenth-century European social construct is demonstrated by very old texts which capture and describe the innate moral value of work. Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians is clear: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (3:10). As Peterson (1999) argues, these ancient texts should not be understood as fanciful prescriptions; rather, they capture and encode the innate morals of humanity. Europeans have preserved these values. The 2012 Eurobarometer (European

Commission 2012) reports that “an absolute and increasing majority of Europeans are opposed to giving more importance to leisure than to work”. In this survey, 41% of Europeans agreed with the statement that “more importance should be given to leisure than to work” and 54% were opposed to it.

But Weaver (2013) noticed that things are changing: Men no longer feel it laid upon them to translate the potential into the actual; there are no goals of labour like those of the cathedral-builders. Yet, unless man sees himself in relation to ordinances such as these, what lies ahead is the most egregious self-pampering and self-disgust, probably followed by real illness. With religion emasculated, it has remained for medical science in our age to revive the ancient truth that labour is therapeutic.

In that short passage, the three roles of work—beyond putting the food on the table—are apparent:

1. Work builds relationships among people and creates the fabric of society—between workers and customers.
2. Work is a method of self-realisation. Work gives life meaning. Work—being able to improve one’s condition— sets one free. Welfare makes people dependent.
3. Work is a tool for building just, meritocratic societies. Relationships among people in such a society are largely determined by the work they do and how well they do it.

All three are vital for the world as we know it and we should aim to preserve them.

## ***Conclusion***

The best of what technology will bring us is yet to come. Progress will continue to be exponential, which means that it will be difficult to respond to it and even more difficult to predict it. Therefore, we should be setting up flexible, responsive social structures and institutions which can respond quickly and autonomously, adapting to change and encouraging businesses to be flexible and innovative. Technology will eliminate many tasks, but fewer jobs, and will not eliminate work as such. Humans will work alongside technology, and will be complemented by it. Handicapped and older workers will be able to remain in the workforce. Technology will also offer new ways to match demand and supply of work and even allow for unpaid work to be rewarded on a global scale.

There is no need to be afraid of technological determinism—the belief that technology will change society. Human nature cannot be changed overnight. We were shaped as hunter-gatherers, and deep down inside we will remain as such even if we have robot assistants. If, on the other hand, we start believing in free lunches, the negative social impacts of worklessness in areas where most inhabitants live on subsidy or welfare may become common in Europe. While it is tempting to portray the world as a place of abundance—from the perspective of political marketing in particular—the fact is that we still live in a world of scarcity. We should be concerned not about the redistribution of the results of work, but the creation of wealth. There is nothing wrong with living to work, though this idea is harder to sell politically than the idea of a free ride delivered by technology.

Will technology allow us to have the products and services we enjoy today with shorter working hours, perhaps even eliminating most of them? Yes. But this was the case in the past too. We could work fewer hours if we were happy with, say, 19th century living standards. As long as humanity is ambitious, as long as we want to live meaningful lives, as long as we want to leave the world a better place for our children—then work, human work, will be needed to provide all that. Automation and technological development bring both opportunities and threats. In summary, the policies that will allow us to take advantage of the opportunities and mitigate the challenges are the following.

### ***Recommendations***

- Put the EU at the forefront of technological innovation even if it kills jobs. Leaders will be better off than laggards. New technology will kill jobs globally but create new ones locally.
- Reject selfish political or business interests that would stifle innovation and prevent competition under the pretext of saving jobs or creating work.
- Embrace change in labour arrangements and build on the opportunities they offer. Support them with the modernisation of the welfare state, not with stifling the platform economy and the internet.
- Provide top-notch technological infrastructure. Europeans should be able to use and build on the best infrastructure in the world, regardless of who provides it.
- Support investment in human resources by states, businesses, and individuals. Use technological and institutional opportunities to overhaul education and rely not on the state only.
- Be not satisfied with how we live, how our children will live and what kind of life our neighbours in Africa and Asia will have. There are diseases to be cured; ecosystems to be cleaned; planets to be explored; and cathedrals, schools and houses to be built and rebuilt. Life could be even better, and it will not get better without work.
- Progress requires a conservative attitude about work, not progressive encouragement of idleness.



# Chapter 2: Implementing the Smart City Concept in Czechia - The Case Study of Písek

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**Summary:** The “smart city concept” promotes projects which reduce costs, facilitate communication between people and authorities, and bring new opportunities. The town of Písek is a pioneer of the smart city concept in Czechia and serves as a good example by which to analyse the applicability of the concept in the local environment. Successful projects such as the parking navigation system, transportation portal, EPC system, energy portal with open data, and the mathematical model of the water supply network have broad applications. Participating in the international project +CityxChange, whose goal is to decentralize trading with electric energy shows that a small town can become a successful applicant to the EU Horizon 2020 programme. The establishment of the independent department Smart City, which develops technically well-prepared projects, became an important pillar in the successful implementation of the smart city model in Písek.

**Keywords:** Písek, smart city, transportation and energy portals, Horizon 2020, project +CityxChange

## ***Introduction***

The concept of a smart city is still rather complicated for many people to grasp. The word “smart” means in this context “clever”, but it also refers to progressive, cost-saving, simplifying, or unifying. A smart city concept will not build a new shopping centre or globally increase wages, but it will promote projects which reduce costs, facilitate communication between people and administrators, and bring new opportunities. The town of Písek is a pioneer of this concept in Czechia and as such presents itself as a suitable case study to analyse the applicability of this concept in the local environment. Its international cooperation and participation in international projects indicate the possible application of the experience from other countries.

When the term “smart city” was used in connection with Písek for first time, Czechia was still only looking for pilot smart cities and lacked concrete examples. It is a problem for the smart city concept that it presents something that will become commonplace later. Thus, many people are sceptical about these projects, often due to a lack of knowledge. The key source of success was the establishment of the organization Smart Písek, which very quickly implemented several specific tangible projects such as smart parking.<sup>1</sup> Smart Písek works with new technologies and participates in the introduction of new standards. This chapter uses the Písek case study to explain which projects are suitable for smaller towns, how to set up the organizational structure and what opportunities international cooperation can bring.

## ***The Genesis of the Smart City Písek Concept***

The historical South Bohemian city of Písek, with 30 thousand inhabitants, became one of the first Czech towns that adopted the smart city concept. The town representatives adopted the strategic document

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<sup>1</sup> Smart parking in Písek is based on a system with a cable running under area A of P+R parking Na Výstavišti, which reads if someone parked there and sends the information to the display board and transportation portal. People can download an application to their smart phone and when driving a car in the town, they know where to find available parking places.

“The Blue and Yellow Book of Smart City Písek”<sup>2</sup> which generally defined the concept of a smart city and described its starting position with a special emphasis on the current state and problems of the town and the individual areas of town life from the point of the smart city pillars. It also listed various organizations and interest groups which would be potentially affected by the smart city, and which would support it if a proper approach was chosen.

The Blue-Yellow Book included an important analysis of the forthcoming and newly proposed projects in the town which could qualify as part of the smart city concept. It defined probable financial sources, both grants and other types, such as bank loans, private capital in the public-private partnerships (PPP) or the Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) concept, needed for the implementation of specific investment projects of the smart city concept. The Book also provided a proposed course of action, including the organization and designation of responsibilities.

To keep its position as a smart city leader among middle sized Czech towns, Písek needed to set up a technical department which would bring smart city activities under one umbrella, propose systemic concepts, set the priorities within the areas as defined by the Book and, based on these, propose projects to implement. The department for the project Developing Smart City Písek opened on 1 February 2017 and has been preparing and implementing technological projects. The department’s operation is 95% funded by the EU operational programme Employment, which supports, among other things, the streamlining of public administration. The town council nominated five people for this department, as an independent organizational unit. They work part time, and the total workload is 2 FTE, which corresponds with the needs of a town the size of Písek. No other Czech town aspiring to introduce the smart city concept has a similar department. Its establishment will be a major step towards the successful implementation of many future projects.

### ***Examples of Implemented Projects***

We can observe the tangible results of this specialized department’s work in the project for guaranteed energy savings EPC, which reduces energy consumption in local schools and town organizations. The Smart department’s added value was the energy online portal, Transportation portal,<sup>3</sup> and eParkomat application enabling easier parking. Open data obtained from operating the systems serves for the development of other important applications. The mathematical model of water supply network saves up to 30 thousand cubic metres of water a year due to the early identification of water loss. The town of Písek applied for a grant to build sediment and biomass energy use stations, which should bring further savings. Other topics discussed include a town network of Internet of Things, using mobile phones to pay for parking, an online portal for communication with citizens, the increased effectiveness of public transportation lines, and an international project for energy positive suburbs financed by the Research and Innovation programme of EU Horizon 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Full-text is available from [http://www.mesto-pisek.cz/assets/File.ashx?id\\_org=12075&id\\_dokumenty=5399](http://www.mesto-pisek.cz/assets/File.ashx?id_org=12075&id_dokumenty=5399)

<sup>3</sup> The Portal was awarded with Golden Coat of Arms in 2018 in a competition joined by villages and cities from all 14 Czech regions. They presented a total of 430 webpages and projects including electronic services.

One of the first projects implemented was the installation of charging stations with internet connection. More essential projects followed, such as the reconstruction of a P+R parking lot approved by the town council in May 2015. This public procurement commission asked for a system linking smart parking lots with light navigation panels. The first smart parking lot is the currently reconstructed P1 U Výstaviště. Other parking lots and P+Rs are joining the system. Other than navigation, the system logs capacity and provides online information to the drivers. Drivers can get the information from a website and online applications.

The system informs the owners of electric automobiles about the availability of charging stations in town. Parking lots have a set of detectors which collect occupancy data. In cooperation with the developed parking platform, which includes cloud data storage, the information is sent to the variable message vertical traffic signs, i.e. digital display boards. The umbrella parking platform together with the statistical information allow to use the data for mobile application and information portals, which can navigate the users online also with the help of map portals. The parking system is not supposed to help only with navigation to parking lots, it also predicts the occupancy of parking places in the town streets. It saves drivers time when looking for a place to park and lowers emissions.<sup>4</sup>

Other goals include efforts to make public transportation more attractive. Part of the Smart Písek concept is to make public transportation clearer, more transparent and attractive, and to connect it with cycling. In total, the nineteen busiest public transportation stops, and transit stops where people transfer between different types of public transportation were equipped with new digital display boards. The boards use the same technology as some types of electronic books which allows them to be energetically independent, charged only by their own solar panels.

Another step was clearer public transportation information system. Experience shows that many people do not understand the timetables. Písek currently has eleven lines, which is an excessively high number its size, and some run only once a day. The anticipated solution is a system of several backbone lines, which would regularly run between fixed destinations, complemented with additional lines servicing points of interest as needed; for example, schools, municipal buildings, or big companies. The aim to rework the timetables is linked to the aim to provide passengers with information about the lines routes. Visitors lack information on individual stops and the stations lack a map with the plan of the town transportation lines. A map with marked lines can help distinguish between town and inter-city transportation. Visitors would also be able to download them to their smartphones through QR codes.

Another big concern is how to link public transportation with cycling. Písek is a perfect place for the growth of cycling, and primed to connected it with public transportation, for instance, by building the required infrastructure at the key transport nodes. A cyclist could safely park the bicycle there, store the helmet and continue the journey by public transportation. The facilities should also offer additional services such as tyre pumps or ebike chargers. The town hall approved Cyclo-general transportation solutions, which will plan the construction of these facilities for cyclists. Gradually, cycling should become better

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<sup>4</sup> The navigation system of parking, aka Transportation portal (see [parkovani.pisek.eu](http://parkovani.pisek.eu)) received an award at the 20th annual competition of best municipal webpage and electronic service announced at the 2018 Internet in Public Administration and Governance conference in Hradec Králové.

connected with public transportation and individual car transportation. The support for low emission and emission-free transportation aims towards maximum support for public transportation and cycling, thus, the plan includes proposals to complement smart parking lots with bikesharing as an alternative to public transportation. Every visitor to Písek will be able to park the car at the outskirts of town and continue by public transportation or by bike to their final destination in the town.

When meeting the pillars of “Intelligent Energy and Services” and “Integrated ICT Structures”, as defined in the Blue Yellow Book of Smart Písek, the town administers the public part of the energy portal, which through open data provides the general public with access to selected statistical data. The system generates data which enable a more effective management of energy consumption in connection to, for instance, weather broadcasts. The objective is to provide some of the data to the public. The users can follow the real time energy consumption of individual buildings in a smartphone application. Students can check the importance of energy saving measures for saving money and the environment as part of their environmental education. The public energy portal is an addition to the energy saving measures project implemented in eighteen local day-care and primary schools. In 2017, the project saved 3.5 million CZK.<sup>5</sup>

### ***International Cooperation***

Even before the Smart City department started its operation, the city of Trondheim invited Písek to participate on the pilot project +CityxChange. Trondheim plays the leading role in a consortium of seven European cities<sup>6</sup> which presented this ambitious programme to the European Commission and successfully defended its plan to decentralize trading with electric energy. The project +CityxChange is part of Horizon 2020, a framework programme for research and innovation for the years 2014 to 2020 and the EU’s largest grant programme for science, research, and innovation. Písek is the third Czech town to participate in a project of this size.

The successful implementation of the project would mean that individual households could sell electricity to one another. “The project focuses on better utilization of local energy sources. The current state of technology and legal framework does not allow small energy producers to freely sell their surpluses. This approach could change in the future and people could sell the electricity produced by the photovoltaic solar panels on their roofs to their neighbour for a price they agreed on. The project of energy positive

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<sup>5</sup> The town received the Smart City Award for this project in the 2017 competition Smart Cities for the Future in the category towns between 10 and 50 thousand inhabitants. Smart Cities for the Future 2017 is the first competition of this kind in Czechia. Its goal is to identify trends, promote smart city projects and support municipalities and regions in sharing and using best practices founded on the most modern methods. It was announced by a non-profit organization SCII under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Development and Ministry of Industry and Trade. Písek’s project defeated Kolín’s system of smart parking using sensors and online applications and Prachatic and its circular economy solution to waste management. The expert committee also awarded a special prize in two categories; startup activities in smart city concept, which awarded the project Application for real time prediction of parking place occupancy developed by e-Parkomat.

<sup>6</sup> The consortium composed of Písek, Trondheim (Norway), Limerick (Ireland), Alba Iulia (Romania), Sestao (Spain), Smolyan (Bulgaria) and Voru (Estonia), wants to change the established ways of storing and distributing electric energy produced by households, firms and companies.

suburbs should include all stages from legislation to technical solutions and accounting” (Prokýšek qt. in MZP 2018.). One positive impact of the project is the gradual “reduction of greenhouse gas emissions according to the international programme Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and local emissions that pollute the air” (Kalaš qt. in MZP 2018).

The budget of the pilot European Smart City project is 30 million 88 EUR<sup>7</sup> and will be launched on 1 January 2019. The Minister of Local Development, Klára Dostálová (qt in MZP 2018), stated that the participation of Písek in the Horizon 2020 project proved that “Czech cities look for and support modern and intelligent solutions to offer their citizens something new. Managing resources is a growing challenge for local and global environment, it spills over to many different areas, and becomes a task for all of us. The town of Písek managed to join an excellent European project, which is built on citizens’ participation on responsible public administration and use of resources.” The former Czech Minister of Environment and chief advisor of the current Minister, Petr J. Kalaš (qt. in MZP 2018) commented on the project’s approval: “Its focus on the support for municipal energy and the strong emphasis on renewable resources makes it a needed innovative concept in the Czech environment, whose successful implementation in Písek coupled with legislative support could lead to its expansion to the general Czech municipal community and, thus, strengthen the role of renewable energy resources on the national level.”

## **Conclusion**

Smart city projects are no longer a question for the distant future, they need to be implemented now. Our case study showed that the most visible outcomes were the reconstruction of a parking lot, online transportation portal, and parking navigation system, but we can also mention the EPC system installed in schools, cultural centres and sport centres, which has brought surplus revenue to the town, or the energy portal with open data as an addition to the EPC system. Another successful project is the mathematical model of the water supply network, which uses real data, provides early detection of pollution sources, and significantly helps to plan development and maintenance of the network.

The town is preparing a sediment energy use station, which should cut costs and reduce environmental burden. The technology used would generate electricity while burning the sediment, which would bring energy self-sufficiency to the town. Other projects would bring an infrastructure for internet of things, simplify the system of public transportation lines and routes, and enable more comfortable communication with the authorities as part of the eGovernment project. The pilot project Smart City Písek demonstrated the application of this concept in a small town with a rich history, economic life and culture, which is more typical for Czech towns than large metropolises, which the concept was originally intended for. Smart City Písek is a “living laboratory” for other Czech towns of a similar type.

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<sup>7</sup> “The +CityxChange project will receive 20 million EUR from the European research and innovation programme and the partners will provide another 10 million EUR. Písek’s share will be funded by a 100% subsidy of 13 million CZK” (Knot, qtd in MZP 2018).

## Recommendations

- The fourth industrial revolution and ever faster innovation cycles increase demands on public administration to quickly and aptly implement new processes
- Smart city uses technology for improving the lives of citizens and this must be the result of all smart city projects. Some things are cool but they are only new technology gadgets.
- Smart city strategies need to be first well defined and then implemented by competent people.
- Universities should be involved in the development of smart city projects to avoid dependency on suppliers, who want to sell anything they call “smart”.

