



**Civic Space Report 2024**

# **CZECH REPUBLIC**

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# Key trends

- 🔍 **Lack of political leadership to institutionalise civic and stakeholder participation.**
- 🔍 **Public funding still lacks multi-year funding, consistency in approaches by different public funders and streamlined co-financing and bureaucratic requirements.**
- 🔍 **Consolidation of public finances led to unforeseen consequences for governance, addressing the needs of vulnerable people, and for the operating environment for CSOs.**

# Summary

The civic space is rated as open in the Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup> Public trust in the government is the lowest, mainly due to the dissatisfaction and criticism of domestic policy and social and economic issues. Civil society has called for strengthening of society's trust in public institutions and democracy by all available means, including by ensuring that policies are responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups and the wider centre of society and that they are effectively communicated to citizens by the political representation and public administration.

In its 2023 Rule of Law report, the European Commission recommended that the Czech government take steps to improve media ownership and media independence. The Czech Parliament approved the amendment to the media law which was a major step towards limiting politicians' media ownership. However, ownership of private media is still concentrated, and public media continues to face pressure and political influence.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://Monitor.civicus.org/country/czech-republic/>

Public funding for CSOs remains a challenge due to the absence of multi-annual funding, lengthy and bureaucratic grant awarding processes, strict co-financing requirements and diverse grant approaches. While funding allocated from the state budget to civil society activities remained the same, thematic fields such as sports associations received more funds while organisations advocating for rights, such as gender equality, faced a decrease in funding. CSOs are also challenged by the lack of funding for digitisation, which puts the sector at a disadvantage compared to other sectors.

There have been some good practices on civic and stakeholder participation across the Czech public administration in past years. However, the existing processes do not have sufficient impact, there is a lack of coordination, and good practices are not shared. A lack of a comprehensive vision of civil society participation remains.

# **Institutional, political and socio-economic landscape**

On 1 May 2024, the Czech Republic will celebrate 20 years since its accession to the European Union. Throughout 2024, there will be a series of events and activities related to this milestone organised at both government and non-government levels. This provides an opportunity, not only to reflect on 20 years, but also to critically discuss the Czech Republic's role in the EU and the EU's role in the country's transformation, including the challenges and new tasks for improving the rule of law and civic space.

In 2023, defining moments included Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, persistent inflation and weak economic performance and poor political performance of the new government. Just before Christmas 2023, Czech society was most affected by the tragic mass shooting at the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague. With 14 people killed, it was the worst incident in the country's history and sparked a nationwide discussion on gun control, access to mental health care and security measures in educational institutions and other public buildings.

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Russia's aggression against Ukraine led to an acute humanitarian and human rights crisis and the Czech Republic continued to stand behind Ukraine. At the same time, the resolution of the war has become an important focus of social debate. The integration of 375,590<sup>2</sup> refugees from Ukraine hosted in the Czech Republic have been partially successful. Positively, most refugees who are economically active managed to find employment, albeit in work outside of their qualifications and often in poor working conditions; 60 per cent still live below the income poverty line<sup>3</sup>. With decreasing state support, the Ukrainian refugees have been under increased pressure to find employment. Insufficient knowledge of the Czech language and a lack of language courses are a barrier to qualified work. The cessation of housing allowance payments has forced many refugees to move from solidarity housing to rental housing. Similar to other vulnerable groups in the Czech population, refugees face a shortage of affordable housing. A new phenomenon was the disagreements between some in the Roma and Ukrainian communities, caused by real or imagined situational conflicts which escalated in social networking environments<sup>4</sup>.

Economic stagnation<sup>5</sup> was caused by a combination of the energy crisis, supply chain bottlenecks, and a decrease in consumption due to a rapid increase in prices. The Czech Republic is one of the few countries in Europe that has not yet been able to return to the same economic condition prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The combination of stagnation, or even recession, and inflation, caused by additional factors, particularly affected vulnerable groups of the population.

The performance of the conservative-liberal coalition government of five political parties, led by Prime Minister Petr Fiala, was critically perceived by experts and the media in the area of economic and social policy, but positive in foreign policy and in support of Ukraine and the Western alliance. The government has focused on the political implementation of legislation to consolidate public finances and growing public debt, which effectively increased tax collections despite pre-election promises not to raise taxes. However they were criticised for the unpreparedness of these reforms,

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<sup>2</sup> Data from <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/statistika-v-souvislosti-s-vaikou-na-ukrajine-archiv.aspx> and <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>3</sup> PAQ Research: Refugee income and employment have increased. But the loss of free housing has deepened poverty: <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/prijmy-a-chudoba-uprchliku-podzim2023> and PAQ Research: *Integration of Ukrainian refugees: one year on* - <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/integrace-ukrajinskych-uprchliku-rok-pote>

<sup>4</sup> See the Reports on extremism, Security Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior - <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> There was a year-on-year GDP decrease of 0.7 %. The inflation rate was 11.4 %, while real wages decreased. Unemployment remains low, with the poor economic situation being driven more by inflation. The public debt reached 44.2% of GDP. Czech Statistical Office: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cr/predbezny-odhad-hdp-3-ctvrtleti-2023>

their low effectiveness, the failure to take into account the impact on lower income and vulnerable groups of people and the inability to effectively communicate political actions to the public. The public trust in the government is at an all-time low- less than a quarter of citizens trust the government<sup>6</sup>. This is partly reflected both in voting preferences and in the overall attitude towards democracy.

The parliamentary opposition composed of the self-proclaimed ANO “catch-all-party” of the former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and the nationalist SPD is fundamentally critical of the government, and frequent obstructions have paralysed the Chamber of Deputies and the legislative process.

The new President Petr Pavel was elected in January 2023 amid high voter turnout and in a polarised atmosphere. The president enjoys the confidence of a slim majority of citizens<sup>7</sup> - mainly for the representativeness abroad, the perceived increased dignity of the office, and open communication with the media. His communication with the opposition and the selection of collaborators and advisors are viewed more critically. In foreign and security policy, the President clearly expresses support for Western structures, increased defence investments, and European integration of Ukraine.