# The Current Structure of the Czech Family Policy and Its Impact on Families and Employment

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**Summary:** In Czechia, expenditures on family policy in relation to GDP are slightly above the EU average. Support for families with children is primarily provided in the form of tax benefits, whereas there is little support in the form of childcare services. Benefits mostly accommodate families with very young children, regardless of the family's income level. The availability of institutional care for children under three years of age and the supply of part-time employment are among the lowest in the EU. Czechia offers one of the longest parental leaves in the EU, or indeed the world. As a result, mothers are the primary carers for children aged 0 to 3 or 4 years of age. The negative effect of motherhood on women's participation in the labour market is among the highest in the EU and is reflected in a vastly reduced employment rate, higher unemployment when they return to the labour market, and a substantial pay gap between men and women. A comparison of election manifestos of the current parliamentary parties shows that most parties want to increase tax support for families and the availability of pre-school childcare. However, flexible forms of employment are mentioned by just a few parties and an increase of fathers' involvement in childcare is not mentioned by anyone, so we cannot expect a substantial improvement in these areas.

**Keywords:** family policy, pre-school care, women employment, election programmes

## **Introduction**<sup>8</sup>

Czechia's low birth rate is a long-term problem. People postpone the decision to start a family until an increasingly later age. Combining family and work life seems difficult especially for women, who often leave their jobs for many years to care for their children. Families also face an increased financial burden, reflected in the relatively high risk of income poverty. Family policy should consider these facts and provide families with financial and service support that would allow them to effectively combine family and work life. This chapter first describes the focus of Czech family policy and the targeting of its individual measures in an international comparison, and then it assesses the impact of family policy on fertility rates and the position of women in the Czech labour market. Finally, it compares the family policy plans of the current parliamentary parties as described in their 2017 electoral programmes and, if available, the 2018 local election programmes. This overview presents possible directions for Czech family policy in the next few years.

## **Current State of the Czech Family Policy**

The analysis of current Czech family policy led to several key findings. First, Czech public expenditures on families with children are slightly above the EU average. Family policy expenditures represent 3.14% of the Czech GDP, while the EU average is 2.76% (2013). Neighbouring countries spend a little less: Germany (3.03%), Austria (2.61%), Slovakia (2.06%), and Poland (1.61%).

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter is based on two previous studies by the same author; *IDEA PRO VOLBY: Podpora rodin s dětmi: Daně, dávky a veřejné služby* and *IDEA PRO VOLBY 2017. Rodinná politika ve volebních programech: přehled a rozbor*.

Second, the support targets tax reliefs and social benefits, but public services are underfinanced. The GDP share of expenditures on tax relief for families is the second highest (0.93% GDP in 2013) in the EU (0.29%). Expenditures on social benefits for families with children are average (1.65% GDP, approx. 65 billion crowns). On the other hand, public expenditures on services for families with children are very low when compared with the other EU countries – only 0.57% of GDP, while the EU average is 1% of GDP. The tax system favours families with children and one working parent.<sup>9</sup> Support for families with one working parent exposes the second earning parent to high effective tax rates. Given that the second working parent is usually the woman in Czechia, the tax subsidies system disqualifies women with a working partner, which significantly aggravates their return to the labour market after their parental leave ends (Šatava 2016).

Social benefits are greatly centred on families with the youngest children regardless of the family's income. The state paid over 30 billion crowns for this support in 2015. Total expenditures on social benefits amounted to 35 billion crowns in 2015, and parental leave benefits constituted 64% of all social benefit expenditures (MPSV 2016). Social benefits poorly reflect social need. Considering households with the lowest income, 99% of households with children in the lowest income decile receive some form of allowance support, in the top income deciles it is approx. one fourth of all households. The average level of support is very similar between the lowest and highest income households. This is caused by the high share of parental leave benefits and financial maternity aid, which are almost equal for households with the highest and lowest income levels or even higher for the high-income households. Only a small share of the expenditure targets the poverty of families with children. Only 38% of total expenditures on social benefits goes to people at risk of relative income poverty (Janský, Kalíšková and Můnich 2016), the rest is distributed to families with the youngest children and higher income. Child benefits mostly focus on families with children who are at risk of income poverty (69%, Janský et al. 2016). However, the amount received is too low to help families rise above the poverty line; it lowers the risk of poverty by only 0.8 pp (the risk of poverty based on net employment income is 13.4%, if we add child benefits to the net employment income, it drops to 12.4%, cf. Janský et al. 2016).<sup>10</sup>

Third, the capacity of pre-school facilities for younger children has been inadequate for a long period of time. Low public expenditures on services for families with children are reflected in the low percent of children who attend pre-school facilities. Only 2.9% of children under 3 years of age attend nursery school or other forms of childcare, which is the second lowest number in the EU (EU average is 30%). The percentage for the age category of 3-6 years is 78%, the ninth lowest in the EU (average 83%). Increasing the capacity of pre-school facilities would bring a net revenue for the public budget—one

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<sup>9</sup> A high concentration of family support in taxes (in the form of tax discount on a child and husband or wife without income) in Czechia becomes obvious also in the international comparison of net average tax rates by household type. Czechia has the third largest difference between the net tax rate of a single childless individual and the married working individual with a jobless partner and two children of all EU countries.

<sup>10</sup> State financial support for children rose by 300 crowns a month in January 2018 (from the previous 500/610/700 crowns a month). This applies to families where at least one parent is working. The claim border also increased from the previous 2.4 to 2.7 percent of the subsistence minimum. These changes expanded the number of families eligible for support and the number of families that rise above the poverty line, but the change is not a radical one.

additional place in day-care represents a profit of about 10 000 crowns a year for the public budget. We should also add the revenue which families with children receive due to higher income and an easier combination of family and work life (Kališková, Münich and Pertold 2016).

## ***Family Policy Repercussions***

Czech family policy is centred on families with young children, which it supports by very long paid parental leave, and on families with children and one working parent who receive support in the form of child and incomeless husband/wife tax relief. Service support for families is significantly behind international comparisons. How is this reflected in the position of women in the Czech labour market?

First, women's employment drops during childcare. The level of employment for women without children or with older children is among the highest in the EU (88 % childless women and 91% of women with children over 12 years old work). Czech women show very high interest in joining the labour market. Yet, most of them use one of the longest paternal leaves in the EU and stay home with children for three years or even longer. Only 44% of women with children under 6 years old work and Czechia demonstrates the steepest decline in women employment due to motherhood. A significant share of this decline is probably involuntary and caused by institutional barriers. Increasing the employment of women with young children could have a positive impact on both public and household budgets (Kališková and Münich 2012).

Second, women with children have high unemployment rates. In 2015, the unemployment rate for women was almost twice as high as the unemployment of men (6.1 vs. 4.2%). A gender gap in unemployment of 45% puts Czechia at the top of all EU member states. The highest unemployment gap between men and women concerns people with young children. While the unemployment gap between men and women without children under 14 years of age is very small (11%), the difference rises to 212% for people with children under 14 years of age (the unemployment rate is 8.1% for women and 2.6% for men). Unemployment affects women with both high school and university diplomas, and for one third of them it lasts more than 6 months (Bičáková and Kališková 2016).

Third, part-time jobs are extremely rare. Only 9% of Czech women work part time, while the EU average is 32%. One reason is the high effective income tax, which is quite high for women with young children and a working partner (Šatava 2016). High income tax and high fixed costs (transportation costs, food, administrative arrangements, etc.) discourage most women and companies from part time work. The unavailability of stable and well-paid jobs with shorter work hours that would enable women to combine work and family lives often causes women to postpone their return to the labour market or look for alternative strategies, such as starting their own business or engaging in a chain of short-term temporary jobs (Hašková et al. 2015).

Fourth, low natality, which has been around 1.5 children per women over the long term, is below the EU average. The latest research shows that the high childcare demands on women are reflected in their willingness to have children and thus overall natality. The availability of public services which would facilitate childcare prove to be twice as effective in increasing the birth rate than any other form of

support for families with children (Doepke and Kindermann 2016). Czechia focuses on the financial support of families while policies facilitating childcare for women (supporting services and engaging fathers in childcare) are not sufficiently utilised.

### ***Family Policy in Electoral Programmes of Czech Political Parties***

This section compares the 2017 election programmes of parliamentary political parties<sup>11</sup> and their 2018 local election programmes, if they were available before the completion of this chapter (August 2018). The comparison of electoral programmes showed that most parties promised families an increase in revenue and the programmes were extensive except for STAN, which only offered to subsidize starter flats for young families. Even though the support for families with young children is mostly focused on tax reliefs, all parties, except the Pirate Party, wanted a further increase in tax reliefs. Some parties promised to introduce tax relief which would lower the effective taxation of women and would help them return to the labour market (TOP 09), while others planned tax changes that would lower the tax burden for the first working person, usually men (ANO, ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, KSČM). Most parties also mentioned changes in social welfare. Only ČSSD proposed an increase in welfare which would target socially disadvantaged families and increase wealth redistribution from wealthy to poor families, which is relatively low in Czechia. Other parties accentuated the problem of social welfare abuse and their proposals went in the opposite direction (ANO, ODS, TOP 09). The Pirate Party presented a different concept that wished to simplify the system.

The electoral programmes of all parties, except for KDU-ČSL and the Pirate Party, reflected on the shortcomings in services for families with children and proposed to increase the availability of preschool childcare and other services for families, but did not mention who would finance the increased capacities of the preschool facilities or to what extent and for what age group of children the day-care service should be provided. The need to increase the availability of flexible forms of work was mentioned in the programmes of three political parties (KDU-ČSL, KSČM, TOP 09). If the parties presented a specific proposal on how to achieve this (KDU-ČSL), they proposed some form of tax relief for flexible and part time jobs. The engagement of fathers in childcare is very low in Czechia when compared with other countries but none of the parties mentioned this in their programme. Engaging the fathers in childcare and expanding childcare services are important prerequisites for bringing about the rise in natality that Czechia very much needs.

Only KSČM explicitly mentioned a higher birth rate. It was possible to deduce from the other party programmes whether they supported a higher birth rate or not. Most parties proposed higher benefits or more tax reliefs for families with children (e.g., higher maternity benefits and child benefits in the programme of ČSSD, higher tax deductions on children in the programmes of ANO, KSČM, KDU-ČSL, etc.), many programmes planned to expand childcare facilities. The proposals to increase support for families with children could be among other things seen as a motivation to increase the birth rate.

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<sup>11</sup> We limit the list to parties which succeeded in the 2017 parliamentary election, because they will directly influence the legislative process in the current electoral period and will significantly affect the direction and content of the public discourse on this topic.

Family policy proposals in the 2018 municipal election programmes of the Czech parliamentary parties mostly focused on enhancing services for families with children, which corresponded with the municipal competences in this area. It mostly concerned support for micro-nurseries and child groups (KSČM,<sup>12</sup> ODS, TOP 09, STAN<sup>13</sup>), or expansion of the network/increase in the capacities of kindergartens (ČSSD, KSČM, ODS, TOP 09), maintaining the current schools and kindergartens in smaller municipalities (Pirates), improving transportation to these facilities (Pirates, TOP 09, STAN), and the safety of transportation to schools and kindergartens (ČSSD, TOP 09, STAN). KSČM, TOP 09 and STAN mentioned programmes for families with disabled children. KSČM offered asylum homes for single mothers with children and for socially deprived children, TOP 09 and STAN offered public housing for families who could not afford market rents, and low-threshold facilities for children and youth.

Comparing the electoral programmes of all parliamentary parties showed that their family policy sections were rather extensive and promised both tax reliefs and an improvement of the services for families with children, while only some of them considered flexible forms of employment and higher engagement of fathers in childcare. We, thus, cannot expect a substantial change in the setting of the Czech family policy even though the system will be exposed to rising pressures due to high budget expenditures, the insufficient provision of social services, and the need to reform the labour market. All these factors are closely interlinked and need to be addressed in their mutual correlation.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Adapt family support to better address the needs of socially disadvantaged families.
- Address the problem of low employment among mothers with children, including greater flexibility of employment types, or the problem of pay gap.
- Emphasize greater flexibility of the labour market and motivate fathers to become more involved in childcare while expanding the number, types and capacities of services available to families with children in order to allow these families to choose the type of care that fits their needs. These services should be available evenly across the country.

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<sup>12</sup> KSČM did not have a nationwide programme for local elections, thus, we used the programme for the second largest city in the country, Brno.

<sup>13</sup> While TOP09 had a national electoral programme for the 2018 local elections, STAN did not and so we used both the TOP 09 programme and the joint programme of the TOP 09 and STAN for Prague to identify the priorities of these two parties in the 2018 local election. The TOP 09 family policy priorities were identical in both programmes but the latter was supplemented with some additional points.



# Chapter 4: Competences for Responsible Citizenship

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**Summary:** This chapter reflects the current state of civic education in Czechia, presents a competency model for responsible citizenship and, based on that, proposes a design of civic competences. Several analyses (ČŠI, ICCS 2009) found the level of Czech civic education inadequate. Only formal education is regulated by binding documents; thus, we need to focus on these. The revision of Framework Educational Programmes and the preparation of the Concept of Civic Education should be landmark changes in this respect. The aim of this chapter is to present and describe competency model for responsible citizenship and to define civic competences, which could serve as an inspiration when drafting both documents.

**Keywords:** responsible citizenship, civic education, competence, democratic values, civic competence.

## ***Introduction***

This year, Czechia celebrates 100 years since it became independent Czechoslovakia, the first democratic state on the Czech territory. Hand in hand with spreading democracy and engaging citizens in political decision-making, the need for civic and political education appeared in the early 1900s. The first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, was one of the first pioneers of civic education in Europe. Masaryk understood that the newly formed democratic legal state would not work well in the long run if not based on democratically educated citizens. Already in 1919, the National Assembly passed a law to organize popular courses in civic education. The report of the National Assembly's cultural committee justified this law by saying that "an indispensable condition and the most important prerequisite for the existence of a free nation state is the political maturity of the country's citizens. Only then we can foremost anticipate the success of all national life in the state, when all its members are fully aware of not only their citizen rights but also their duties to the state, and are penetrated by a collective spirit of belonging to one and same state structure and by love for their motherland...Every citizen is obligated to contribute their pound to the success of the state. No free country can prosper without intensive coaction of its citizens" (PSP ČR 2014).

When an independent Czechia was established in 1993, the experience of two totalitarian regimes, which had interrupted the democratic development in the country for over fifty years, led to a more restrained approach to civic education than in the era of the first Czechoslovak Republic. The experience of Communist and Nazi ideological propaganda left a strong aftertaste in education. Democratic civic education was not sufficiently made a priority. Today, political literacy is lowest in the age group of 18 to 24 year olds, as indicated by the findings of the 2013 Electoral Study (Lebeda and Kudrnáč 2014). Ten questions based purely on knowledge of politics received the poorest results among individuals who had just received their high school diplomas. The results of the Czech education system showed that the current system cannot provide the citizens with sufficient knowledge about politics and democracy.

The state administration will take important actions in 2019 which could help improve civic education in Czechia. These include the revision of the Framework Educational Programmes by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in cooperation with the National Institute for Education, and the preparation of the Concept of Civic Education by the Council of the Government of Czechia for Human Rights. An important question linked to the improvement of the quality of civic education is: what sort of

competences should citizens of a democratic legal state possess? This chapter presents one potential competency model which could contribute to a better quality of civic education. It is a competency model for responsible citizenship which has been modified to meet the specific needs of Czechia.

### ***Competences in the Present Curriculum***

Civic education in Czechia is carried out both in formal and informal education. Formal education in pre-school, primary, secondary grammar and vocational schools is regulated by binding documents known as the Framework for Educational Programmes (FEP)<sup>14</sup>. These framework programmes are published by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and supersede the School Education Programmes (SEP) which are prepared by individual schools. Key competences are part of both the Framework and School Education Programmes. Their characteristics and nature represent the main goal of education and it is the teacher's task to find teaching strategies which will develop these key skills. Key competences in the FEP should not be developed in an isolated way but should be mutually interconnected and linked to the teaching content and teaching results in the individual educational areas and disciplines. One area of key competences is civic competency.

Introducing the FEP together with competences meant to increase the effectiveness of teaching so that teaching does not only transfer knowledge, but also acts as a space for developing skills and attitudes which the students can use in everyday life. These should lead to a balance between knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Using methods other than the classical teaching methods, such as “frontal teaching” should help achieve this goal. This exemplary vision often remains just a vision and the reality at schools is quite different. Key competences are obviously incorporated in all binding documents and textbooks, but often remain just a formality. Their complexity and low interconnectedness with teaching content is hard to grasp for many teachers. Few people aspire to truly cultivate them in the school environment.

Civic education is sufficiently elaborated in the aforementioned curriculum documents. It is part of every mandatory course, part of key competences and cross-sectional topics, which should permeate all compulsory education across all educational areas. However, a closer look reveals that the reality is different. The development of key civic competency is neglected (see above), the subject itself is given little importance, instruction often takes places only once a week by uncertified teachers, who use this course to top up their work load at the school. We also see that in the current curriculum civic education became some sort of a “rubbish bin” for topics that the other subjects did not find place for.

The Czech School Inspectorate (CSI) published a document in February 2018 which stated that key competences were very general and hard to assess. It proposed to look for inspiration in foreign competence models. It proposed that the educational area Humans and Society, which is comprised of Civic Education and History courses, should seek inspiration of the corresponding Austrian competence model (Česká školní inspekce 2018).

Another outstanding weakness of the civic competency in the FEP for primary education (FEP PE) is

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<sup>14</sup> Art schools and special education have their own FEPs.

the absence of a clear value set linked to the democratic political system of Czechia. The Chamber of Deputies pointed out the importance of values in civic education in a resolution which defined values in the following way: “The development of democratic competences must be patterned on the values set by the Constitution of Czechia, whose fundamental list is found in the Preamble to the Constitution of Czechia—patriotism, liberty, human dignity, equality, responsibility, democracy and rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, protection of natural and cultural, material and spiritual wealth handed down to us” (Parlament ČR 2018). Inspiration can be found also in the definition of civic competence in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council:<sup>15</sup> “Civic competence is based on knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights, including how they are expressed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international declarations and how they are applied by various institutions at the local, regional, national, European and international levels” (Metodický portál rvp.cz n.d). An understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy should be the main result of civic education and this should develop students’ competences not only as part of one course but should be one of the main goals of (not only) primary education, as these are part of the inviolable values set by the Constitution of Czechia.

### ***Civic Competency***

Based on our findings, it is wise to define a profile of civic competency which would meet all requirements of responsible citizenship and remove all aforementioned shortcomings. The definition of civic competency also includes individual partial skills for responsible citizenship inspired by the Austrian competency model for civic education.

Civic competency is a sum of mutually linked knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead individuals to responsible citizenship. The fundamental pillar of responsible citizenship is possession of the knowledge that would allow individuals to form their own political opinions and attitudes, based on which they can responsibly participate on social life. Knowledge based on expert analysis mostly includes knowledge about political and legal issues, additionally including economic and media terminology and structures, and the value base is established by the Czech Constitution. The skills of a responsible citizen are mostly based on the capabilities of analytical and critical thinking. They are part of the methodological skills and the competency needed to create one’s own opinion. The skills of a responsible citizen also include independent judgment of the correctness/credibility of opinions on social affairs, working with information, analysing and interpreting this information, and critically evaluating the opinions presented based on the capability to form own opinions. Attitudes are based on the competency to act and include active participation and motivation to participate. One’s own attitude and participation are based on the previous skills, thus, expert knowledge and the capability to work with it are a condition for responsible participation and engagement in civic and social life.

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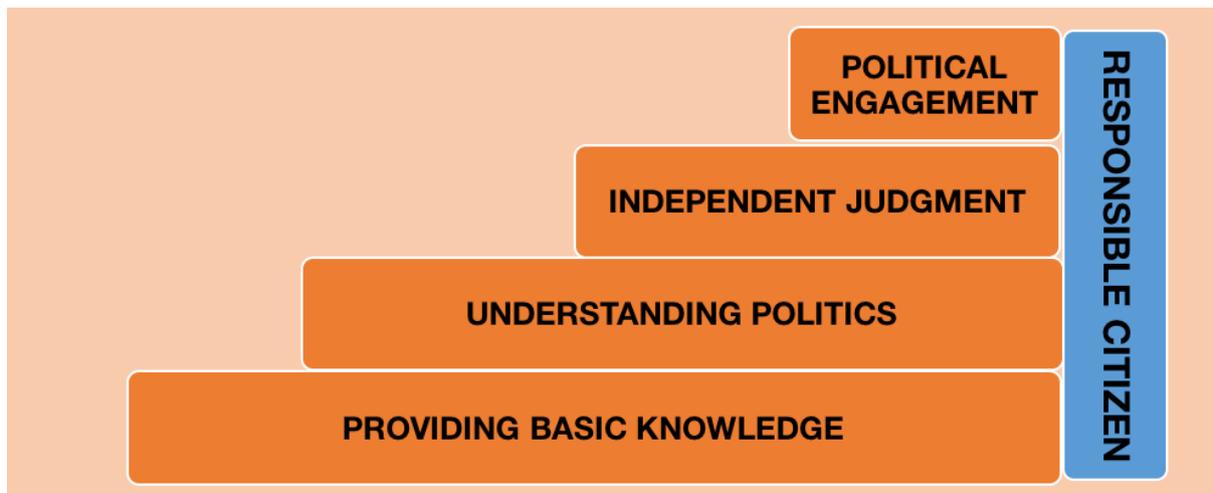
<sup>15</sup> The Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council was issued before the FEP were introduced. It is possible that its firm specification of democratic values and attitudes served as an inspiration when the Ministry defined civic competency

## ***Competence Model for Responsible Citizenship***

This model was mostly inspired by the Austrian competency model for civic education, which is part of the Austrian legislation since 2016. It has been modified and redefined to better suit the needs of civic education in Czechia.

Responsible citizenship can be perceived as an imaginary staircase (see Fig. 1), with responsible citizens at the top, who, thanks to their knowledge understand politics, make their own opinions and, thus, act and engage in public life.

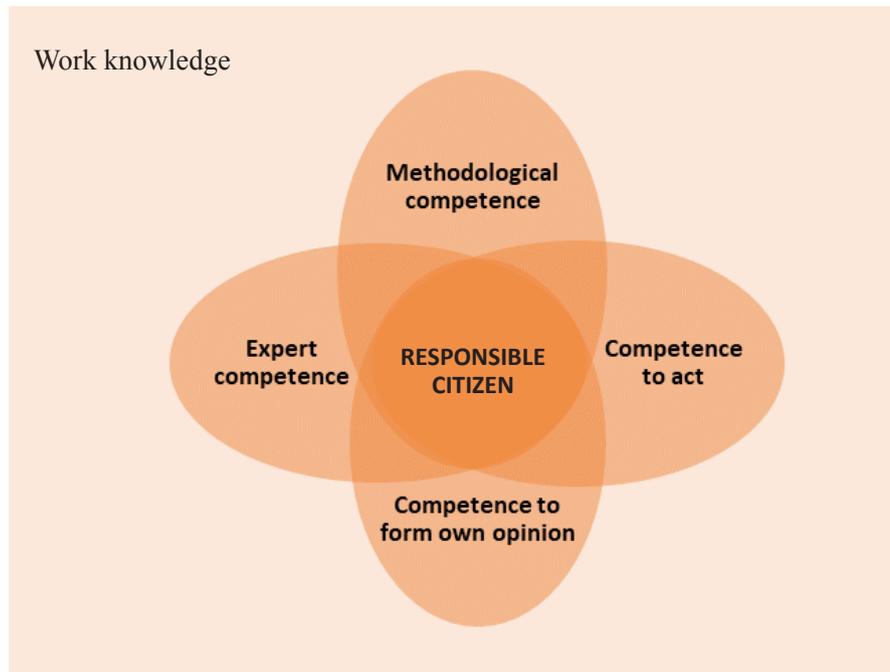
**Figure 1: Responsible Citizenship Chart**



Source: Müller n.d.

The displayed stairs are interconnected with individual competences for responsible citizenship—expert competence, methodological competence, competence to form own opinion, and competence to act (see Fig. 2). These competences are connected not only with the aforementioned stairs but also with one another and their common ground is working knowledge. Working knowledge includes the concepts and definitions derived from a given situation, topic, and problem in the classroom. Individual competences are not developed separately but in connection to all individual competences and the given teaching content.

**Figure 2 Austrian competency model for civic education**



Source: Krammer 2008.

The two figures above are interlinked because we expect that the development of expert competence (gaining expert knowledge) can lead to the “first step” of a responsible citizen. This step, together with methodological competence, leads to a greater understanding of politics. The competence to form one’s own opinion is linked to the “third step”. The “last step”, political engagement, refers to the competence to act. It is clear that if students develop the competence to act, they can become politically engaged.

Expert competence enables an understanding of all defined terms, categories and concepts. Methodological competence equips individuals with the skills and abilities to further work with the acquired terms. An individual using various techniques is able to analyse political information and media products presented to them, is able to form own political products. The competence to form one’s own opinion includes not only the adoption of one’s own attitudes and opinions but refers also to the understanding, inspection, evaluation, and argumentation of already presented opinions. To preclude the emergence of prejudice and other unjustified opinions and attitudes, it is important to always rely on the abovementioned working knowledge and knowledge acquired as part of the expert understanding.

The abilities and skills to understand other people's behaviour, to solve problems, form and present own opinions, to express and enforce one's own opinions equips individuals with the competency to act. It also includes the ability to capitalize on the offers of various institutions, facilities, and non-profit organizations.

The biggest advantage of this model is the realization of both cognitive and affective goals, which the current education system often neglects. Equally important are the values set in the Constitution of Czechia and in the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms as reflected in the recommended expected outcomes formulated through these individual competences. We find the specific wording of learning outcomes covering legal and political topics formulated through competences for responsible citizenship for primary and secondary schools in the publication *Competence for Responsible Citizenship—Contribution to the Debate about the Revision of Framework Educational Programmes*.<sup>16</sup>

Teachers find this competency model easy to grasp and it is integrated into the teaching syllabus, making it invaluable support for the effective development of responsible citizens. Today's society requires responsible citizens who can navigate the waters of constant change and lots of information, who defend their well-founded opinions, and are critical towards opinions of others, and who meaningfully, effectively and responsibly engage in (not only) political life.

## **Conclusion**

The level of civic education is currently insufficient as evidenced by many studies (Volební studie v roce 2013, ICCS 2009, ČŠI). The revision of FEP and the draft Concept for Civic Education could bring hope and a better future to the education of responsible citizens in Czechia. It is vital though that the solutions are effective. It is desirable to find inspiration in the well-functioning systems abroad, such as the Austrian competency model for civic education. We cannot, however, adopt it unequivocally, we should modify it to fit the needs of the Czech democratic state. The proposed model could become an inspiration for the preparation of the aforementioned documents and significantly contribute to the effective education and training of responsible citizens, who, thanks to their knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills will actively and responsibly participate on social life.

## **Recommendations**

- Find inspiration in the well-functioning Austrian competency model for civic education when revising the FEP and preparing the Concept for Civic Education, and implement the proposed competencies for responsible citizenship.
- Put greater emphasis on civic education and the training of responsible citizens.

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<sup>16</sup> Available for download at: <https://katedry.ped.muni.cz/obcanska-vychova/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/06/kompetence-pro-odpovedne-obcanstvi.pdf>

- Emphasize the inviolable values set by the Constitution of Czechia and the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms.
- Improve teachers' methodological support for the development of responsible citizenship.



# Chapter 5: Referendum as a desirable instrument in the constitutional system of Czechia?

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## **Introduction**

Referendum,<sup>17</sup> the most important element of direct democracy, has become fashionable in the last decades: it is a political instrument either used directly<sup>18</sup> or at least newly introduced on the constitutional or the legislative level. Thus, it is not surprising that Czechia is not immune to this trend. On the contrary, a number of political figures, even those currently represented in the Czech Parliament, significantly succumb to this trend, and the topic of referendum has recently become one of the prominent political issues, echoing throughout the public discourse to such extent that the effort to have it (re)enshrined in the Czech legal system on the national level has become practically a political evergreen. Such a fashionable trend on the level of populism thus needs to be confronted with critical reflection to objectively evaluate its positive and negative aspects, particularly because in the case of a nationwide referendum, a change to the Constitution of Czech Republic is necessarily at stake. The aim of this chapter is thus to provide a (brief) evaluative reflection; its tone is, however, utterly critical towards the embodiment of the nationwide referendum in our constitutional system and thus even to the politics, particularly with regard to the “false assumptions” associated with this instrument by the abovementioned political subjects as well as a part of the general public.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Referendum as a Political (Populist) Topic in Czechia***

The origin of this trend manifested as the increasing interest in referendum may generally be seen in several, often mutually interconnected factors that either became reasons for the new embodiment of referendum in legal systems of the respective countries, or influenced the manner and frequency of its use in decision-making processes within the countries’ political systems. Through these factors<sup>20</sup> we may perceive the holding or the embodiment of referendum as a) the result of state-building (or regime-changing) shifts, which applies particularly for post-communist countries in the period of their emancipation after the fall of the Iron Curtain, when the constitutional and political changes occurring in the newly emerging system were frequently accepted directly by the people based on nationwide referendums;<sup>21</sup> b) an instrument of international politics, which applies particularly in relation to the establishment process of the EU, its expansion and the increase in European integration—an integral

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17 The term “referendum” refers to a general referendum on a nationwide scale, not a regional or a local referendum: these are embodied in the Czech legal system (Act No. 118/2010 Coll., or Act No. 22/2004 Coll.), and local referenda are a widely used and thus a very important tool for local politics. For more information, cf. e.g. Balik 2016. It is possible to distinguish between a referendum and a “popular initiative”; i.e. the citizens’ right to demand discussion of a particular issue within the scope of the particular decision-making body (the Parliament, council, or assembly of the self-governing unit).

18 As proven by L. LeDuc in his comparative study, cf. LeDuc 2003, as well as a number of other authors, cf. e.g. Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001; or Qvortrup 2002.

19 In greater detail to the topic cf. Kokeš 2016.

20 For more detailed information, cf. e.g. Tierney 2012.

21 An important exception worth mentioning is the Czech Republic, or the former Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, where the disintegration of the federation happened through political agreement on the governmental level, approved by the parliament’s decision-making, although holding a nationwide referendum was accounted for by the contemporary legal system on the constitutional level—see the Constitutional Act No. 327/1991 Coll. on referendum.

part of these processes were obligatory referendums conducted in the individual member states, or candidates for membership, regarding accession to the EU<sup>22</sup>, and concerning the present events in Great Britain and the exit from the EU; c) an instrument reflecting recent political events, particularly in relation to the increasing demand for the independence of the respective territories (states)<sup>23</sup>; d) a constitutional referendum, an obligatory tool and a stabilizing element in the constitutional system serving for the confirmation of constitutional changes; its purpose is the “additional affirmation of legitimacy” of decisions on constitutional changes adopted by political representatives for which they did not achieve a direct mandate in the elections, as well as strengthening the stability of the constitution or the constitutional system itself<sup>24</sup>; e) a product of discontent with the level of representative democracy and consequently a cure for it, where the referendum is perceived as a product resulting from the increasing discontent with the level and operation of representative democracy.

It is particularly through the last factor mentioned that a referendum becomes a political, or mainly populist topic, and through which it is perceived as a political instrument returning decision-making mechanisms and thus even power directly to the public. In this respect, a referendum is thus perceived as an alternative or a supplement to traditional decision-making mechanisms and processes of representative democracy, whose popularity and credibility may have been decreasing. The perception described above may also be observed in the content of Czech political discourse. The reasons why direct democracy and the referendum as its key instrument are very popular in society, and why they are perceived as a reaction to representative democracy, not as a rather desirable supplement, may be seen for instance in a certain customary romantic image of functioning democracy in Ancient Greece, where acclamations, plebiscites and principal assemblies (ekklésia) in the polis of Athens made up the primary instruments of democracy. This romantic image is particularly related to the idea that citizens will regain a tool to directly participate in important political decisions and the governance of public affairs. Put simply, direct democracy, and referendum in particular, revive the democratic ideal of a (direct) government of the people.<sup>25</sup> The increased interest in direct democracy has been also significantly influenced by research in political science, where traditional democratic theories have been confronted with the concept of deliberative democracy.<sup>26</sup> Here, a national referendum in the sense of a popular vote is, according to this concept, a practical tool ensuring that the “will of the people” will not only be heard, but also accounted for and respected when creating and enforcing

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22 The above mentioned also applies to Czechia, where the only nationwide referendum took place in 2004, concerning the issue of accession to the EU; in order to conduct this referendum, the ad hoc Constitutional Act No. 515/2002 Coll. was adopted.

23 For instance: in Great Britain in relation to the Scotland’s separation requirements, devolution in Wales, or the confirmation of the “peace” process in the Northern Ireland, or the effort for independence in Catalonia.

24 For instance: constitutional regulation in Ireland, Australia, and Switzerland.

25 For more detailed information, cf. e.g. Dahl 1995.

26 Its fundamental starting point is to ensure and support deliberation, which may be defined in simple terms as a process of adopting political decisions based on a discussion unburdened (uncorrupted) by private or other interests taking place among the equal figures (individuals) capable of qualified reasoning as well as the acceptance of the others’ opinions. In relation to the concept of direct democracy, its supporters speak about the need for popular deliberation; once it is ensured, common citizens (not only the elected elite) have the opportunity to participate in the process of the elaboration and adoption of important political decisions influencing the operation of the particular society (system). Cf. e.g. Barber 1984; or Dryzek 2000.

political decisions, which is a deficiency manifested at present mostly in representative democracy, according to supporters of this theory.