During the first three years of his five-year mandate, the current President will replace thirteen of the fifteen seats on the Constitutional Court. All of President's Pavel's nominations presented to the Senate thus far are as a result of the work of a consultative panel convened by him, shortly after he took office to ensure transparency in the process of nominations to the Constitutional Court. Due to several problematic nominations and media pressure, the Senate began to scrutinise nominations much more closely, even more so than for some of controversial candidates proposed by former Presidents. There is a clearly stated concern by some senators, especially conservative ones, about the significant predominance of progressive-oriented constitutional judges and the alleged value imbalance of this institution.<sup>8</sup>

A historic first OECD Public Governance Review of the Czech Republic confirmed that Czech governance needs to increase its efficiency of the quality of public administration and availability of public services and to make informed political decisions that take into account the legitimate needs of citizens. The recommendations include improving the whole-of-government coordination, digitalisation, fostering citizen and stakeholder participation, and evidence-informed decision-making both at the political and civil servant levels. The OECD Review also rightly points to the lack

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<sup>6</sup> CVM: Trust in constitutional institutions - autumn 2023 - <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/politicke/instituce-a-politici/5765-duvera-ustavnim-institucim-podzim-2023>

<sup>7</sup> CVM: Trust in constitutional institutions - autumn 2023 - [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c2/a5735/f9/pi231214.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5735/f9/pi231214.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See the statement of political scientist Michael Drašar of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University for Deník Referendum - <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/35750-po-fremrovi-opacny-extrem-jak-sezmeni-vyber-ustavnich-soudcu>

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of a strategic approach and the limited ability of the public administration to attract and recruit people with the right skills, including leadership.<sup>9</sup> There are concerns that the investment in the public governance review will not translate into real and necessary changes, as there are limitations not only due to the limited capabilities across the administration, but largely due to the lack of stewardship at the governmental and political level. In addition, there is a widespread political narrative for the need to reduce the number of civil servants, leading to major reorganisation, loss of key expertise and institutional knowledge, and rushed reforms without adequate strategic impact assessments. The situation is further complicated by the outsourcing of core functions and the influence of interest groups on lawmaking. Moreover, the departure of experienced staff, reinforced by the standard post-election changes, undermines the continuity and stability of the public administration.

The Czech Republic has been criticised for the absence of a national human rights institution (NHRI) or an ombudsman for children's rights. The forthcoming amendment to the Ombudsman Act foresees that the Ombudsman would carry out the NHRI mandate and that a children's rights ombudsman would also operate within the Ombudsman's Office.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> OECD (2023): OECD Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic: Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration - <https://www.oecd.org/governance/oecd-public-governance-reviews-czech-republic-41fd9e5c-en.htm>

<sup>10</sup> See more:

[https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/vznik\\_narodni\\_lidskopravni\\_instituce\\_nhri\\_i\\_zrizeni\\_detskeho\\_ombudsmu\\_by\\_ochranu\\_lidskych\\_prav\\_v\\_cesku\\_posilily\\_shoduji\\_se\\_ombudsman\\_i\\_jeho\\_zastupce/](https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/vznik_narodni_lidskopravni_instituce_nhri_i_zrizeni_detskeho_ombudsmu_by_ochranu_lidskych_prav_v_cesku_posilily_shoduji_se_ombudsman_i_jeho_zastupce/)



# Civic freedoms: regulatory environment and implementation

## Freedom of association

Article 20 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Czech constitutional order states, that "The right to freedom of association is guaranteed. Everyone has the right to associate with others in associations, societies and other associations." Article 21 of the Charter also states that "Citizens have the right to participate in the administration of public affairs directly or by freely choosing their representatives." According to the charter, freedom of association applies to any association, regardless of whether it has a legal personality. Therefore, the freedom of association may be invoked even by an association existing only in fact, i.e. without a legally recognised form.

The key legislation for associations is set in the Civil Code which covers the major legal entities of CSOs (associations, subsidiary associations, institutes, foundations, endowment funds) and in the legislation on churches and religious societies<sup>11</sup>. The conditions for registration, merger, or dissolution of legal entities of CSOs have not changed nor deteriorated in 2023.

## Freedom of peaceful assembly

Freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed by Article 19 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms as part of the constitutional order of the Czech Republic and further elaborated on in the

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<sup>11</sup> Civil Code No. 89/2012 Coll., and the Act No 3/2002 Coll., on freedom of religion and the position of churches and religious societies and amending certain acts.

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Act on the right of assembly<sup>12</sup>, which has not been changed in 2023 nor have any changes to it come into force. A public assembly, such as meetings, street parades, demonstrations, or happenings open to everyone and held in a public space, does not require a permit from a public authority but is subject to notification within given time limits, free of charge. Authorities can immediately prohibit a declared assembly, but only if the purpose of the assembly was to call for the restriction of citizens' constitutional rights, incite hatred and intolerance, violence or gross indecency, or any other violation of the constitution and laws. The organiser of the assembly can appeal against the prohibition to the administrative court, which will make a decision within three days.

In 2023, the Czech Republic respected freedom of peaceful assembly in practice and there was no serious nor disproportionate interference by the authorities in demonstrations. The General Inspectorate of Security Forces (GIBS) investigated whether police officers had committed a criminal offence in intervening in an anti-government demonstration on 11 March. Several hundred participants in the demonstration attempted to break into the National Museum building and tear down the Ukrainian flag, which had been flown in solidarity with Ukraine. They clashed with riot police, whose calls to leave were not heeded. Police officers arrested 20 people, of which 19 were fined in administrative proceedings. The police dealt with 16 complaints about the intervention, but the GIBS found no wrongdoing.<sup>13</sup>

The CSO Iuridicum Remedium discovered<sup>14</sup> that the Czech police have been using the Digital Personal Image Information System in trial operation for about a year, which is an analytical face recognition tool linking photographs to a citizen database derived from state registers, effectively turning any high-resolution camera into a biometric surveillance tool. The operational basis for this tool comes due to an internal directive from the police president, details of which have largely been kept secret from the public.