These theoretical conclusions are applied in political discussions particularly by new, non-established (prevalently populist) political groups who have adopted them, albeit in a considerably simplified or even radical version, where the concept of direct democracy<sup>27</sup> and the concept of representative democracy are put in a mutual contraposition; i.e., they are perceived as alternatives, and the option of the mutual complement of these concepts is completely disregarded, which actually happens in the real operation of political systems (cf. e.g. Haskell 2001). Instead, the majority of supporters of direct democracy unequivocally reject the present form and manner of functioning of representative democracy, as it is not a concept that would sufficiently ensure respect for “the will of the people” and its enforcement, which is the original ideal of democracy on which it was established. However, it has to be noted that a number of their direct opponents act in the same way (from the opposite perspective), as they question the ability and (moral and professional) capacity of “the people” to take (through referendums) qualified political decisions vital for the functioning of the particular system, without concern for the unquestionable fact that this reasoning could also be applied to decisions taken by people in elections, which serve as the fundamental mechanism of representative democracy. The primary starting point for conflicts of opposing opinions thus should be exclusively the choice between the concepts of “pure” representative democracy and representative democracy “interwoven” with elements of direct (deliberative) democracy with referendum as the leading feature. It is only from this starting point that meaningful research may be conducted regarding the effects of referendum (and elements of direct democracy in general) on the existing decision-making mechanisms and processes of representative democracy. The outcomes may subsequently serve for reasoning within the discussion regarding the benefits and meaningfulness of the embodiment of referendum into the existing representative democracy operation model in particular political systems. Sadly, in Czechia (and not only here) this is not true, as political discussion rather resonates with a confrontational approach where the “traditional” and “genuine” direct democracy is perceived as an alternative to the “fading” or even “outdated” representative democracy.

### ***Referendum as a Constitutional Topic***

The fact that it is not a marginal or a peripheral topic in Czechia is documented by the success in the form of parliamentary representation of those politicians who incorporated this issue in their political programmes<sup>28</sup>, as well as by the extent to which this topic echoes in the social-political discussion; political representatives (including the government) react to this by submitting a number of bills striving for nationwide referendum to be constitutionally enshrined in Czechia. Their common feature is an effort to react to the long-term discontent of the society with the operation of representative democracy in Czechia. This, however, leads to serious consequences in the form of a gradual (and often almost

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<sup>27</sup> Also referred to as “deliberative”, “strong”, “new age”, “referendum” democracy.

<sup>28</sup> SPD, Piráti.

irreversible) decrease in the credibility of representative democracy and the questioning of the legitimacy of the concept as such, since the deficiencies listed below are related to the very foundations and principles on which this concept is established.<sup>29</sup>

Particular manifestations (demonstrable as well as presumed) of this discontent may involve a decrease in confidence in key institutions and processes (not only the elections) on which (representative) democracy is built: a gap between the political elite and society (the dichotomy we/the people versus they/the elite, wherein accompanying phenomena include a steady decrease in confidence in the moral integrity of the elite/political representatives, and questioning their competence to take qualified and vital political decisions); the former is related to a decreasing level of legitimacy of political decisions, which are perceived to be a result of backstage dealings which cannot be influenced in any way by society (“about us, without us”); the “eradication” of party politics in society from which it should thrive, and related shifts in the role of political parties within society manifested particularly as a decrease in its members and supporters and, in contrast, increasing opposition to it.<sup>30</sup>

As already emphasized, in reaction to these manifestations, political representatives (new political figures, as well as the long-established ones) come with proposals and “guaranteed” solutions to tackle this poor condition, and direct democracy and referendum in particular were, and continue to be, frequently mentioned either in the “extreme” form as an alternative concept, or as a supplement strengthening the original ideal of democracy and bringing the people “back into the game”. The abovementioned efforts are transformed within the political space into particular points in the political/election/government programme or directly into legislative proposals in the form of drafting constitutional acts enshrining a referendum in Czechia on the national scale, which continue to appear (in varied quality) in the Parliament of Czechia.<sup>31</sup> There is always the question as to whether these efforts are in earnest, or whether they only reflect “social demand”, and as such are a product of populism; content analysis may therefore reveal a lot about the actual motivation of their submitters and supporters, and thus determine the borderline between the seriously intended proposals (requests) on the one hand and proposals (requests) reacting (with a varied extent of seriousness) to the social demand on the other.<sup>32</sup>

From the constitutional perspective, every proposal like this needs to be investigated particularly regarding the parameters (conditions) set in relation to the following issues: i) Who may become a proponent (initiator) of holding a referendum and under what conditions: most frequently, this condition

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<sup>29</sup> Among the most fundamental ones, we may undoubtedly include the principle of political representation (within the meaning of Art. 2 (1) of the Constitution of the Czech Republic) and the closely related principle of free competition of political forces (Art. 5 of the Constitution, or Art. 22 of the Charter).

<sup>30</sup> For more detailed information, cf. Kokeš 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Until the present day, more than thirty draft constitutional acts on nationwide (general) referendum have been submitted to the Chamber of Deputies (by the government/deputies); however, none has been approved so far. In the current election period (8th election period), a draft constitutional act submitted by deputies is under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies (see Chamber of Deputies Print No. 111/0, available at [www.psp.cz](http://www.psp.cz)).

<sup>32</sup> Obvious if concerning the points and demands in SPD’s programme, such as “we want a radical change to the political system; we want direct democracy with revocability of politicians”; “we will enforce direct election of deputies, mayors and governors”; “we want revocability of politicians and accountability of politicians to citizens”, or “we regard as necessary to stop the demo-democracy governed by godfather-like party mafias”.

is set so that every citizen or group of citizens of Czechia who have reached the age of 18 years shall be entitled to submit a proposal for holding a referendum, under the condition that this proposal is supplemented with a petition, with signatures of Czech citizens who have reached the age of 18 years— numbering usually in the order of several hundred thousand. ii) What question the referendum may ask about: this condition is usually constructed through a list of questions on which a referendum must not be held; typically, these are questions related to the fundamental rights and freedoms ensured by the constitutional order or by international treaties, the state budget (e.g. administration of taxes and fees), questions which would incorporate the violation of liabilities for Czechia resulting from international law, etc. Simultaneously, a referendum should not serve as a tool for the adoption of legislation.<sup>33</sup> iii) Who decides on the admissibility of this question: in general, it is emphasized that the person who formulates (or raises) the question of the referendum in fact controls the referendum as such. In practice, the most frequently encountered situation is that a question raised by the proponents (voters/petitioners) is submitted to the parliament/government who, in case of doubt, always submits it to the constitutional court for an assessment of its admissibility. And finally, iv) What is the nature of the result of referendum: by setting the conditions for determining when the result is relevant (or binding) and how it shall be tackled, even the legal nature of the referendum as such is determined, i.e. whether the referendum is binding, or recommendatory (consultative). In practice, it most often depends on the quorum of the number of voters which needs to be achieved so that the result of the referendum is valid, or binding (for instance, the absolute majority of voters or all legitimate voters, etc.). The extent to which the result is binding subsequently predetermines the obligation of the respective public authority to reflect the result of the referendum in the particular decision-making process. Additional conditions may involve, for instance, the possibility of re-examination of the result by the constitutional court, or the prohibition of another referendum regarding the same issue taking place before the set time interval elapses.

A purely Czech feature is undoubtedly the fact that Art. 2 (2) of the Constitution of Czech Republic provides a ‘reservation on a constitutional act’, which has to be perceived as a very restrictive, and therefore unwelcoming, requirement if a referendum is to be enshrined in the Czech legal system, since this reservation determines an obligatory form of legal regulation, namely the adoption of a constitutional act, where the conditions determined for adoption of such an act are (with regard to the requirement of stability of the constitutional system) considerably more stringent than for a common act.<sup>34</sup> However, it is necessary to disprove here one of the “false” claims by supporters of direct democracy that the absence of such a constitutional act is a manifestation of a “deficiency” of the Czech Constitution,<sup>35</sup> as the content of Art. 2 (2) of the Constitution of Czech Republic<sup>36</sup> distinctly indicates the possibility, not the obligation, of the constituents to adopt a constitutional act which would enshrine some of the institutions of direct democracy. If they are to permit the holding of a nationwide referendum, they are obliged to do so through a constitutional act (as in the case of the already mentioned one-time referendum regarding the

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<sup>33</sup> For more, cf. Molek 2016; or Wintr and Askari 2016.

<sup>34</sup> For instance the requirement for the explicit consent of both Chambers of the Parliament or a quorum of the number of votes necessary for its approval in the form of the constitutional three-fifth majority of all senators present (Art. 39 (4) of the Constitution of the Czech Republic).

<sup>35</sup> Similar to the deficiency in the establishment of the Senate as late as 1996, or the Supreme Administrative Court in 2003.

<sup>36</sup> It needs to be emphasized that the original government’s draft Constitution of the Czech Republic did not even account for this option.

accession of Czechia to the EU in 2004). It is, however, not necessary to insist that this constitutional act thoroughly delimit all conditions for holding a nationwide referendum; it is sufficient to define the general parameters and leave the particulars to a “common”, implementing law.

Another feature specific for Czechia is the fact that, together with Belgium and Cyprus, they are the only EU member states where legislation related to a nationwide referendum is completely missing in the legal system.<sup>37</sup> This fact does not make Czechia a less democratic country; to accomplish this demand, to a rational extent of course, could nonetheless result in (or give the impression of) the strengthening of democracy in Czechia, where representative democracy would be supplemented by elements of direct democracy. However, it is not possible to accept the opinion that direct democracy should replace representative democracy, nor to consider certain claims relevant on the basis of which referendum is perceived as a cure for the deterioration of representative democracy.

### ***False Assumptions Related to Referendum***

The above mentioned point leads in to the final part of the chapter which aimed to point out and disprove some false assumptions connected to the enactment of a nationwide referendum into the constitutional system of Czechia, used by its proponents along their own reasoning. The most common claims are as following: firstly, they claim that a referendum is a tool to satisfy the increasing need to articulate political opinions in society, especially through involvement and direct participation, when political parties fail to accomplish this role. In this respect, however, the objection can be made that election participation rates (in all types of elections, including those to the Chamber of Deputies) do not confirm an increased interest in politics in any way. It may hardly be expected that holding a referendum would bring any change to the attitude and approach of the public; not even if it was supposed to pronounce an opinion on an important nationwide issue<sup>38</sup> or a constitutional change being considered.<sup>39</sup> In regards to this, it is necessary to take into account a possible increase in voter “exhaustion” from an almost permanently ongoing election campaign, as holding a nationwide referendum would also be accompanied by a campaign. If even the particular manner of voting was “modernized” into a form of ‘e-voting’, i.e. electronic voting, the mobilization of voters would occur none the less. It may be concluded that a change to the process of decision-making by voting in a referendum, preceded by an “actual deliberation”—unlike the existing negative form of the decision-making processes in representative democracy wherein crucial political decisions are made by “non-competent elite” in a confusing, deliberation lacking process—would result in a higher level of participation and mobilization of voters and society.

This leads us to other aforementioned claims that a referendum is a tool ensuring the participation of society and its influence on key political decisions, i.e. that the “will of the people” will not only be heard, but also accounted for and respected when creating and enforcing political decisions, and that

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<sup>37</sup> For more, cf. Antoš 2016.

<sup>38</sup> One example could be the utilization of a referendum in Slovakia, where questions and possible answers should provide an important signal as to the future perception of the institute of a family.

<sup>39</sup> One illustration could be the lack of interest of the Polish public towards a referendum on a change to parameters of the electoral system.

referendum is a guarantee that important and crucial political decisions will be made without any undue influence from interest groups, particular interests, lobbying, and outside the corruption environment of backroom politics; in contrast, they will be made based on deliberation. Firstly, it is necessary to consider the specific behaviour of a voter, voting in a referendum raised in a question that may only be answered by 'YES/NO', targeting a voter's emotional and sensational (rather than rational and reasoning-based) decision making. The emotional "tension" raised in society by holding a referendum is another negative aspect almost inherent to every majority decision making, i.e. the threat of the tyranny of majority and usurpation of power at the expense of the minority. Although this threat is more relevant for a heterogeneous society wherein important ethnic, national or religious minorities are present, it must not be underestimated even in a more or less homogenous society such as Czechia. All the more so, since holding a referendum itself, as well as the subsequent result, may have a direct impact on the "division" of opinions in society, particularly if a decision is to be made on issues related to the fundamental values of society, or to questions on a topic strongly echoed in society at that particular time, which in itself divides society's opinions.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, it is necessary to point out that the deliberation so intensively demanded is only possible in smaller groups (political units, such as a local referendum), so that all parties (ideological streams) are heard sufficiently, and also (paradoxically, unlike decision making in Parliament, which is subject to numerous safeguards against arbitrariness, manipulation on the part of particular interests, and corruption, even though we may question their effectiveness) that decision making in a referendum is much more prone to manipulation and influencing, as functional and timely safeguards against these can hardly be found.<sup>41</sup> It is the threat of manipulation on the part of the political elite that is generally emphasized as the greatest deficiency of decision making in a nationwide referendum on important societal issues.<sup>42</sup> While it is ensured in each particular situation that the "will of the people" will be heard and possibly also respected, it is necessarily that the "established" will, where entirely private interest groups as well as political representatives including the governing majority, may exercise their influence. For instance, a situation would hardly occur where the governing majority would permit holding a referendum which would negate or significantly influence its programme and direction of governance.<sup>43</sup> In relation to this, we may make a provocative claim that if the political representatives actually permit holding a referendum, it happens exclusively in cases where the result of the vote is certain. In such cases, however, it becomes a "populist" tool in the hands of the political representatives (the governing majority), who use the referendum either to transfer the responsibility for an unpopular decision to the people, or to the "already certain" confirmation of the government policy and direction through vox populi.

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<sup>40</sup> An example of the former may be a hypothetical Czech referendum on refugee quotas in the context of the related presently escalated discourse, which divides the society to "do-gooders", "love'n'truthniks", "home guards", "true Czechs or Europeans", etc. After all, even the direct presidential election left the Czech society considerably polarized.

<sup>41</sup> As the practice indicates, even elections are not spared various efforts for manipulation, influencing the results, vote shopping, and other machinations, although compared to a referendum they may be considered a process that is more regulated process and thus guaranteed with safeguards.

<sup>42</sup> The so-called "elite control syndrome", for more detail, see Tierney 2012.

<sup>43</sup> An illustration of this could be holding a referendum concerning the accession of Czechia to the EU, which was accompanied by a massive campaign supporting the accession of Czechia to the EU.

Also, it is possible to point out some unpreparedness or the “democratic immaturity” of society in relation to direct democracy, as society is not (thus far) able to handle it due to a short democratic tradition, which has not yet made it possible for society to learn direct democracy. This remark particularly targets the constantly occurring claim to draw comparisons to the tradition of direct democracy in Switzerland or other countries. It needs to be added that Czech society is now learning within the environment of communal politics and through local referendums; however, it is always necessary to also consider the different characteristic features and functions of these instruments.

## ***Conclusion***

Although the tone of this chapter is primarily critical towards the enactment of nationwide referendums into the constitutional system of Czechia, the criticism is targeted rather at the particular reasoning and the general “distortion” or political discussion related to this issue in the public space, especially if the referendum is perceived as the most important instrument of direct democracy, and as an alternative to the “deficient” decision making within representative democracy, which is undergoing a credibility crisis (not only) in Czechia. Such opinions and this general attitude need to be rejected as populist or even anti-democratic, as they collide with the very constitutional foundations on which the constitutional system of Czechia is based. If, however, the referendum is perceived (and based on this perception, even enshrined in the Czech constitutional system) as a complement to strengthen the prevailing representative democracy (as in the majority of EU member states, as well as in Czechia on the communal level), its enactment may be considered rather desirable (if its individual parameters are set in an appropriate way, for instance in the form of a popular initiative). Nevertheless, its absence may not be perceived as a deficiency of democracy in Czechia even in the future; deficiencies undoubtedly lie in other aspects which a referendum, regardless of how well regulated, cannot eliminate in any case.

## ***Recommendations:***

- Facing, in a knowledgeable way, the prevalently populist reasoning and the accompanying legislative proposals for the constitutional enactment of nationwide referenda in Czechia, and incorporating rational and professional reasoning in the political discussion and even in the awareness of wider public (unlike in the case of the direct presidential election).
- If the preparation of a draft of a constitutional act on a nationwide referendum is considered a political (not constitutional) necessity, thoroughly consider the setting of parameters for holding the referendum, especially the constitutional aspects.
- Assess inspiration from abroad with regard to the specific features of the respective political system and tradition, which are not always transferable to the environment of Czechia (for instance in the case of Switzerland).

# Chapter 6: Euroscepticism of Czech Political Parties

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**Summary:** The countries of Central Europe were characterised by their high support of EU membership in the early 1990s. The attitude of the public and the political elites started to change in the second half of the 1990s as was reflected also in the respective party programmes. After EU accession, the parliamentary political parties' attitudes towards European integration further evolved and formed one of the most Eurosceptic environments in the EU. Czech Eurosceptics repeatedly appeal to national sovereignty, evoke the fear of second rank membership, and criticise Brussels' red tape. Pro-European elites have neglected this discourse, considering it irrelevant and thus far have not attempted to create a more realistic debate about the country's role in the EU. The nature of Czech discourse regarding the EU has a high potential to negatively affect the attitudes of voters towards European integration.