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<sup>12</sup> Act No. 84/1990 Coll., on the right of assembly.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zasah-policie-narodni-muzeum-trestni-oznameni-gibs-rakusan-policie\\_2308260500\\_tec](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zasah-policie-narodni-muzeum-trestni-oznameni-gibs-rakusan-policie_2308260500_tec)

<sup>14</sup> <https://digitalnisvobody.cz/blog/2023/07/12/tz-policie-jiz-temer-rok-vyuziva-analyticky-nastroj-na-rozpoznavani-tvari-podrobnosti-jeho-fungovani-ale-pred-verejnosti-taji/>

## Freedom of expression

The freedom of expression and right to information is set in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms as part of the Constitutional order of the Czech Republic, and in the Freedom of Access to Information Act<sup>15</sup>.

The government has not imposed restrictions or interfered with Internet access, and there is no clear evidence to support claims of government surveillance of private online communications without proper legal justification. In 2022, the government requested to block pro-Russia disinformation websites in connection with the attack on Ukraine resulting in the domain name administrator temporarily blocking eight websites. After three months, the administrator restored access to the sites because there was no legal reason to block them further. In 2023, the Supreme Administrative Court dismissed a cassation appeal by two CSOs against a decision by the Municipal Court in Prague which found that the blocking did not constitute an unlawful interference with the rights of the public. The government had called for the sites to be blocked via regulation but did not enforce it in any way, and internet providers, including domestic mobile operators, voluntarily blocked websites, the court said.<sup>16</sup> The case highlighted the broader problem of how state measures, even without legal backing, can interfere with citizens' fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, especially in situations deemed to be of exceptional gravity, such as Russia's attack on Ukraine. The decision raised important questions about the limits and effectiveness of such measures in a democratic society.

Following the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, the escalating violence in Israel/Palestine led to a number of demonstrations including in Western European countries, which in some cases were accompanied by expressions, such as "From the river to the Sea", alleged to be anti-Israeli and anti-semitic. This sparked public interest in the Czech Republic for a more thorough analysis of the criminal law aspects of these expressions in the context of the Czech legal system and for the constitutionally protected freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and of political opinions. In November 2023, the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office issued an opinion on the "legal assessment of hate speech in connection with the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel and the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian armed conflict". The document highlighted the need for careful evaluation of individual cases, with consideration of the specific circumstances and the context of each act, to determine whether it constitutes a criminal offence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Act No. 106/1999 Coll., Act on Free Access to Information

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zaloba-dezinformace-blokovani-weby-zasah-nss\\_2308101501\\_cib](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zaloba-dezinformace-blokovani-weby-zasah-nss_2308101501_cib) <https://www.otevrenaspolecnost.cz/aktuality/8306-nejvyssi-spravni-soud-prehlizive-odmitl-uvazovat-o-svobode-projevu>

<sup>17</sup> <https://verejnazaloba.cz/nsz/nsz-zverejnuje-text-stanoviska-k-projevum-ve-vztahu-ke-konfliktu-v-izraeli/>

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In the latest Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index on media freedom,<sup>18</sup> the Czech Republic improved its ranking, from twentieth to fourteenth place. In the previous year, it went from fortieth to twentieth place, mostly because then Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, a de-facto owner of a key media house left the government. However, press freedom is threatened by the concentration of private media in the hands of a few billionaires and the pressure on public media. Parliament's approval of the amendment to the media law represents a major step towards limiting media ownership by politicians. It also prohibits public officials and their companies from receiving subsidies and investment incentives. However, it does not address the ownership of online media, which is a significant shortcoming that requires new legislation.<sup>19</sup>

# Safe space

There are no specific formal rules or protective frameworks for CSOs and human rights defenders in the state administration, beyond those set out in civil and criminal legislation. Thus, an affected person or an organisation can only turn to the police in the event of an attack and proceed according to the criminal law. There is no system to monitor attacks, threats, etc. and no comprehensive study has been commissioned to date. Therefore, the assessment can be done only on the available information provided.

Some CSOs report that they are increasingly confronted with false accusations and attacks due to increased disinformation. Therefore, CSOs have less capacity to effectively communicate about their activities, strategically cultivate a network of supporters and fulfil their mission. As a result, disinformation threatens the resources of CSOs and human rights defenders and can lead to the loss of donors.

Organisations and advocates promoting equal rights (esp. marriage equality) and LGBTIQ+ rights report encountering targeted insults, verbal attacks, hate speech, and, at times, hate crimes solely due to their advocacy efforts. Derogatory comments range from questioning their right to engage in

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<sup>18</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/country/czech-republic>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/politici-jako-vlastnici-medii-novela-zakona-odkryla-potrebu-hlubokych-reforem-v-medialni-oblasti>

public discourse to spreading misinformation and unfounded claims about LGBTQI+ individuals. Furthermore, there are instances of inciting social discord and fear by falsely asserting that LGBTQI+ people pose a threat to society. Notably, the Czech Criminal Code provides the least protection to victims of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity compared to hate crimes based on other motives like race or religion. Additionally, there is reluctance to offer financial support for initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals, posing funding security challenges for LGBTQI+ organisations.<sup>20</sup>

The pressure exerted on journalists in recent years has mostly been verbal, with some political actors (especially former president Miloš Zeman) riding the current wave of distrust for the media. Unrestrained attacks on journalists from the highest ranks of government has led to citizens' growing distrust of journalists. An important precedent was set when Pavla Holcová, the editor-in-chief of *investigace.cz*, won in a case brought by former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš. His party ANO previously *de facto* lost the elections, following the publication of Holcová findings in the Pandora Papers case, which exposed Babiš's suspicious property purchases through an offshore scheme. Babiš wrongfully accused the journalist of manipulating the elections in cooperation with George Soros on his social media platforms, which led to a hate campaign against her. The court ordered Babiš to publicly apologise and pay the legal fees. This ruling is significant as it establishes a politician's responsibility for their posts on social media and for moderating subsequent comments under those posts.<sup>21</sup>

The Whistleblower Protection law that came into effect on August 1, 2023, aligning with a European directive and designates the Ministry of Justice as the overseeing authority. However, a notable limitation of the law is its lack of protection for anonymous reporting, a significant concern given the preference of most whistleblowers to remain unidentified to avoid publicity and potential retaliation. This gap in protection raises concerns about the law's effectiveness in practice.

The enforcement of this law falls under the purview of the Ministry of Justice and labour inspectorates, tasked with ensuring compliance and overseeing the operation of employer notification systems under labour law requirements. The capacity of these bodies to manage their roles effectively remains in question.<sup>22</sup> This comes after the Minister of justice Pavel Blažek (ODS) dismissed the director of the insolvency department, Jan Benýšek, after Benýšek filed a complaint against Blažek's political deputy pointing out possible abuse in insolvency proceedings. Despite Benýšek's call for protection under the new whistleblower law, the government approved his

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<sup>20</sup> <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/predsudecnych-utoku-proti-lgbt-lidem-bylo-loni-nejvic-od-zacatku-sledovani-343280> and Jsme fér Initiative: <https://www.jsmefer.cz/>

<sup>21</sup> More at: <https://www.investigace.cz/babis-se-musi-omluvit-holcove/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2022/11/25/funkcnost-zakona-o-ochrane-oznamovatel-u-ukaze-az-praxe/>  
<https://www.whistleblowingcenter.cz/blog/schvaleni-zakona-o-whistleblowingu-je-vyznamny-posun>

termination of office on the Ministers recommendation- assumed to be in retaliation for his whistleblowing activities. The incident underscores concern about the law's ability to effectively protect whistleblowers from retaliation. At the end of 2023, the inspector of the Ministry of Justice confirmed Benýšek's corruption complaint and provided him with legal protection against retaliation, although the government already proceeded to terminate his post.<sup>23</sup>

In response to the pandemic, economic changes or foreign conflicts, a favourable climate has emerged for anti-system movements. It is made up of a wide range of disparate groups with limited membership and limited longevity, but increasingly vital. They espouse various conspiracy theories or in some cases try to give them a spiritual or esoteric dimension. Supporters of this movement are generally over 40 years of age, evoke a certain revolt of people who feel existential fears and experience a sense of alienation. The main risk associated with these groups lies in their ambition for the Czech Republic to leave NATO and the European Union. The implementation of these plans would threaten the overall security, sovereignty, defence and, as a result, the functioning of democracy in the Czech Republic. The conflict in the Middle East has brought new impetus to some of these actors, as they did not see the developments in Israel/Palestine and subsequent events as a regional conflict, but rather framed it within their ideological worldview.<sup>24</sup>

# Funding for civil society

While the legal environment for civil society is relatively solid, systemic problems persist in the area of public funding, such as the absence of multi-annual funding, lengthy and bureaucratic grant award processes, strict co-financing requirements, or diverse grant methodologies applied in different public granting schemes. The comprehensive data on the structure and monetary value of funding of CSOs activities from public and private sources (Czech and foreign) does not exist.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzy-duvodne-kontrolor-dava-za-pravdu-muzi-ktery-jde-proti-blazkovi-242455>

<sup>24</sup> See the Reports on extremism, Security Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior - <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>

The *Strategy for the Cooperation of the Public Administration with NGOs for the years 2021 to 2030*<sup>25</sup> is a key government document for the cooperation of the Czech public administration with the non-profit sector. It sets out a commitment to support the development of conditions under which the CSOs can perform their role with dignity and efficiency from the local to the national level. The strategy addresses the promotion of philanthropy, volunteering, the efficiency of the financing system from public budgets, access to funding from foreign sources (especially the EU), the harmonisation of the state and regional approaches to financing social services, the monitoring of data on state subsidies, and also monitoring of legislation directly related to CSOs. Some measures in the strategy contain important steps for systemic change, which requires long-term effort and interest, necessary capacities on the authorities and CSOs, and financial resources. On the contrary, the strategy mistakenly assumes that "its implementation does not create increased demands on the state budget or other public budgets".

Every year, the Czech government approves the main areas of state subsidy policy towards CSOs to support public benefit activities for the following year, including funding from the state budget. The document actually shows how much the government is actually investing in areas of public benefit that it cannot effectively address on its own, but only through CSOs. These areas may include social care, informal education, gender equality, transformational policies, foreign development cooperation, and more. The total funds from the state budget allocated to public benefit activities has not changed much in recent years, but operating subsidies have lost their real value due to inflation and a significant drop in the share of GDP.<sup>26</sup> The largest part of subsidies from the state budget goes to sports through the National Sports Agency. For 2024,<sup>27</sup> the government approved a total of 263,3 mil. EUR for 21 thematic areas in April 2023. However, in November 2023, changes were made to the budget allocations for 2024 as part of the government's public finance consolidation package. Most state programs remained at the budgeted levels from April 2023, while some have lower financial allocations (e.g. gender equality or anti-corruption, whose allocations are lower than 0.01% of the total amount). Surprisingly, the overall financial support from the state budget increased

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<sup>25</sup> The *Strategy for the cooperation of the Public Administration with NGOs for the years 2021 to 2030* was approved by the Czech government on 12 July 2021: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/vlada-schvalila-strategii-spoluprace-verejne-spravy-s-nestatnimi-neziskovymi-organizacemi-na-leta-2021-az-2030-189691/> and <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/BROZURA-FINAL-S-PRILOHAMI.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> See Kolář, D., Janský, P. (IDEA-CERGE, 2023): Analysis of state budget expenditures in 2024 in the light of the pre-crisis year 2019 - <https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/studies/analyza-vydaju-statniho-rozpoctu-2024-ve-svetle-predkrizoveho-roku-20191>

<sup>27</sup> Main areas of state grant policy towards non-governmental non-profit organisations for the year 2024

<https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-nestatnim-neziskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2024-206824/>

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due to a significant increase in allocations for sports and related activities (from 150 mil. EUR to 210 mil. EUR)<sup>28</sup>.