**Keywords:** Euroscepticism, Czechia, Europragmatists, Euroenthusiasts, European Union, parliamentary political parties

## ***Introduction***

The last ten years have witnessed a fundamental shift in the Czech parliamentary political parties' attitudes towards European integration. First, before accession, the most Eurosceptic parties were the opposition parties, whose Euroscepticism was part of their electoral strategy. Today even governmental parties have a restrained attitude towards the EU. Second, some political parties have witnessed a significant shift in favour of Euroscepticism. Third, the biggest political parties hold Europessimist positions, with the only truly pro-European parties being the two small centre-right parliamentary parties, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09. This chapter discusses the typology developed by Kopecky and Mudde (2002) and analyses the origins of the prevailing Euro-pragmatism in the last ten years. Finally, it offers several recommendations for centre-right parties, which perceive the EU as a base for democratic values in Czechia.

## ***The Nature of the Czech Eurosceptic Debate***

Even though domestic and European issues are closely interconnected, Czechia has not internalised European politics. The debates about European integration are limited to local issues, are vague, and typically misunderstand the basic principles of the EU system and the Czech role in EU institutions. We have seen a significant move in the EU debate from balancing the advantages and disadvantages of future eurozone membership to demanding a referendum on leaving the EU. Only one parliamentary party (SPD) officially supports a "Czexit" but a number of other prominent Czech politicians support it as well. The Czech EU debate lacks views on the nature of the European integration, its future, and what role Czechia should play. It is reactive and usually criticizes the EU legislation, often in terms of creating and spreading Euro-myths rather than presenting substantiated criticism.

Neglecting the value, political, economic, and security aspects of Czech EU membership has one common denominator: bad communication. The inability of Czech society to come to terms with its own past, because the communist regime did not allow open debate about the past and manipulated

the historical narrative to stay in power, together with an immature educational system which the newly democratic society has not seen as a priority and has thus been neglected for 30 years, makes the Czech voter vulnerable to unsubstantiated claims linked to national sovereignty.

For many years, the “spokesperson” of Czech Euroscepticism was the former PM and president, Vaclav Klaus, and his followers (cf. Tunkrová 2006). His departure from active politics provided an opportunity window for political actors to use his version of Euroscepticism at the moment of the EU’s identity crisis, when the EU was trying to determine its future direction and was not capable of a timely reaction to many challenges of the day. Calls to leave the EU are relatively new in Czech mainstream politics and are connected with the attempts to use the voice of the “unhappy public”, to give them a simple narrative and a simple answer. It reinforces the feeling that Czechia is a second (or even third) rank member state in the EU. The country nurtures the narrative that it is a small country which others try to dominate and which has minimal chances to influence the behaviour of more powerful states. This very common Czech Eurosceptic narrative is summarized in one sentence from Václav Klaus (2017): “It is our specific characteristic that as a small country neighbouring the continental hegemon, Germany, we face the problem of survival for a thousand years.”

Some politicians appeal to the voters by using terms such as the “dictate of Brussels”, which, for instance, appears in speeches by Václav Klaus, vice-chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, Tomio Okamura (SPD), or MEP Jiří Maštálek (KSČM). It resonates with the “Munich dictate”, which destroyed the territorial integrity of the country and eventually ended its sovereignty. Another trauma for Czech society, the Prague Spring of 1968 and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army, amplifies the impact of warnings against Brussels’ “socialist policies and practices” (Václav Klaus compared the EU to the former Soviet bloc). The failure to achieve a moral and ethical settlement with the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia after the end of WW2 feeds the threats that Germany plans to overtake the country.<sup>44</sup> Another term, which appears quite often in connection with the EU is “oppression from Brussels”, which appeals to the nationalistic, renaissance descriptions of the Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) Empire, which the Czech historical textbooks describe as an era of Slavic oppression.

The discourse on national sovereignty gained a new dynamic first during the sovereign crisis and the “repayment of Greek debt”, when Czech Eurosceptic voices highlighted the position of Slovakia (which had just joined the eurozone), and grew far stronger as the migration crisis unfolded. This country—whose pro-European elites had neglected the value, political dimension, and security of the country’s European identity and in reaction to Euroscepticism highlighted the economic advantages of EU membership based on a balancing of credits and debits<sup>45</sup>—lead to the result that Eurosceptic and/or anti-immigration voices determined the pace and direction of discourse on the European migration crisis. Brussels was also to blame; instead of supporting pro-European elites, they put heavy pressure on subduing them to a policy that the country was not prepared for and reacted to the inability of the member states to solve the crisis by imposing mandatory quotas, which further exacerbated the situation. The migration crisis

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, during the migration crisis, the former chancellor of president Klaus, Petr Hájek (2015) warned against “German dictate.”

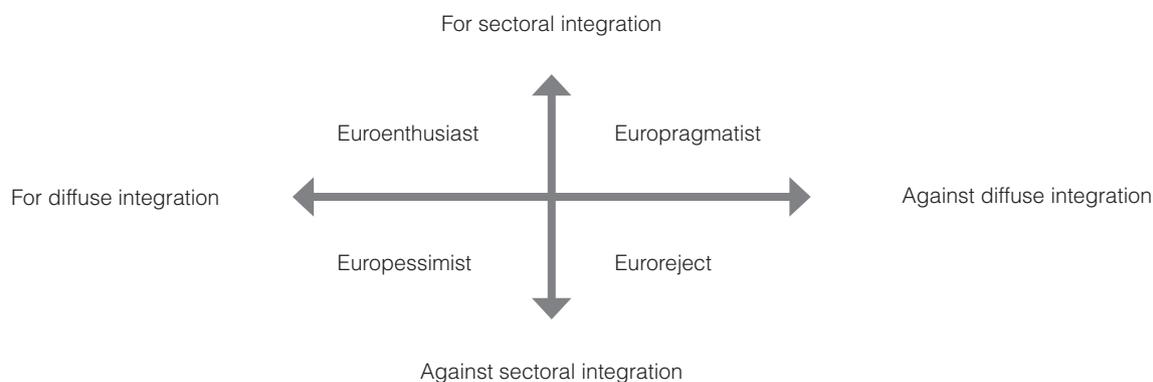
<sup>45</sup> Economists most often identify as the greatest economic advantages of the EU membership growth of trade, single market, and FDI (cf. Tůma 2014).

was directly connected with the EU and even though it affected Czechia only marginally, it significantly influenced Czech EU discourse. Brexit then added a possible exit from the EU to it.

### The Typology of European Integration Support and the Czech Political Elites—From Euroenthusiasts to Eurorejects.

Political parties are the key gatekeepers in the process of political representation and their share in the process of integration is rather significant—they access EU institutions (mainly the Council and the European Parliament, influencing the appointment of Commissioners), and decisively influence the results of referenda (including whether the referendum will take place or not). Kopecky and Mudde (2002) provide a different typology, where they distinguish diffuse and specific support for European integration. The former implies support for the broad *ideas* of European integration, the latter concerns support for the wide-ranging *practice* of European integration, i.e., as the EU exists now and how it develops. Based on this distinction, they then identify four groups of party approaches to the EU: Euroenthusiasts (Europhiles in diffuse and Eurooptimists in sectoral terms), Europragmatists (Europhobes in diffuse and Eurooptimists in sectoral terms), Europessimists (Europhiles in diffuse and Europessimists in sectoral terms) and Eurorejects (Europhobes in diffuse and Europessimists in sectoral terms).<sup>46</sup>

Figure 1 Typology of EU Support in National Political Parties



Source: author, model by Kopecky and Mudde (2002).

Analysts believe that the current form of EU discourse is mostly shaped by the country's president Miloš Zeman, followed by Andrej Babiš and Václav Klaus (Houska 2017). While Klaus's statements

<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, they admit that such categories are ideal types and in real life are more difficult to be identified as clear examples of each of the four types.

gradually moved from Europragmatism to Eurorejects,<sup>47</sup> Zeman and Babiš are Europragmatists. Zeman, who previously labelled himself a Eurooptimist, supports the idea of a referendum on remaining in the EU, even though he claims that he would vote against exiting the EU; he criticised the current setting of the EU and compared it to the “limited sovereignty doctrine of the Soviet communist leader, Leonid Brezhnev” (Kopecký 2017b). Babiš claims to support EU membership and stated to the foreign press that he was “probably the last hope for reverting the negative view of the EU in Czechia” (iDnes.cz 2018), while in 2010 he stated that he voted against EU membership. He rejects the migration quotas and accession to the eurozone (iRozhlas 2018) but claims that Czech EU membership is “vitally important and leaving [the EU] would be a disaster.” Like Zeman, he calls for reforming the EU setting in terms of depoliticization, more power to the nation states, and the completion of the single market (info.cz 2018).

The Czech Chamber of Deputies currently has more or less six Eurosceptic parties, which in the aforementioned typology belong in the Europragmatic or Europessimist groups;<sup>48</sup> one party (SPD) is a Euroreject party, and two are Euroenthusiasts, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09. Both of them support the general idea of European integration, Czech EU membership, perceive EU membership as a basis for prosperity and stability in Czechia, and highlight not only the economic advantages but also the shared values and the sense of belonging to one civilization. They support individual EU policies; they support joining the eurozone, the proposed reform of the agricultural policy (capping direct payments, support for small farmers), a stronger single market, the preservation of cohesion policy, stronger educational policy (TOP 09), stronger Schengen policy, the fight against illegal migration, closer cooperation in defence (KDU-ČSL), support for renewable resources (TOP 09), European tax policy (KDU-ČSL) and the digital market (KDU-ČSL). At times these two parties also criticise the EU, but when doing so they focus on specific aspects of specific policies only.

ČSSD, which was a Euroenthusiast party in 2004, moved closer towards Europragmatism. Its programme does not mention the value-based sense of belonging to the EU and membership is perceived through an economic lens. It supports some policies—such as the cohesion policy, the single market, the Schengen area or the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard—but expresses reservations.<sup>49</sup> The other two parties considered to be Europragmatic are the Pirate Party and STAN, which support some European policies (the single market, education, science and research, enlargement) but demand a reform of the EU institutional setting towards greater democratisation, decentralisation, transparency, better application of subsidiarity and improved communication with the public. Unlike the Pirate Party, STAN appeals to shared values and common civilizational belonging, which actually puts it between Euroenthusiasm and Europragmatism and pushes it closer to the other two, small, centre-right parties.

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47 Klaus (2018) said in June 2017 that it was time to leave the EU because of the pressure to accept the refugees (Kopecký 2017a), and in April 2018: “One must be exceptionally stubborn and insensitive to neglect the tragic defects of the European Union ... I consider the long discussed defects of the EU congenital abnormalities (Geburtsdefekte), thus, not problems, which can be solved by well-meant but business as usual reforms ... I recall how as a young student I could not reconcile with – and I think that I quote it exactly – the codex of a young builder of socialism. Thanks to the experience, which lasted four long decades, we, who experienced it, are disappointed that we experience something similar in the EU now.”

48 To compare with the situation shortly after EU accession, cf. Tunkrová 2006.

49 It for instance supports the accession to the eurozone but at an „economically and socially favourable moment” and demands that the EU should first introduce the mechanisms for “convergence of living and social standards in the EU.”

We find proposals similar to the Pirate Party and STAN in the KSČM programme. Its original position as a Euroreject moved first to the position of a Europessimist but now is closest to Europragmatism because its criticism no longer addresses the nature of the EU project as an interest of German multinational capital, and instead demands an institutional reform of the EU, securing a “greater equality of the member states” and the reinforcement of the European Parliament and the national parliaments as elected institutions and the European public. It supports European policies, such as transnational networks, but the programme criticises some existing policies. For instance, it addresses the single market in regard to social dumping, rejects refugee quotas, the trade agreement with the USA and Canada, and sanctions against other countries.

The two Europessimist parties in the Czech Parliament are currently ANO and ODS. Their programmes do not question EU membership,<sup>50</sup> but they reject the euro and support a multispeed Europe. They request a reform of some policies (agriculture) but support others (the environment, the protection of the external border, an energy union, consumer protection) or even demand more involvement with the EU in some policies such as the single market. For ODS it is a long-term trend (cf. Tunkrová 2006) but ANO has gone through a transformation from a Europragmatic party in 2011 to a Europessimistic party; the main reason behind this change was the migration crisis.

The only parliamentary Euroreject party is currently Tomio Okamura's SPD. It demands a referendum on Czexit because it claims that European integration threatens freedom and democracy, which consequently endangers the existence of the country. As was the case of the other categories, the typology shows its limitations as the party presents a plan for Czexit<sup>51</sup> but also supports the single market. Yet, comparing the nature of European integration with the party's demands, we consider SPD a Euroreject party.

## **Conclusion**

The greatest problem with Czech Euroscepticism is the long-lasting inability of the Czech political elites to define which Czech national interests the country should promote in the EU, to work on the Czech profile in European institutions and in cooperation with its key partners among the EU member states. The Czech EU debate mostly focuses on the rational summarization of economic and political advantages and disadvantages. It neglects shared European values, European identity, security and civilizational aspects of having Czech belong to the European integration project. Eurosceptics use Euomyths to increase support for their positions, which together with a low level of media literacy, including digital literacy, and a low level of EU education lead to a widespread acceptance of the idea that the EU is an organization which takes advantage of less economically advanced countries in order to find an easy

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<sup>50</sup> ODS until recently lacked voices, which would support Czexit but we now have several leading representatives of the party, who support it. The most vocal ODS supporter of Czexit is Václav Klaus, junior..

<sup>51</sup> The party would first propose to the EU a change in the form of Czech membership demanding independent policy in the areas of “immigration, internal and external security, food and energy safety, taxes and currency” and the right to reject European legislation. If the EU would not accept these conditions within 6 months, the party will declare a referendum on Czexit.

market for its goods (of often lower quality than in the West), supplies the country with absurd and expensive red tape, and enforces its decisions by the weight of its economic and political power. Even though the Czech public is more Eurosceptic than the EU average, there are many voters there who consider EU membership a strategic interest of the country. Political parties should not succumb to the pressure of the Eurosceptic public opinion and should improve their communication bonds to better explain why the EU is important for Czechia.

### ***Recommendations***

- Emphasize that Czechia shares the values and civilizational roots of the European integration project.
- Support the communication of pro-European MEPs with local and regional politicians from pro-European parties and movements.
- The pro-European elites should first clarify why they support European integration, how they see the future of the EU, and what role Czechia should play in it.
- Improve the EU debate by insisting on facts and knowledge instead of impressions and feelings.
- Significantly improve the factual knowledge about EU history, its institutions and the policies among the leading representatives of the pro-European parties. Promote better quality education about European integration in Czech schools.
- Use the Czech EU presidency to present the EU as a multilevel complex arrangement of small and big member states. Combining their power makes each country stronger and strengthens their internal and external stability.

# Chapter 7: Czech Society and the 2019 European Parliament Election

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**Summary:** This chapter maps the current situation in Czechia before the upcoming 2019 European Parliamentary election. It addresses the issue of how to increase the public's interest in European politics, defines target groups based on surveys conducted by the market research agencies CVVM, STEM and Median, and analyses how to use their findings for targeted communication. It proposes a strategy and venues for research to be conducted before the election campaign.

**Keywords:** European Union campaign, EP election, topics, surveys, society

## ***Introduction***

One of the issues in the 2019 European Parliament (EP) election in Czechia will focus on whether it is possible to boost the minority of Czech pro-European voters, and if so, which topics and tonality to apply, and whether new voters will join this camp. Equally important will be if the election reproduces the previous 2014 EP election results, which displayed the second lowest voter turnout in the EU. The parties that are members of the European People's Party (EPP) won the election; they received seven mandates and formed a joint parliamentary club. A third issue connected with the previous two investigates the problems of "European" communication or communication about the EU and proposals for its modification. Some factors are already predictable through the use of various public opinion polls and data. The aim of this chapter is to summarize the current situation of communications and to suggest venues for further research.

The Czech public have continuously changed their EU membership expectations since the 2004 accession; election campaigns and media coverage of European topics have undergone a similar change. Before and after EU accession, the topics dominating Czech society mostly concerned the economic advantages of accession, higher living standards and free movement of people. After accession, the public perceptions of the EU focused mostly on economic factors framed by the debate about the Czech position in the EU and the conditions and exceptions which were negotiated. The debate over the EU's economic impact on the Czech economy gradually overshadowed the perception of the EU as an area to which Czechia was returning after the fall of the communist dictatorship, marked with reminiscing about the era of the so-called First Republic (1918-1938).

The initial EP election campaigns focused on national topics and policies with a distant understanding of something supranational or European. They lacked a strong European theme. Czechia was considered a peripheral country in European affairs. The debate about the future of the EU was dominated by the clashes between European and Czech policies and Eurosceptic voices grew louder. The 2009 EP election displayed increasing personalization in the campaign, focused on national and not European issues. Most commentators assessed the campaign as a clear competition between ODS and ČSSD, marked by the upcoming autumn parliamentary election campaign.

A minor change occurred during the 2014 European campaign when most parties chose to focus on specific topics which also had something to do with the EU. That changed nothing about the fact that the political parties and media focused specifically on personal issues and national problems. The

approaches of the governments of both Prime Ministers Petr Nečas and Bohuslav Sobotka were pro-European; the media became more interested in the European affairs, and the country's attitude towards the EU began to slightly improve. This trend deteriorated when the migration crisis emerged and the public's trust in the EU returned to very low levels, where they still stand today.