The government's consolidation package with tax changes came into force in January 2024 and will impact CSOs in many areas, though the full extent remains to be assessed. As for the cuts in the subsidy programmes of the different ministries, a more careful interpretation of the data is necessary to determine what impact the cuts could have in the medium term on reducing inequalities and promoting social cohesion (e.g. budget cuts in preventive services). CSOs will be affected by the change in the conditions for the use of employment contracts and contracts for the performance of work, which will complicate contractual arrangements with their co-workers. The tax measures enabled individual and corporate donors to take advantage of increased tax deductions from the tax base for the value of free services provided to taxpayers for activities expressly stated in the law. The limit for deducting donations from the tax base was increased from 15 to 30 per cent for natural persons and from 10 to 30 per cent for legal persons. These limits were again extended by changes within the consolidation package of public finances for the year 2023.<sup>29</sup>

The Expert Group on systemic change in funding of public benefit services established in 2022 under the Government Council for NGOs (RVNNO) has been assessing and preparing proposals for systemic change leading to more efficient public funding. Eight thematic working groups addressed several issues, including multi-year funding, allowing partnerships in grant programmes, grants without co-financing (i.e. awarding grants that cover the full cost of projects), co-funding projects with volunteer work and in-kind contributions, grant programmes to ensure mandatory co-financing of projects funded from foreign sources, fast-tracking and awarding grants in the event of emergencies, the lump-sum treatment of indirect costs and simpler accounting for grants, sustainable funding and grant programmes for umbrella organisations and CSOs networks so that they do not compete with their member organisations, solutions for *de minimis* rules.<sup>30</sup> The legislative proposals will be presented in 2024.

The Ministry of Interior prepared the amendments to the Act on Public Donations,<sup>31</sup> taking into account the recommendations by the RVNNO and its Working group on Public Donations. The proposal was approved by the government on January 10, 2024. On the other hand, the Ministry of

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<sup>28</sup> This figure may still change and is subject to clarification by the National Sports Agency.

<sup>29</sup> The Act No. 586/1992 Coll., on Income Taxes.

<sup>30</sup> [https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex\\_skup\\_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/](https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/ex_skup_fin/expertni-skupina-k-systemove-zmene-financovani-verejne-prospernych-sluzeb-a-cinnosti-ze-statniho-rozpoctu-198755/)

<sup>31</sup> Act No 117/2001 Coll., Act on Public Donations - <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vysledky-jednani-vlady-10--ledna-2024-211374/>

<https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-navrhuje-zjednodusit-poradani-verejnych-sbirek--upravit-chce-take-vykon-advokacie-211390/>



Finance submitted a proposal to change the ESF+ co-financing rate to the one proposed by the previous government in June 2023. The proposal intended to ensure savings in the state budget by reducing the state's share of funding for these subsidies, while the differences in the co-financing amount between the different categories of regions should henceforth be borne exclusively by the beneficiaries of the subsidies - i.e. service providers, schools, municipalities, CSOs. The co-financing rate for calls in the area of social inclusion and social services was to be increased from 5 to 13.2 per cent (an increase of 165 per cent). CSOs raised their concerns via an open letter as this would threaten the provision of publicly beneficial, especially social and educational services.<sup>32</sup> The government finally approved a five per cent co-financing rate, with the provision that it may approve an exception to zero per cent co-financing for a limited type of calls. CSOs in social services have very limited possibilities to secure their own co-financing. At the same time, there is a growing need for social services and counselling in difficult life situations or for prevention, partly due to the economic situation of many vulnerable groups of people.

In 2023, the government failed to reverse the decision of the previous Babiš government and did not transfer 10 per cent of funds (i.e. EUR 270 million) from the Operational Programme Transport to ESF+ for social topics. As a result, there is a shortfall of funding especially in the areas of vocational counselling, work with families, debt issues, dealing with domestic violence, housing, assistance to people from Ukraine and social innovation. Despite advocacy<sup>33</sup> from various stakeholders, a satisfactory resolution has not been achieved.

The lack of funding for digitisation puts CSOs at a serious disadvantage, and in particular affects their sustainability. A survey on the state of digitisation and IT in the Czech non-profit sector in 2023<sup>34</sup> revealed that the long-term underfunding of the sector is also reflected in the state of digitisation and IT: 43 per cent of CSOs do not have enough funds to purchase the necessary equipment, seven per cent exclusively use software owned by employees or CSO members (for volunteer organisations it is 30 to 50%), 22 per cent use shared storage exclusively on physical servers, 19 per cent have no shared storage. Managers of CSOs often lack knowledge and experience with digitisation. CSOs are not protected against cyber-attacks. Outdated computers and other equipment, lack of know-how and skills hinder organisations from using the full potential of modern technologies and their work

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<sup>32</sup> See the joint letter of CSOs addressed to Minister of Finance, coordinated by Glopolis -

<https://glopolis.org/koordinace-neziskoveho-sektoru-neon/otevreny-dopis-nevlnadnich-neziskovych-organizaci-ministru-financi-zbynku-stanjurovi-k-navrhu-pravidla-spolufinancovani-eu-fondu/>

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. the initiative For Housing - <https://www.zabydleni.org/aktuality/penize-z-evropskych-fondu-v-socialni-oblasti-stale-chybi-jednani-o-spolufinancovani-se-ale-posunulo-dobrym-smerem>

<sup>34</sup> Source: Association Via, TechSoup and OSF Foundation (2023): Survey of the state of digitization of the Czech non-profit sector - <https://sdruzenivia.cz/pruzkum-stavu-digitalizace-ceskeho-neziskoveho-sektoru/>

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becomes expensive and inefficient. Organisations are exposed to cyber security risks and the development of the entire sector is slowing down.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> <https://sdruzenivia.cz/pruzkum-stavu-digitalizace-ceskeho-neziskoveho-sektoru/>

# Civil dialogue and the right to participation

As described by the OECD Public Governance Review,<sup>36</sup> there are islands of good practice of citizens and stakeholder (including CSOs) participation across the Czech central administration and at the local level. For example, the good practice of creating advisory and working bodies that include different types of non-public stakeholders. However, the existing processes do not have sufficient impact, there is a lack of coordination, and the good practices are not shared. Czech governance has no overarching national vision of civil society participation. Objectives and initiatives pre-supposing participation in public decision-making are scattered in many political documents, ministerial regulations and methodologies. There are often divergent and confusing definitions between ministries and central authorities and participatory processes and working methods vary greatly, with their functioning depending to a large extent on the political will of the ruling administration and the profile of the people responsible. This does not ensure the same level of access to decision-making for a wider group of stakeholders nor people.

The transition from limited *ad hoc* consultations to a culture of participation as an integral part of all stages of decision-making and legislative processes require the introduction of institutionalised mechanisms, providing centralised methodological support, harmonising procedures across public administration, ensuring transparency and access to information from the state. In addition, it requires developing motivation, capacities and skills for participation across the public administration, politicians, the public and stakeholders.<sup>37</sup>

The Government Council for NGOs (RVNNO)<sup>38</sup> has been the key institutional platform for discussing the agenda of civic space and for CSOs to initiate proposals for the government and the ministries,

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<sup>36</sup> OECD (2023): Public Governance Review: Czech Republic: The Czech Republic on the Path to a More Modern and Efficient Public Administration - <https://www.oecd.org/governance/oecd-public-governance-reviews-czech-republic-41fd9e5c-en.htm>

<sup>37</sup> OECD (2023): Public Governance Review: Czech Republic: The Czech Republic on the Path to a More Modern and Efficient Public Administration - <https://www.oecd.org/governance/oecd-public-governance-reviews-czech-republic-41fd9e5c-en.htm>

<sup>38</sup> <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/zakladni-informace-767/>

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incl. the *Strategy for the Cooperation of the Public Administration with NGOs for 2021 to 2030*.<sup>39</sup> As the permanent advisory body to the government, it is composed of representatives of CSOs and state administration, chaired by the Prime minister, and co-chaired by the Commissioner for Human Rights and a representative of CSOs. It has no legislative or executive power.

The Strategy for Cooperation with NGOs recognises the participatory role of CSOs and aims to support effective partnership between the state and the non profit sector. It also seeks partnerships with CSO umbrella organisations and networks, as they aggregate different field experiences, including those of individual CSOs. The state's partnership with CSOs and their umbrella organisations remains a challenge.<sup>40</sup> The Office of the Government that runs a subsidy program for umbrella organisations capacities will be revised as its eligibility criteria does not correspond to the real number of cross-sectorial networks. It's program is not linked to a specific goal of cooperation with the state and has a limited allocation of 118 000 euro. The expert subgroup under RVNNO is preparing further proposals to support the sustainability of umbrella organisations.

The Strategy also includes the goal of improving public climate and an emphasis on raising awareness of the benefits of projects and activities of CSOs and the results of public administration cooperation with CSOs. The problem, however, lies in the mismatch of these ambitions with reality, i.e. the lack of capacities and financial resources for their implementation, both on the part of the managing or coordinating body at the Office of the Government and on the individual ministries. There is a lack of strategic communication across public sectors with secured funding and greater impact. State officials can make significant value-based declarations supporting the recognition of civil society, but their tangible efforts in this regard are limited. The Government's Commissioner for Human Rights, Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková, has been doing praiseworthy work in communicating on important human rights topics and the work of CSOs through participating in many events and through active contributions via her social media accounts.<sup>41</sup> However, she cannot be solely responsible for improving the societal climate.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/BROZURA-FINAL-S-PRILOHAMI.pdf> and [https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/2022\\_Monit\\_zprava\\_Strategie\\_AP\\_fin.pdf](https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/2022_Monit_zprava_Strategie_AP_fin.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> The key being a lack of capacity at CSOs side, lack of access to information, low awareness of the state administration about partners among CSOs and how to engage them, see the research report: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/analiza-spoluprace-statni-spravy-se-stresnimi-organizacemi-a-sitemi-nestatnich-neziskovych-organizaci-198802/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/laurencikova.zmocnenkyne> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/klarasimackovalaurencikova/>

During 2023, seven ministries began testing the methodology for the participation of CSOs<sup>42</sup> and the Secretariat of RVNNO widely applied the methodology in the process of nominating CSO representatives to the advisory bodies and EU fund committees.<sup>43</sup> However, the methodology is non-binding and only a recommendation for the public administration. This could change if the government adopts it by resolution.

As a follow-up to the Czech Republic's Presidency of the EU Council 2022, Glopolis ran a survey "Evaluation of the Czech Presidency from the perspective of CSOs".<sup>44</sup> CSO networks, who actively participated in the Czech Presidency, found that there was average fulfilment of expected objectives in European policy. The Czech Presidency also received an average rating in terms of its performance and the degree of its influence on changes in the 12 areas monitored.<sup>45</sup> Above average scores were given for progress in the areas of gender equality, strengthening resilience to Russian influence and cyber threats, managing the refugee crisis and post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, and humanitarian and development aid. It was rated above average for energy security and transition, and the lowest for its implementation of the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and the promotion of the rule of law, democracy and civil society in Europe. Developments in the cultural and creative sectors were rated below average. Based on this evaluation, several recommendations were put forward to the Committee for the EU, including the better involvement of CSOs in EU agendas and preparation of the Czech Republic's framework positions, and financial and personnel support of a "culture of participation" and cooperation between the state and CSOs

A pilot cooperation was run in 2023 between the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and the Green Circle, an umbrella association of 91 environmental CSOs. The outcomes are promising: The MoE has strengthened its capacity and set up a new position of a MoE liaison officer for the participation of

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<sup>42</sup> The Methodology for the participation of NGOs in advisory and working bodies and in the creation of public administration documents was approved by the Government Council for NGOs on June 28, 2022. -

<https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/metodika-participace-nestatnich-neziskovych-organizaci-v-poradnich-a-pracovnich-organech-a-pri-tvorbe-dokumentu-statni-spravy-197878/>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/aktuality/prubezna-vyzva-k-podavani-prihlasek-na-cleny-a-nahradniky-z-neziskoveho-sektoru-do-pracovnich-telel-fondu-eu--aktualizace--211026/>

<sup>44</sup> Glopolis (2023): Evaluation of the Czech Presidency from the perspective of CSOs -

<https://glopolis.org/koordinace-neziskoveho-sektoru-neon/hodnoceni-ceske-predsednictvi-v-rade-eu-nestatnimi-neziskovymi-organizacemi/>

<sup>45</sup> The thematic areas were: 1. Coping with the refugee crisis and Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, 2. Humanitarian and development assistance and promotion of human rights, 3. Safe and carbon-free energy, 4. Resilience to Russian influence and cyber threats, 5. Mitigating the economic and social impact of pandemics and migration waves, 6. Mental health of children and young people and meaningful learning, 7. Cultural and creative industries, 8. Rule of law framework and support for civil society, 9. Protection of civil liberties and media pluralism, 10. Gender equality, 11. Implementation of the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe, 12. Declaring 2025 the European Year of Volunteering.