### ***Thematic Areas – EU Membership***

The Czech EU debate revolves around the assessment of EU membership, usually within the scope of perceived benefits and costs. Societal attitudes depend on developments in the EU—they displayed the highest satisfaction during the Czech EU presidency and gradually decreased during the financial crisis and the subsequent migration crisis. The last STEM survey revealed that in comparison with the previous six years, the level of satisfaction with the EU has started to pick up again. Considering EU membership, an analysis of trends in Czech society focused on the amount of red tape, the EU's impact on Czech politics, Czech policy-making, cultural aspects, the free movement of labour, studying abroad, etc. The findings of a CVVM survey (2018) provide an outlook of long-term positive and negative trends.

- The Czech public generally believe that the country should be a member of the EU (62%). One third is satisfied with the membership (36%). As most beneficial they see the opportunity to travel, live and work in other EU member states (81%), defence policy integration (53%), EU funds (69%), and Czechia's prestige abroad (50%).
- Most Czechs believe that the negative aspects of EU membership include excessive burden of EU law (69%), the EU having too much effect on Czech politics and decision-making (69%) and the exit of qualified labour force to other EU member states (66 %). Negative factors include the general lack of flexibility in the EU and the number of the EU member states.
- The Czech public is divided whether membership brings better enforceability of law (40% agree, 36% disagree). Most Czechs do not agree that the EU membership brought better laws (28% agrees, 57% disagrees).
- Most Czechs agree that economic integration is beneficial (53 %, CVVM 2014), while their attitude to joining the eurozone is "paradoxical. Four in five respondents are against adopting the euro but for preserving or strengthening relations with the EU" (Rousek and Nepřašová 2017).

### ***Communication and Key Electoral Segments in European Issues***<sup>52</sup>

The emotional component of communication is important in all campaigns, including the one for the European election. It is very difficult to evoke a clearly pro-European emotion in Czech society; in other

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<sup>52</sup> A workshop that took place on 11th May 2018 in Prague brought together Czech political scientists, and marketing and communication experts. Using quantitative analysis, they came to the below summarized conclusions. The project followed two aims: investigate topics, which lead to a set of themes/statements, which could further test how people perceive them (positive, negative) and would recommend the best future venues for research - media analysis or quantitative sociological research.

words, it applies to only the minority of voters who can be motivated to vote. Most do not join the communication and do not vote unless they have a different, intra-party motivation as in 2009 (Vodička 2009). In the 2014 election, Czech voter turnout dropped to the lowest of all EU countries (volby.cz 2014). There are several reasons for this—experts link low turnout to the complexity and incomprehensiveness of the European Union for the Czech public, which has political, educational and historical reasons.

Emotion usually arises as part of conflict, and conflicts will appear in the 2019 campaign as well. Estimates predict that many will campaign with—until recently—a minority position, i.e., we will see candidates from significant parties (regarding their electoral support), who will demand a departure from the EU or its fundamental reform. Regardless the content of these calls, they will find an audience just like they found supporters in other, far more pro-European, EU countries.<sup>53</sup>

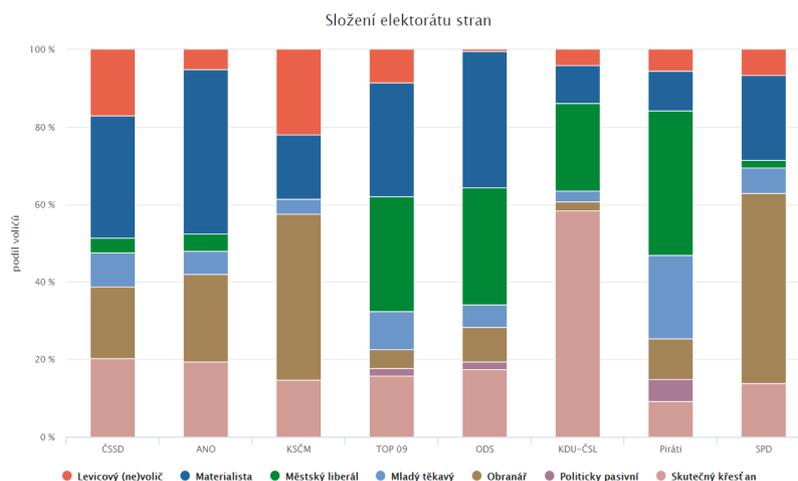
Individual European topics should aim at specific social segments.<sup>54</sup> These segments should be defined by basic sociodemographic data and respect the value frameworks of the respondents. Research should focus on communication channels, which these groups trust. The agency Median examined the relationship between these segments and the EU (Boček, Cibulka, et al. 2018) and selected three key segments: urban liberals, genuine Christians, and materialists, whose motivation is predominantly economic, which is not the case with the other two groups. It is worth mentioning that these groups largely determined the results of the 2014 EP election.

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<sup>53</sup> The French and Austrian elections especially showed that the EU topic had not become an empty one.

<sup>54</sup> A remark was heard in this context that crucial values are those transferred from parents to children, which is related to the long-term division of the Czech society, based on the information they receive in primary school.

**Figure 1 Composition of Party Electorate<sup>55</sup>**



Source: Boček, Cibulka, et al. 2018.

Daniel Prokop (qt. in Boček, Cibulka, et al. 2018) argues that the powerful group of materialists (19% of the population) defines itself as a “relatively pro-European but it is not ... a value orientation; [a materialist] is not a ‘snowflake’, is pragmatic, the EU membership brings them some opportunities.” The materialists form a significant segment of ANO, ODS, ČSSD but also TOP 09 electorate and they can change their electoral preferences. This group reacted negatively to the refugee crisis. They will not support radical proposals for leaving the EU because they believe that it would lower the quality of their lives. On the other hand, we do not know how this group would react to a debate about reforming the EU. We also do not know (and it is a subject for further research), if this group prefers economic advantages of EU membership over the refugee issue or not.

The group of urban liberals is far smaller (9%) and they have no problem with refugees or the EU. The parties that compete for their votes are the Pirate Party, TOP 09 and ODS. It is interesting that both the abovementioned segments are represented in TOP 09 and ODS with equal strength and it creates tension in their membership base. While Median interprets this group as “friendly to refugees”, it would be useful to further investigate how this “friendliness” looks in relation to specific proposals, in order to clarify the communication strategy for this issue. For instance, TOP 09 surveys conducted prior to the 2017 parliamentary election indicated neutral attitudes to immigration even within its electoral core.

<sup>55</sup> The full list of groups includes: leftist (non)voter, materialist, urban liberal, young volatile, defender, politically passive, genuine Christian (following the order as the explanation below in the graph). Czech parliamentary political parties are listed on the x-axis and the y-axis shows the % of voters.

The last influential group with a positive attitude to the EU are the “genuine Christians”. Daniel Prokop (Ibid) explained that “it is ... language” not just about institutionalized faith but certain New Testament ethos. A clear majority of people in this group are believers but do not need to be. A genuine Christian is defined by faith and belief in the permanent validity of the Christian values but is not culturally closed. These people are not nationally closed, do not strictly reject refugees, are relatively content with the post-1989 developments and do not find “salvation” in stricter laws; they are closer to Pope Francis than Dominik Duka [Catholic Archbishop of Prague]. I do not mean the actual people but their image and language.

“Genuine Christians” form about 16% of the population and most of the KDU-ČSL electoral potential. They are represented in almost all parties. As they are de facto happy, we can assume that economic issues will be important to them; the values they believe in belong to the European ideological base.

It is also worth asking why groups with a lower affinity to the EU would come to the election. It could lead to support for parties, which propose a weaker relationship with the EU in all possible meanings of the term.

### ***Crisis of Communication***

The right form of communication depends on how social groups perceive the EU and which aspects of European integration they find interesting, which can help identify their concerns about future developments. STEM agency recommends distinguishing between how people perceive the general values of the EU integration process and how they assess their actual implementation. The migration crisis and, most of all, its media representation clearly showed that neither the media, nor the Czech political representation originally understood the urgency of the issue. The public started to feel threatened by unspecified security risks potentially jeopardizing European and national culture, and that terrorism would spread in Czechia. The lack of distance, factual ignorance, and inability to act on the side of the elites and media changed the public opinion within six months. About three fourths of the population blamed this stressful situation on the “incompetence” of the EU and the “stupid policy” of Angela Merkel. This, hand in hand with the rising fear of refugees, dramatically decreased trust in the EU.

Next steps in crisis communication require an approach that would respect people’s fears and look for explanations which do not imply that the issue is unimportant. On the other hand, it is essential to choose language, which would be clear for the most European group of voters, urban liberals. They have the potential to become the group that will not be afraid to defend the EU and the Czech position in the EU. It is necessary to strengthen this group, because in the media spectrum their attitudes can balance those who would like to leave the EU. The 2014 election demonstrated that speeches about the so-called national interest and its defence represent empty communication. The debate shows that they were too abstract and substituted a general position towards the EU. Pro-European parties consider a stronger position in the EU part of Czech national interest.

The aforementioned economic topics indicate that the Czech public’s frustration might stem from an unfulfilled promise to catch up with the Western European quality of life. Yet, the economic merit of the EU’s single market is crucial to the Czech economy and this argument continuously appears in

the Czech EU debate. The Czech public though do not seriously consider what an intensification of multispeed Europe might bring. Regardless to all objections, the economic topic will play an important role, especially in connection to the modernization of some (northern) Czech regions which have felt the negative effects the most.

Communication about the EU lacks personalization, even though it is very important to present a relevant person before the election, who has focused on European issues. He or she will naturally fight against efforts to misinterpret EU activities. It is important to support activities which strengthen the pressure to provide facts based on factual data, not political speculations. The leading personalities who represent EU institutions do not reach the Czech public and it is not possible to even theoretically expect that they would be presented to the Czech public, or that we should involve them in the Czech debate about European issues. The negative perception of the EU is based on the equally negative view of political elites, thus, a change in attitudes would be very complicated.

### ***Conclusion: European Policy Topics in the 2019 Campaign***

Which topics could increase interest in the EU among the Czech public leads to different answers based on the individual target groups; for the biggest group, “materialists”, economic topics linked with the EU are important. Value topics will be important for “genuine Christians”; and “urban liberals” will adopt the hardest pro-European attitude because they do not want to lose the advantages they currently enjoy. The emotional component of communication is important and, thus, how creatively it is prepared will matter (especially as part of the campaign). Further research should verify that. The media will not change the debate by itself. The media environment encounters problems with low personalization of EU topics, the ambivalence about EU issues among media personalities, and generally a low level of awareness, which is also a breeding ground for disinformation. Research clearly shows that a relevant tactic cannot be chosen without further sociological and media studies.

### ***Recommendations***

- Aim individual European topics at defined segments of the society.
- Examine how materialists react to the possible debate about the EU reform. Is it more important to them to keep the economic advantages of the EU or will the refugee issue overshadow the economic benefits? Learn whether pro-European voters react to specific migration policy proposals.
- Ask why voters with a lower affinity to the EU would vote in the EP election.
- Any communication on crises deserves an approach which respects the public's fears and tries to provide an explanation that would not make the topic sound less significant. It is necessary to choose language which would be clear especially for the most pro-European voters—urban liberals.
- The Czech public does not take the fear about possible future development resulting in a multispeed

Europe seriously. Despite all objections, the economic issues will be important especially in relation to the modernization of some (northern) regions in Czechia, which felt the most negative effects.

- Do not underestimate the importance of EU-related economic topics for the “materialists”.



# Chapter 8: The Protection of European Borders - A Czech Perspective

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**Summary:** The state of the European border protection is currently unsatisfactory despite many improvements having been done. The main problems include the insufficient capacity in securing the Mediterranean marine border and the member states' insistence on national competence in this area despite the clear shortfalls of this approach. Yet, the last three years witnessed a mobilization of political, administrative, and technical resources, and increased cooperation with third countries including Turkey and Libya. In the Schengen area, the external EU border is a shared border; the border of one EU member state is the external border of all EU member states. This requires joint external border management policy, sufficient financial resources and operational capacity. Czechia, together with Luxembourg, are the only EU countries which do not have an external EU border. Czechia is a heavily export-oriented country, directly dependent on the advantages of Schengen, whose future and sustainability depend on better security of the external border. Thus, it is in Czechia's interest to provide help and support at a higher level than the current average. We need to keep in mind that the protection of the external border itself and more border patrols can neither replace European cooperation with third countries nor the need to seek member states' consensus regarding the acceptance of rescued survivors and asylum seekers.

**Keywords:** external European border, maritime border, Schengen area, Frontex

## ***Introduction***

The EU external border stretches over almost 9,000 km of land and 44,000 km of sea. The protection of the EU border currently appears to be one of the fundamental issues that will determine the future of the Union. The protection of the external border has various goals, including the identification of people who enter the EU territory, ensuring legal cross-border trade and the protection of national security concerns. Frontex data show that 700 million people cross the EU border annually, including those who go shopping. One million of them cross the border illegally. In 2018, most attention was focused on the protection of the external border from illegal migration.

The current debate often ignores the fact that the protection of external border is an externality of European integration. When the financial cost of cross-border control was discussed in the European Community in the 1970s, it revealed that the free movement of people and goods within the EC cannot be secured without protecting the external border. The gradual introduction of free movement led to efforts to harmonize the external border protection. In 2004, a few months after Czechia joined the EU, the Council adopted a regulation establishing The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). This service agency was set up to coordinate the cooperation of member states, train border police, analyse risks, and organize the return of illegal migrants to their countries of origin. It also mediates cooperation among border authorities in the EU member states and provides technical support and know-how. Frontex has also conducted joint operations with national border patrols on the southern Mediterranean Sea border.

The protection of the EU external border is still within the jurisdiction of the member states. Many member states criticize the inactivity of the EU on the one hand, but on the other their attitudes and

decisions prevent the ability to act. The Union still lacks operational tools for this area of activity. This is not the fault of the EU administration but rather the fault of its member states which resist the shared burden of protecting their border, i.e., the European border, under the pretext of defending their national sovereignty, even though experience has shown that they often fail to accomplish this task.

Frontex is not a substitute for national border patrols or coast guards, and currently it cannot be. It has only few hundred employees and beyond its headquarters in Warsaw it does not have its own infrastructure necessary for its activities. This is provided by the member states instead. The agency was legislatively enhanced in 2016, when the member states approved the reinforcement of Frontex in a record fast time. In extreme cases, it gives the Council the option to intervene in the territory of a member state against its will. The change in the Frontex regulation increased the agency's role in organizing the return of illegal migrants and enabled the establishment of 1,500 border guard corps which do not belong to Frontex directly; the agency can summon them from the member states at any moment. The president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, announced in July 2018 that his Commission would present proposals this year to strengthen the protection of the external border with the aim to have over 10,000 border guards available by 2020 (Herszenhorn and Eder 2018). The European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther Oettinger, made a similar statement in the European Parliament during budget negotiations. The proposal for the EU 2021-2027 budget, presented by the Commission in May 2018, asked the member states for a threefold increase in funds for the management of the external border and migration and asylum policy. The Commission projected that the EU external border and migration and asylum policy should receive 33 billion EUR in the next multiannual financial framework, in comparison to the current level at 13 billion EUR. It would be a budget equal to almost two thirds of the Czech national budget (circa 850 billion CZK). Thus, it is a rather radical increase; however, it does not correspond to the current urgency of EU external border protection. Some experts claim that the EU would need to spend about 150 billion EUR on security to create full border protection comparable with the USA or Canada (Zastoupení Evropské komise v ČR 2018).

In 2019, we expect the EU to fix the other mistakes and shortcomings which have been part of the common protection of the external border since its beginning. The security of the European border has suffered not only from the unwillingness of the member states to financially and materially support Frontex, but also to share data in common databases. For instance, when Czechia joined the Schengen zone in 2007, the Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security complained about the vast discrepancies between the needs of Frontex and the member states' contributions. This happened at the moment when the joint maritime patrols were expected to start their operation in the Mediterranean Sea. Frontex had twenty vessels and four helicopters at that time. The planned operations had to be halted. These material shortcomings led not only to the loss of thousands of migrants' lives on the sea but also diminished European security because the patrols were unable to stop unofficial migrants on their way to Europe. Only Malta, Greece, Spain, Italy, France, and Germany contributed to Frontex in its initial years (Kubošová 2007). Czechia, like the other states, ignored the security of the southern border.

This situation remained largely unchanged even after the Lisbon Treaty was passed in 2007. It introduced

the protection of the EU's external border as a shared duty of the EU and its member states. Article 77(d) talks about the gradual establishment of an integrated system of external border management and measures necessary for the "gradual establishment of an integrated management system for external borders." That changed nothing about the fact that the member states insisted on their right to protect their borders and to be responsible for admitting third country nationals (i.e. non-EU nationals) onto their territory. The application of this rule often did not receive sufficient funds.

Individual member states initiated their own efforts, leading to bilateral agreements on cooperation with North African coast guards. Spanish cooperation with Morocco and the Italian secret deal with the Libyan dictator Gaddafi from 2009 are worth mentioning, which in various ways prevented thousands of migrants from crossing the sea and reaching Europe. The 1992 Spanish-Moroccan agreement enabled, for instance, the return of 153 migrants to Rabat after they illegally entered the territory of the Spanish enclave Ceuta.