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CSOs. The MoE has enabled the Green Circle to improve its capacity for participation by concluding a Cooperation Agreement for the period 2023-2025 and enabling CSOs to access the inter-ministerial comment procedure system. The communication between MoE and the Green Circle CSOs has intensified, as the CSOs were actively involved in the inter-ministerial comment procedure of legislative and non-legislative materials in nine cases, and in the preparation of two important policies - the update of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 and the update of the Climate Protection Policy.<sup>46</sup>

The involvement of CSOs in the National Recovery Plan (NRP) has undergone moderately positive development. The Czech Republic has the opportunity to use over 9,2 billion euros from the European Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) for reforms and modernisation in the fields of digitalisation and green transition between 2021 and 2026.<sup>47</sup> From the beginning of the NRP preparations in 2020, it has been challenging to determine how to involve CSOs in the entire process and in proposing reforms and priorities. After two years, it was finally possible to include representatives of CSOs in the Committee of NRP and in 2023 the sub-committees based on the nomination process under RVNNO. However, the Committee of NRP only has an advisory and informative role. Coordination is under the Ministry of Industry and Trade - the Delivery Unit, which gradually became open to discussing the proposals tabled by CSOs representatives. The information level on the NRP website is improving (list of contact persons by component, overview of the largest beneficiaries, overview of expected calls, etc.). An important step was the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Transparency and Civil Society Engagement. However, when it comes to key decisions, CSOs and other stakeholders are absent and do not have access to the sub-committee, which was evident in the NRP update during 2023. Although the topic was on the committee's agenda, in reality, the whole process was conducted at the inter-ministerial level and in the final stage at the Cabinet meeting. CSOs involved learned about the change of the loan amount from the discussed 5,6 billion euros to reduced 818 million only through the media.

CSOs involved in the NRP generally see the experience as a key lesson for improving the design of the new EU financial facilities and the next EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework to ensure stakeholder involvement at least to the extent of the principles of partnership and multi-level governance in the programming of Cohesion Policy.

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<sup>46</sup> <https://zelenykruh.cz/o-zakonech-ve-prospech-zivotniho-prostredi-ohlednuti-zeleneho-kruhu-za-rokem-2023/>

<sup>47</sup> implemented under the European Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) More at <https://www.planobnovy-cr.cz/> and [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en)

# Civil society resilience

Civil society plays a key role in addressing fundamental rights in the Czech Republic. There are a number of CSOs that have been advocating in the areas of the rule of law and engaging in the rule of law agenda at the EU level. In addition to Glopolis and NeoN as cross-thematic networks, there is the Reconstruction of the State, the Network for the Defence of Democracy, but also thematic umbrella organisations through their pan-European networks or individual CSOs working in the field of human rights, democracy and EU affairs. CSO networks are also very well-placed to disseminate information to their members and to engage or mobilise wider constituencies. The Czech public is active and responsive to calls to action when the rule of law or democracy is under threat or to promote human rights. They can mobilise and fill squares throughout the country.

In 2023, there were, among others, actions for the promotion of equal marriage, affordable social housing, or desegregation in the Czech educational system. LGBTIQ+ organisations advocated for the legal recognition of marriage equality that would positively affect many couples, individuals, families and children to have equal rights, responsibilities, and recognition. Recent surveys indicate that there is significant support with 65 per cent of the population in favour of marriage equality. The legislative proposal has received support from various actors, including the President, many politicians, professional organisations, businesses, associations, arts groups and academic bodies. Nevertheless, a complex debate continues to take place in the parliament, often to the point of being dishonourable. A vote is expected in 2024 but it is uncertain whether a majority in the parliament will support the proposal. At the same time, a parliamentary counter-proposal appeared with the aim of constitutionally enshrining marriage as a union of a man and a woman by amending the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is a step that contradicts the intention of the Charter to protect, not restrict, the rights of citizens. This appears to be a strategic attempt to hinder and complicate the enforcement of marriage equality legislation.<sup>48</sup>

The Czech Republic lacks adequate legal regulation of social housing, and according to the Constitutional Court, it is unsustainable as long-term insecurity regarding housing can threaten public confidence in the democratic rule of law. The state's obligation to provide housing for marginalised and particularly vulnerable persons (e.g. families with children and seniors) is not directly enforceable. However, vulnerable persons cannot be left only in the care of charity,

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<sup>48</sup> See Jsme fér Initiative: <https://www.jsmefer.cz/>

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volunteers or non-profit organisations.<sup>49</sup> The CSO Platform for Social Housing, along with the broad civil society initiative "Za bydlení/For Housing," advocates for effective and impactful housing support legislation before the end of the current electoral term. The proposed Act on Support in Housing aims to solve the housing crisis with several procedures proven in practice. It would establish a wide network of accessible contact points in municipal authorities providing people who find themselves in housing need with professional advice and help to prevent the loss of housing. Thanks to a well-thought-out system, people at risk of losing their housing will be able to receive a special benefit to pay the deposit, and assistants will help them with housing arrangements and good living conditions.<sup>50</sup>

The Czech society shows a high degree of solidarity and trust, compared to the EU, it was in 10th place in 2022 and 8th in 2023<sup>51</sup>. While public trust in the government is at an all-time low, 84 per cent of Czechs trust other people in general. Czech society knows how to come together and help in times of crisis, and the willingness to help each other is growing, with 20 per cent of people willingly volunteering. From the long-term time series of CVVM research on public trust in public institutions, the public attitudes towards CSOs is unfavourable - since 2015, mistrust prevails over trust<sup>52</sup>. On the other hand, other studies reveal different perceptions of CSOs among politicians/public administration and the public, with the public having more favourable attitudes towards CSOs in environmental matters.<sup>53</sup> However, data and systematic research on public attitudes towards CSOs and broader civil sector topics are scarce, making it impossible to draw a comprehensive interpretation.