Even though Frontex grows stronger over the years, as codified in the 2011 Frontex Regulation, joint protection of the external southern border has been failing (unlike the eastern border, which is incomparably easier). The collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2012 and the long civil war in Syria have dramatically worsened the geopolitical situation of Europe. The refugee and migration crisis of 2015 and 2016 revealed all the weaknesses of the EU's southern border protection, especially its inability to keep irregular migrants from entering and to register those, who had entered the EU. It revealed the inadequacy of the European asylum system, which was unable to process asylum applications, the problems of the European secret services and foreign ministries, which did not promptly react to the large influx of people into the EU. The irregular flow of over two million migrants, most of them refugees, brought not only many security risks but also undermined the political stability of the Union and many of its member states.

### ***Why Czechs Need Schengen***

Not counting international airports, Czechia is the one of the few EU countries, together with Luxembourg, which does not share the EU's external border. Yet, as a heavily pro-export economy exporting mostly to the EU it is directly dependent on the advantages of Schengen, whose future and sustainability depend on the stronger protection of its external border. Thus, it is in the interests of Czechia to provide more than the current average assistance and engagement.

Czechia is currently providing average total assistance comparable to the other EU member states. It has sent 361 police to Frontex since the migration crisis started, who were sent to Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Spain among others. Outside the EU, they provided assistance in Turkey and Western Balkans, mostly Macedonia and Serbia, where they will operate until October and November 2018, respectively. The official statements of the government and the police president indicate that Czechia wants to be active in the protection of the EU's external border even after the end of the bilateral agreement with Macedonia about Czech police assistance with guarding its border in October 2018. According to the Czech Police, an estimated 170 police are expected to work for Frontex and around 400 have shown interest.

The general perception that the protection of the EU external border is an assistance that everyone should be grateful for rather than viewing it as a national interest and a priority dominates both political and public discourses. The inability to protect the EU's external border will affect Schengen and might even lead to its demise. Schengen is, according to its “father”, Robert Goebbles, an “absolute success”. Its borders are crossed 1.5 billion times annually and two million Europeans daily commute to work in another EU state. He argued that abandoning border checks created a new economy, from which pro-export countries, like Czechia, benefit the most (Šafaříková 2016).

The controversy surrounding non-profit organizations operating in the Mediterranean Sea—saving lives of migrants and transporting them to Europe—fully unfolded in 2018. These organizations filled the vacuum which emerged as a result of the imbalance between the large number of illegal migrants and the relatively small capacity of the national coast patrols on both sides of the Mediterranean. A lack of reliable information makes an assessment of the situation difficult. It is clear though that the European authorities should have an idea about the identity of the incomers and that cooperation with smuggler gangs (denied by the non-profit organizations) is unacceptable.

### ***Trends in External Border Protection***

Frontex is not the only component of external border management. The Schengen Borders Code, Internal Security Fund (ISF) and databases such as the Schengen Information System, Visa Information System and Eurodac (database for collecting fingerprints of asylum seekers), also comprise this system (Neville 2018). The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) also plays an important role. Its task is to secure the exchange of information between the member states and process the analyses related to the fight against organized crime and terrorism, which is key in the agenda for preserving a Europe without internal borders.

Developments regarding the joint protection of the external border have headed in a better direction since 2015. The EU and its member states started to realize that the protection of the external border starts far away from Europe and have increased the intensity of their contact with non-EU countries. The military operation “Sophia” started in 2015 as part of the European mission EUNAVFOR MED. Its aim is to neutralize the smuggling gangs who bring migrants to Europe. Part of the operation is the preparation and training of Libyan coast guards. Even though helping migrants is not the primary goal of this operation, Human Rights Watch claims that the operation has saved 50 000 lives so far because, according to international law, every boat that appears in the proximity of drowning people must provide them with assistance.

Operation Sophia's mandate expires in December 2018. The 7<sup>th</sup> brigade of the Czech Army consisting of four soldiers participates in the operation at this point. Sophia has four military vessels in total, which are currently provided by Ireland, Germany, Spain, and Italy. The last two countries also provided two helicopters, the Netherlands two Merlin III aircrafts, and two more planes were provided by Poland and Spain. The operation was criticised for the fact that instead of effectively putting human traffickers off, the vessels often became safe havens for refugees in the middle of the sea and the smugglers have strongly benefitted from this.

A controversy emerged in the summer of 2018 whether countries should provide safe haven to ships which had saved passengers from their often wobbly boats and small ships on their way to Europe. Whether saved in operation Sophia or saved by ships from non-profit organizations, Italy rejected the automatic admission of survivors. This controversy, which does not have a clear solution, opened another fault in the political battle over the redistribution of refugees among the EU member states.

Despite the ongoing disputes between the member states starting in 2015, the EU managed to significantly restrict the influx of migrants. According to Frontex, the number of people detected crossing the borders were 89% lower in 2017 than at the peak of the immigration crisis in 2015. The Union drew closer to the aim articulated in the 2016 Bratislava Declaration, i.e., “[to not] allow return to uncontrolled flows of last year [2015] and further bring down number of irregular migrants”.

The EU-Turkey agreement from March 2016 had the greatest effect on moderating the migration crisis. It led to the heavy restriction of incoming migrants from the Aegean Sea; it almost halted drownings in the sea and secured basic living conditions for migrants in Turkey. It first of all showed that solving the migration crisis without agreements with third countries would be difficult, if not impossible. The actual protection of the external border and increase in the number of border police neither replaces cooperation with non-EU countries, nor the need to seek member states’ agreement on how to admit survivors and asylum seekers.

Solving migration requires long-term, solid, and most important of all, joint solutions. Part of the solution lies in finding a working compromise with the Dublin system, a pre-condition for saving Schengen. If we cannot find a European solution, we risk that countries will decide on national solutions, which would most likely lead to the elimination of the Schengen area. Even a return to consistent border checks would negatively affect the Czech economy. The Commission’s Dublin IV proposal includes many elements, which would bring a clear positive contribution to the acceleration of the asylum procedures. All member states welcome and agree with establishing deadlines for the decisions or with limiting the number of repeated appeals. The most disputable part of the reform concerns the mandatory reallocation of asylum seekers in the EU. Not only the V4 but also Austria, currently presiding over the EU, and others are sceptical about it. The flexible solidarity concept would be much more realistic than mandatory reallocations wherein countries join the general solution scheme but do not necessarily apply the same tools.

An inherent part of the complex solution to this problem is the effective return policy for those who do not meet the criteria of international protection. So far, the member states responsible for the return policy have failed. Frontex states that the number of those who did not receive international protection and did not return back to their country of origin has been increasing. AFP (novinky.cz 2018) quoted the head of Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri, saying that EU countries still do not expel immigrants who are there illegally. If European countries do not start to deport illegal migrants more effectively we face the risk that the migration problem will never get solved, according to Leggeri.

## ***Conclusion***

On the 21st December 2018 will have been eleven years since Czechia joined the Schengen cooperation. On the night from 20th to 21st December all internal border controls were abandoned, while the checks at international airport flights within the extended Schengen area were lifted in March 2008. If we want to pass Europe “non-stop” from the southern corner of Spain to, for instance, the northern coast of Estonia, Czechia should be much more active in seeking a joint Union solution to effective external border protection. As a heavily pro-export economy, it is directly dependent on the advantages of Schengen. It is Czechia’s chief interest to preserve the Schengen area.

## ***Recommendations***

- The EU and its member states should strengthen cooperation with third countries regarding border protection, while acknowledging that this cooperation should go hand in hand with stronger political cooperation.
- Given the inadequacy of the current approach to the protection of the external border, which still relies on national capacities and decisions, Czechia should make further steps to make the protection of the external border a *de facto* European matter.
- The Commission and member states should create a system of incentives for the interior EU countries which would make them realize that the protection of the EU’s external border, especially in the south of the EU, is like their own.
- Czechia’s activities regarding the protection of the EU’s external border should not be presented on the domestic political scene as assistance but as a necessity if we want the country to continue to profit from the advantages of Schengen, which today is under threat due to the ineffective protection of the EU’s external border.

# Chapter 9: Too Many Regional Organizations? Perspectives on Cooperation in Central Europe

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**Summary:** The Visegrad group has become an important regional grouping. Since 2004, it has repeatedly shown in the European Union that it is capable of putting important topics on the EU agenda or at least block solutions which it found disadvantageous. Several alternative regional groupings formed during recent years complementing, competing with or even replacing the V4 when the ideological disputes among its members become stronger than the will to cooperate. The analysis focuses on the position of Austria within the Central European formats, and the emergence and ambitions of the Slavkov Triangle and the Three Seas Initiative.

**Keywords:** Visegrad group; Regional partnership; Slavkov Triangle; Three Seas Initiative; European People's Party

## ***Introduction***

The idea of Central European reciprocity and regional identity represented one of the outstanding themes in pre-1989 Czechoslovak political ideologies, defending Christian conservative values. We should recall the fundamental role of Alois Mock, the Austrian politician who built friendships with many of the future figures of democratic political life in Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia during his trips to these countries behind the Iron Curtain in the 1970s. In the 1980s, he became one of the most profound critics of Austrian social democrats, who, as a governmental party, favoured economic diplomacy (in this case meaning production using cheap labour in the communist countries). As the minister of foreign affairs, Mock became the most crucial figure at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which convened in Vienna between 1986–1989 and focused mostly on developments in Eastern Europe. Along with Italy, Austrian diplomacy was also interested in the Central European area as a part of the Alps-Adriatic working community, which at the beginning of the 1990s transformed into Central European Initiative (CEI). Christian-democratic and conservative forces have always placed central European cooperation within the broader European framework as ideologically introduced in R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi's work *Pan-Europe* and promoted political parties which joined the European People's Party (Wohnout 2014).

The calls for more intensive Central European cooperation declined shortly after 1989 because Austria wanted to accelerate its EU accession process, Germany accentuated reunification, and the former Yugoslavia broke down. Visegrad cooperation commenced in 1991 and soon compensated for this debilitation. The V4 countries intensively worked on their NATO and EU accession processes despite several critical periods. The risk factors were caused by bilateral relations negatively influenced by the past and competition for a leadership position in the group (some of the most prominent risk factors and periods were the governments of V. Klaus in Czechia, the tenure of Mečiar in Slovakia, tensions between Slovakia and Hungary, the increasing Polish emphasis on military aspects of security, and since 2010 the efforts to distance themselves from some policies of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Orbán). After meeting these primary goals, they committed themselves to continue with regional cooperation in the Kromeriz declaration of 2004 and after few years of groping around in the dark, they found key some

common themes—the future EU enlargement to the Western Balkans; support for the Eastern dimension of the European neighbourhood policy and for energy security. All priorities were reflected in the Council presidencies held by the V4 countries: Czechia in 2009, Hungary and Poland in 2011, and Slovakia in 2016 (Cabada and Waisová et al 2018).

Since 2004, the V4 managed to become the leader of the post-communist area and managed to promote its own interests quite effectively. The group became the foundation of an informal V4+ format, which was joined by other countries that together promoted their agenda on the EU level. Analysts consider the formation of the “Friends of Cohesion” group possibly its greatest success. In 2012 and 2013, during the budget negotiations of the 2014-2020 financial framework, the group identified as its goals the preservation of subsidies in the Cohesion fund and in the agricultural and rural development policies at levels equal to the previous financial period of 2007-2013 (Walsch 2017: 205). It is worth mentioning that other than the new member states, some EU southern states joined too, which supported the ambition of (some) V4 countries to “become one of the necessary energizing factors in the European integration project” (Kořan 2012: 208–209).

This ambition was undermined by the negative image of some populist and anti-liberal politicians. Some V4 countries wanted to distance themselves from this negative image and looked for their own paths but others reinforced the image of exceptionality that met with resentment among the dominant EU powers, led by France and Germany. All aforementioned processes accelerated during the 2015 migration crisis, strengthening the ties inside of the V4 group but worsening its image. The struggle between the European mainstream and V4 led to black and white perceptions in both camps aptly summarised by Boglárka Koller: “while Western Europe reflects the V5 nations as laggards, the Central European states perceive oneself as pioneers”.

This analysis examines the alternative or complementary regional bonds in Central Europe which we believe are a reaction to the problematic image of the V4 and to some of its executive actors. We will focus mostly on the Slavkov Triangle project, where the Czech and Slovak governments decided to reinforce their partnership with Austria, and the Three Seas Initiative, which reinforces the integration of the EU’s Eastern wing. We specifically want to focus on Austrian irresolution in Central European politics, which strongly influences the developments in the V4 as well.

### ***Austria as an Actor in Central European Politics***

The Visegrad group was formed partly in reaction to Austria’s unwillingness to be the leader of the regional cooperation after the Iron Curtain fell. That does not mean that Austria was not interested in Central Europe, though it was at times difficult to understand the premises of Austrian diplomacy. After joining the EU in 1995 and reconsidering its priorities, Austria began to think about a more active role in the region. In 2000, Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel proposed Regional partnership, to which he invited the neighbouring countries, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and “cultural neighbour” Poland. The fundamental objective of this partnership was to help prepare the countries for EU accession and define and defend their common interests after accession. Three Austrian interests were crucial for its

emergence. Firstly, the Austrian economy benefited from the Eastern enlargement the most out of all EU-15 countries and proposed to give the cooperation with Central European countries a multilateral framework. Secondly, the EU “sanctions” against the Austrian government composed of the People’s Party and populist Jörg Haider’s FPÖ were also a factor. Thirdly, the unofficial theme was to play a more important role in the region (Kiss, Königova and Luif 2003).

Some countries approached Regional partnership with scepticism; the countries with which Austria had tense bilateral relations were especial cold, mostly Czechia and Slovakia. Poland viewed the project with suspicion and the assertiveness of a “real” regional power. The project also represented clear competition for the exiting V4 arrangement, most visibly challenging Poland, who clearly felt to be the leader of the V4 group (Cabada and Walsch 2017: 117–120).

Regional partnership played an important, though largely unrecognised, role when the V4 countries were entering the Schengen area. Cooperation in internal affairs was coordinated by the Salzburg forum, a platform for the cooperation of ministers of interior. The main topics covered were internal security in connection with the enlargement of the Schengen area, the fight against terrorism, and cooperation in third countries (Walsch 2015: 236–238). Cooperation in internal affairs showed that the V4 countries were interested in cooperation with Austria when they saw a clear added value. The V4 and Austria failed to see such value after joining Schengen (Austria was not member of the “Friends of Cohesion” group as a net contributor) and the Austrian government announced the end of the project in 2012. Vienna declared that it would promote its interests within the existing regional and European institutions but abandoned this decision three years later when it joined the Slavkov Triangle with Czechia and Slovakia; since 2016, Austria belongs also among the members of the wide regional Three Seas Initiative. If we link these steps to the most recent important act of the Austrian diplomacy in Central Europe—the decision to leave CEI in July 2018—we see that the country still feels a strong Central European identity but cannot decide which form of competition it prefers and wants to join them all. Representatives of social democracy (SPÖ) and President A. van der Bellen especially tend to prefer liberal democracy over regional cooperation regardless of the partners’ political profile.

### ***Slavkov Triangle***

The Slavkov Triangle is a form of intergovernmental cooperation between Czechia, Austria and Slovakia which was officially launched in January 2015. Although Czech diplomacy declared bringing Austria closer to the V4 group as one of its goals, it is more than obvious that the intentions of the three governments, run by social democratic Prime Ministers B. Sobotka, W. Feymann, and R. Fico, wanted to declare their distance from the nationalist-conservative governments in Hungary and Poland, namely from V. Orbán and J. Kaczyński. In theory, the project could have led to their departure from the V4 group or to an “empty-chair” policy and the emergence of a new, more “democratic” version of Central European cooperation. The Czech and Slovak decision was perceived very negatively in Warsaw and became a clear trigger for Poland to consider its own alternatives, wherein Poland would openly assume the role of a regional leader.

The victory of S. Kurz in Austria and Andrej Babiš in Czechia left Slovakia as the only country in Central Europe with a social democratic Prime Minister. The steps of Kurz's and Babiš's governments so far indicate that they are not interested in fortifying this cooperation. Babiš is loyal to the other V4 countries in their approach to the migration crisis and follows mostly the views of V. Orbán. S. Kurz does not diverge much from that either, even though he chooses to use more careful language and tries to gradually implement his own ideas about the protection of the Schengen external border. Despite having similar attitudes, the V4 countries have not established stronger bonds with the new Austrian Chancellor.

The Slavkov Triangle is thus a project now in hibernation and we can hardly expect it to replace the V4 or become a somewhat "better" V4, which other countries could join as well (Slovenia, Croatia, possibly Hungary, which would have excluded dominant Poland from the narrower Central European cooperation formats).

### ***The Three Seas Initiative***

The Three Seas Initiative is an ambitious project of wide regional cooperation in Central Eastern Europe. Polish diplomacy viewed the efforts of other V4 countries to establish alternative regional groupings or activities with concern—other than the Slavkov Triangle, the Hungarian cooperation with Croatia and Serbia as part of the so called "HCS Triangle"—and after the parliamentary election and change in government in autumn 2015 it decided to create its own project. The clearly most dominant country in the region took over the initiative and wanted to create a far wider platform of regional cooperation than offered by the V4.

Poland officially started this activity together with Croatia in 2016. The first summit took place in Dubrovnik in August 2016 and representatives of twelve countries, all post-communist EU member states, and Austria were invited to attend. Polish diplomacy presented the general objective of the Initiative as an effort to strengthen the link between the EU's North and South, as a counterweight to the West-East division. The Initiative declared the fundamental area of cooperation as the economy, partially connecting it with security. The Dubrovnik summit emphasised—and it stands to mention that a representative of the Chinese initiative the New Silkroad was also present—energy, transportation, and communication infrastructures, especially the motorway Klaipėda–Thessaloniki and the pipeline linking Central Eastern Europe between Polish and Croatian pipelines for liquefied natural gas. The second summit, which took place in July 2017 in Warsaw, was an activity parallel to the state visit of the American president Donald Trump to Poland, during which the Three Seas Business Forum was founded (Wiśniewski 2017).

Even though Polish diplomacy vigorously rejects suggestions that the Initiative is a follow up to the mid-war Polish project *Intermarium*, with a significant "imperial" component, Poland clearly plays a leading role in this project and given its size it is also its dominant actor. The Initiative commenced one and a half years after the launch of the Slavkov Triangle and can be perceived as an effort to overcome the emerging rivalry between the V4 and the Slavkov Triangle by proposing a new platform. The main challenge and risk of the Initiative is definitely the fact that it is formed solely by post-communist countries with Austria as the sole exception, and thus automatically accepts the West-East division in the EU. That can be useful when forming coalitions on the European level but it can also unintentionally set the stage

for a “multispeed” Europe. Many Central Eastern European countries (Slovakia, Slovenia, the Baltic countries) reject this notion and it is questionable how strong their links to the Initiative are and will be.

Poland and Croatia tried to blunt criticism that they were unintentionally or willingly creating two rival macro-units in the EU, the “liberal” West and the “national-conservative” East, by proposing to organize the third summit in a non-founding country. Romanian president K. Iohannis promised to organize it in 2018 but it was still unclear by July 2018 where and if it would take place. It is even possible that the seventh Chinese meeting with Central Eastern European countries (format 1+16) in Sophia in July 2018 will be considered as a substitution for this event. These sixteen European countries include all eleven post-communist EU member states and all candidate countries except Kosovo. One major criticism targets the division of Europe which can be directed against both China and the Central Eastern European countries.

## ***Conclusion***

Despite the relatively dynamic developments in Central European cooperation formats, the V4 remains a priority for its member states and we believe that there is no other platform at this point which would replace it or displace it from its current position. Regarding the macro-regional format, if the mental abyss between “West” and “East” deepens, the Three Seas Initiative could become a permanent institutionalised form of the “V4+” in its maximal form that includes all post-communist EU member states and Austria, or with partial deviations to the “West” or “Core” of the EU (Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czechia?). If we, however, find rather bigger differences in opinions regarding the optimal solutions to some fundamental issues and policies in the V4, a group of up to twelve countries would be even more complicated. Some countries in the Initiative strongly support the single currency and call for strengthening the integration within the EU core which they claim allegiance to, others breach the rule of law concept and would like to be in permanent opposition to “Brussels” and this approach significantly improves their score at home.

We consider this the gravest danger of the Central European regional cooperation. If the V4 is considered to be a “toxic community” today (cf. Hokovský 2017), the wider Eastern European intra-EU platform would be perceived as an “alternative” to the EU–15, based on negativity stemming from populism. We believe that such steps would strengthen the tendencies of the EU’s “West” to create an institutional framework for the “core” that would result in a renewed or reinforced (semi)peripheral position of Central Europe. Czech politics (not only centre-right) should reject such a development. The approach of the Slovak leadership could serve as a good example. Despite the declared unity of the V4 in the migration crisis, they constantly emphasised that Slovakia preferred the EU’s core to any regional group. Shortly after the victory of A. Babiš in the October 2017 elections, R. Fico said: “For Slovakia, the Visegrad Four is not an alternative to the EU. For Slovakia, the V4 is not a living space we fancy in the future. Our living space is in the Union” (Vilček 2017).

## ***Recommendations***

- Czech Central European policy should try to have a balanced position towards the Visegrad and Slavkov cooperation patterns allowing Austria and possibly other partners as well to engage in regional cooperation.
- Reject efforts to build Central European cooperation as a negation of the EU's "West"

# **Kapitola 10: Multiannual Financial Perspective 2020+: Czech Negotiation Priorities**

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**Summary:** The EU budget finances EU policies and financially guarantees that the EU as such works well. Annual budgets must fit within the multiannual financial frameworks (MFF), which are adopted for periods of seven years. The negotiations about the financial perspective beyond 2020 have entered its final stage now. It is typical for the EU budget not to have almost any of its own income (86% is funded by the contributions of the member states based on their GNI and the share of VAT). The debate about the future MMF brings up many new problems and questions. The post-2020 MFF should reflect the need to fund the new priorities of the EU and the question regarding the fair allocation of funds among the traditional budget priorities (cohesion and common agricultural policies) including the search for a new structure of its own resources. Furthermore, the MFF negotiations will not be easy due to the growing pressure to lower EU budget expenses coming from countries like Germany and Sweden, and due to Brexit. This chapter examines the individual aspects of restructuring the MFF after 2020, the priorities, and tools that should fund the priorities.

**Keywords:** Multiannual financial framework 2020+, EU budget reform, migration, cohesion, agriculture, new own resources of the EU budget

## ***Introduction***

The EU budget has several specifics. The expenditure ceilings, set by the multiannual financial framework (MFF), are fixed and determine the annual EU budgets. The EU budget must always be balanced; expenditures cannot be higher than revenues. Unlike nation states, the EU cannot temporarily borrow from the financial markets to finance its budget. Fixed for several years, a relatively small volume of the EU budget (1% of EU's GNI is very low in comparison with the ratio of the national budgets to the GDP) together with the missing option of external additional financing often leads to the EU budget's inability to fully react to all situations which could be effectively covered from the common budget. As a result, other forms of external financing outside the EU budget and with clear definitions occur; such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. It is questionable whether the establishment of funds outside the EU budget is the right way to improve the EU's flexibility and its ability to react to unexpected events. Similarly, there is the question of budget reserves and the problem with unclear responsibility for their redistribution or transfers between budget categories.

The EU must deal with many crises which affect its operation and the funding of its activities. The EU has articulated new priorities (the migration crisis, internal and external security, deeper security cooperation), the significance of which should not be underestimated and it is important to focus on their actual implementation. The current MMF addresses these priorities in both the EU budget and the extra-budgetary instruments which are often the subject of debates between the European Commission and the member states. An example is the enhanced cooperation in defence, accentuated by the EU Global Strategy. In June 2017, the European Commission proposed to establish the European Defence Fund, which should finance the purchase of military equipment, technology, and research and development in the area of defence, aiming to enhance cooperation between the EU member states. The Commission proposed that the European Defence Agency (EDA) would become a central institution to significantly increase its competences, and many member states disagree with this.

## ***Which Changes to Expect in the Multiannual Financial Framework Structure after 2020?***

The structure of the post-2020 MFF represents a great challenge for the EU. On the one hand, we can expect that the EU will further evolve and deepen its activities in new priority policy areas, such as migration or internal and external security, and it will try to preserve its leading role in the fight against climate change and the provision of humanitarian and development aid. On the other hand, Brexit will reduce the sources of EU funding. The situation is even more complex due to the amount of spending on traditional EU expenditure policies—cohesion and common agricultural policies, which are key priorities for many member states, including Czechia.

The current debate about the future of financing the EU considers five scenarios of future development (see table at the end of the chapter). The size and structure of the next financial framework depend on the intensity of cooperation: will the EU simply continue along the current rules, will member states do less together more effectively, or will they do much more? Each scenario has different consequences regarding the amount of spending on individual areas and the source of the revenues. Options are many—from reducing spending on current policies to increasing revenues.

The total volume of MMF is a complicated matter. The need to increase funds for new EU priorities and the efforts to preserve traditional priorities increase the pressure on MFF's expenditure side. The EU must financially guarantee more priorities with less resources, naturally increasing pressure on overall savings and the search for sufficient resources. Net contributors clearly express their unwillingness to increase national contributions the member states pay to the EU budget.

The replacement of the UK contribution is also an issue. The amount will be known after Brexit negotiations end. The nature of the relationship (whether a member of EEA or 'hard Brexit') will determine the amount and form of UK payments to the EU budget and how much will be covered by the remaining member states.

The total volume of the financial framework and the size of member state contributions are not the only issues to discuss; the discussion must also address the revenue side of the EU budget and the introduction of new types of revenues. Monti's Report from January 2017 reopened the debate about reforming the revenue side and brought specific proposals to introduce the genuine resources of the EU's own budget. The new sources of revenue up for discussion are, for instance, financial transaction tax (FTT), Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) or an environmental tax.

Attention should also turn to the revision of traditional expenditure policies. We should discuss how much can be saved by reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The EU strongly supports lower subsidies for big farms and instead supports small farmers who should lead to the much needed regionalization of production and the processing of agricultural production in the countryside. Smaller farmers usually do not concentrate only on primary production but also the process their production, which creates diversity and non-anonymous production, which is necessary for regional-level economic and social bonds. Family farming displays a higher degree of resistance to economic fluctuation. The debate should focus on the maximum possible use of opportunities the market has to offer to big companies and on using the advantages of economies of scale.

Another issue is the capping of “subsidy ceilings” for direct payments and whether it would lead to a more balanced distribution on the regional level. A large share of the subsidies and profits of large agricultural companies do not flow to the countryside but are used for new purchases and increasing the total area of agricultural land at the expense of family farms. It is open for discussion whether more support for family farms, including support for economic activities emphasizing environmental protection and climate change and the introduction of a system of degressive payments, wherein small farms would receive more and big farms less funds, would be a suitable solution. We can think about the role agricultural policy should play in general; whether it should focus on providing public goods such as safe and healthy food, preserving agricultural land including fighting against the degradation of the arable land, reflect climate change, environmental protection, and contribute to the circular economy, or whether it should play its traditional role to provide healthy and nutritional reach food for European citizens. We can even consider a greater transfer of responsibility for the agricultural sector on the national level reflecting the national specifics (e.g., Czechia traditionally has big farms with big land area).

Czechia should support the establishment of specific instruments to help countries and regions which face problems caused by climate change (such as drought). Examples of such regions are South Moravia and Central Bohemia. Both regions are sufficiently rich in structural funds but could also benefit from the newly defined type of region affected by climate change (such as drought).

Another example of a significant CAP reform is to transfer of some funds which were allocated to CAP, but not spent, on large farms to fight against drought in central parts of Africa, thus restricting future migration of the local population to the EU. Experts claim that if not addressed, long-term drought in central parts of Africa will become one of the most significant push factors of migration in the next decades.

Cohesion policy should address targeting; if it should concentrate funds solely on regions lagging behind or should preserve some flexibility of fund transferability between individual types of regions respecting the unequal impact of globalization processes and crises How much money should be allocated to fund cross-border infrastructure projects and competitiveness for growth, especially support for innovative projects with high market growth potential?

## ***Conclusion***

The discussion about the post-2020 MFF will very much depend on the debate in two areas. First, a compromise between net-payers and net-recipient member states; second, the nature of the relationship between the UK and the EU and the related size of contributions to the EU budget based on the result of Brexit negotiations. The context of Brexit is very important but no simple task in the post-2020 MFF debate. The EU budget will see many important changes after 2020 and Czechia should make a timely reflection of it in its budget considerations and in defining its political priorities in the EU. It will also affect many domestic arenas. As the Eurozone and migration crises showed, the important limiting factor of the EU budget is its rigidity. The EU budget is not flexible enough to address unexpected events. Flexibility is a key characteristic that the EU budget should have.

## ***Recommendations***

- Czechia should strategically support a debate about the member states' interest to lower their demands on the spending of, for instance, agricultural and cohesion funds and instead give more financial support to the countries of origin, especially in Africa. The EU can invest and support the development of less developed countries more efficiently than individual member states.
- Another issue is the establishment of complex support for Africa as part of the so-called Marshall Plan for Africa, i.e. the consolidation of various EU budget programmes and national development funds into one fund supplemented with private investment.
- The V4 has declared that cohesion policy should remain the most expensive expenditure policy of the EU budget. In case the EU limits the funds for the cohesion policy, Czechia should promote a new classification of regions, e.g., category of regions affected by climate change (the above-average impact of drought on arable land).
- Czechia should support the full application and observation of the subsidiarity principle in the new CAP after 2020. Referring to the principle of fairness, it should reject the Commission's proposal to cap direct payments at 100 thousand EUR per farm. It would lead to the purposeful and calculated division of big farms into smaller statistical units. Czechia should support the notion that capping of direct payments is a decision of the member states respecting the structure of their own agricultural sector.
- From the point of GSA headquarters and the tradition of Czech space research, Czechia should initiate an increase in funds for the European Space Programme. Given the future of energy independency, we recommend to support research in the area of International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).
- Czechia has long-term problems with spending EU funds in the most centrally managed EU programmes and with the inefficient use of new financial instruments. The European Commission proposes to significantly increase funds for these programmes in the MFF 2020+ and puts a much higher emphasis on using new financial instruments. It is clear that if Czechia wants to react to the proposed reduction in financial allocations for cohesion policy and coverage with the old member states, it is necessary to use the current programming period for setting mechanisms which will succeed in competition with other EU member states.
- As a non-Eurozone country, it is important to follow the proposal for establishing a special fund for countries preparing to join the eurozone.

Table below summarizes the impact of the various EU future development scenarios on the EU budget, the individual expenditure categories, and the structure of revenues.

**Table 1: Scenarios of Future EU Development and Their Connection to a Reformed EU Budget**

Scenarios	Scenario 1: Business as usual	Scenario 2: Do less together	Scenario 3: Some of us do more	Scenario 4: Fundamental facelift	Scenario 5: Do much more together
<b>POLICY PRIORITIES</b>	Continue with the current reform programme	Finance mostly only policies necessary for the operation of the single market	Like scenario 1; some member states will increase the budget in areas, where they decide to do more	Fund priorities with very high value added for the EU	Do much more in various policies such as defence
<b>RELATIVE SIZE OF BUDGET</b>	Basically the same	Significantly lower	Somewhat higher	Lower	Significantly higher – federal
<b>COMPETITIVENESS</b>	Slightly higher share	Like scenario 1 but much lower amount	Same with scenario 1	Higher share	Higher share
<b>ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND REGIONAL COHESION</b>	Lower share	Lower amount	Same as scenario 1	Lower share	Higher amount
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	Lower share	Lower amount	Same as scenario 1	Lower share	Higher amount
<b>SECURITY, DEFENCE, MIGRATION</b>	Higher share	No financial means	Higher share partially paid by interested member states	Significantly higher share	Significantly higher share
<b>EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</b>	Higher share	Lower amount	Higher share partially paid by interested member states	Significantly higher share	Significantly higher share
<b>ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION</b>		Role of macroeconomic stabilization for member states of the eurozone		Role of macroeconomic stabilization and European monetary fund	
<b>REVENUES</b>	Current system without rebates; financing the EU budget from other sources of revenue or payments	Current system without rebates	Like scenario 1; plus, new policies funded by participating member states only	Further simplification of scenario 1; new own resources	Thorough reform beyond scenario no. 4; financing a significant share of the EU budget from new own resources



# Conclusion

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This publication focused on several important political, economic, and social issues that appear in public discourses in Czechia and other EU member states as well. Our policy analysis examined the current situation and proposed specific recommendations on how to face these challenges in the future, securing the citizens' rights and interests while protecting the democratic political system and foreign policy orientation set in the period following the 1989 regime change. Czech and European politics are experiencing an increase in the salience of dangerous factors which threaten to destabilize their societies and lead to confrontation. The scope of the publication allowed us to select only a limited number of issues. The aim was to apply critical analysis in order to help decipher the nature of some key policies in the European and Czech contexts and due to the aforementioned specific recommendations, help rationalize the public debate, which often evokes strong emotional reactions and lacks an expert and factual background.

As much as the individual recommendations address specific topics, they share several common features. On the European level, the authors agree that Czechia needs to define and clarify its main priorities, and become more constructive and pro-active, because it is its key interest to preserve the EU and deepen European integration. Czechia should support regional cooperation and joint activities but it should stay open to alternatives and communication with other possible partners. The domestic discourse about the EU should reinforce the pro-European voters and elites, and help them rationalize the discussion about EU membership, which should not be limited to economic factors but focus more on shared values, a sense of belonging with Europe, and the defence and security aspects of EU integration.

The authors also agree that the most major problems in Czech politics include the immaturity of political discussion and low degree of political literacy, and the rise in populism, bias and one-sidedness in political discourse. Cultivating public discourse, supporting critical thinking, and fighting against false reasoning are just some examples of the areas which need a lot of attention. Looking for inspiration abroad is a useful but not omnipotent solution and it is necessary to understand the specifics of the Czech local context. The analysis of robotics, family policy, or the protection of the external EU border showed that some trends are irreversible and we must prepare for them. The Czech political discourse is dominated by normative discussions, which should be replaced with discussions about specific reform proposals which would prepare the country for the challenges of the future. The reforms should reflect the needs of the people instead of people trying to meet the expectations of the state and society. They should not undermine the fundamental rights and freedoms which form the core of modern liberal democracies. New technologies pose a threat to the world as we know it because every revolution threatens to undermine the stability of society if it fails to adapt, or the destruction of the old order happens too fast; but they also carry a great opportunity to improve and strengthen the political, economic, and social structure of the state.



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