In November 2023, 16 years passed since the European Court of Human Rights issued the judgement in the case of *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*. It concluded that the Czech Republic violated the prohibition of discrimination against the complainants in the area of their right to education. The complaint was filed by a group of 18 young Roma from Ostrava, who were placed in special schools for pupils with mental disabilities. The Roma were thus excessively enrolled in schools that offered modified educational programs, which subsequently limited their further education and employment. The European Court of Human Rights made it clear to the Czech Republic government

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.usoud.cz/aktualne/v-cr-chybi-zakon-o-socialnim-bydleni-dlouhodobajistota-obcanu-tykajici-se-bydleni-muze-ohrozit-duveru-v-demokraticky-pravni-stat>

<sup>50</sup> <https://socialnibydeni.org/> and <https://www.zabydleni.org/>

<sup>51</sup> Prosperity Index of the Czech Republic according to Česká spořitelna - <https://www.indexprosperity.cz/>

<sup>52</sup> CVVM - timelines of selected questions from the Naše společnost (Our society) survey - <https://cvvmapp.soc.cas.cz/#question24>

<sup>53</sup> CVVM - viz výzkumy v rámci Naše společnost - Ekologie - NS\_2209 - [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/index.php?option=com\\_finder&view=search&Itemid=250&lang=cz&q=%22NS\\_2209%22](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/index.php?option=com_finder&view=search&Itemid=250&lang=cz&q=%22NS_2209%22)



that the segregation of Roma children is not in accordance with the human rights convention, which the state signed in 1992. Many civil society actors, such as the local Roma parent organisations and Czech and international human rights CSOs, the European Commission and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights and the Council for CSOs have continued to call on the government to take the necessary steps for improvement. Research and civil society stakeholders acknowledge that Czech Roma face discrimination and identify concrete measures for desegregation in schools.<sup>54</sup>

The joint initiatives and coalition building across the civic sector have been ongoing. Some organisations gradually decreased their activity due to changing urgency (e.g. *Energy to People*<sup>55</sup>), while others have been emerging and grasping new topics (e.g. *Byro* - a platform for leaders in the public administration<sup>56</sup>). *NeoN - Network of Networks*<sup>57</sup> has increased to 20 networks and organisations, associating over 600 CSOs across wide thematic fields ranging from environment, education, youth and informal education, aid, social housing, anti-corruption and volunteering. The networks' common agenda is to strengthen democratic space, civic and stakeholder participation and partnership of the state with the CSO networks. *Partnership for Education 2030+*<sup>58</sup> was established at the end of 2022 as a collective impact initiative of seven important platforms in education and is becoming a leading partner connecting key stakeholders for systemic changes for improving children's learning and reducing educational inequalities. The business-based initiatives such as *The Second Economic Transformation*<sup>59</sup> or *The Change for the Better*<sup>60</sup> have established themselves in the public space, with substantially different resources and access to policy dialogue than CSO-led ones. Cross-sectoral cooperation for comprehensive solutions to the needs of society in the Czech Republic has potential for development, which requires financial and personnel resources, which are still very limited.

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<sup>54</sup> PAQ Research: [https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/vybor-pro-eu/2008/Priloha\\_1\\_Desegre\\_PAQ.pdf](https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rnno/vybor-pro-eu/2008/Priloha_1_Desegre_PAQ.pdf) and the project <https://www.desegregace.cz/> [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/evropsky-soud-pro-lidska-prava-ceska-republika-diskriminace-romskych-zaku-umluva\\_2305310700\\_ank](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/evropsky-soud-pro-lidska-prava-ceska-republika-diskriminace-romskych-zaku-umluva_2305310700_ank)

<https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-romske-deti-tu-nemaji-budoucnost-cesko-porazil-u-soudu-chce-ale-emigrovat-219377>

<sup>55</sup> An initiative of environmental and social care CSOs aiming at fighting the impact of energy poverty and promoting measures for clean and affordable energy for all - <https://energjelidem.cz/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.byro.works/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://neon-cooperation.org/>

<sup>58</sup> <https://partnerstvi2030.cz/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://druhaekonomickatransformace.cz/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.klepsimu.cz/>

# Recommendations

## Targeted recommendation:

- 🔍 Ensure political support and institutional embedding of citizen and stakeholder participation in public decision-making, including the introduction of participatory mechanisms, necessary skills, capacities and communities of practice, and strengthening overall literacy and culture of participation in the Czech administration and wider society.
- 🔍 **Promote recognition of the diverse roles of CSOs and encourage partnerships with CSOs and their umbrella organisations and networks within the public administration.**
- 🔍 **Ensure the necessary political support, administrative capacity and resources for the implementation of the Strategy for the cooperation of the Public Administration with NGOs 2021-2030.**
- 🔍 **Ensure that all CSOs have access to secure funding.**
- 🔍 **Ensure systemic changes in public funding enabling the multi-year financing, financial transfers in projects in partnerships and between the main and subsidiary associations, and fast-track grant making, grants without co-financing or with volunteer work and in-kind contributions, simpler accounting for grants, and sustainable funding for umbrella organisations.**
- 🔍 **Support the digitisation of CSOs through grant programmes for the development of digital competencies and digital infrastructure, as well as other capacities and processes necessary for ensuring open and safe digital civic space.**
- 🔍 **Take immediate steps to protect CSOs working on LGBTQI rights by holding perpetrators of attacks to account.**
- 🔍 **Immediately amend the Whistleblower Protection law by removing the requirement to sign the reporting by a whistleblower; expand the scope of the law so it applies to at least all misdemeanours; introduce preventive**

**protection against retaliatory measures following the example of Slovakia;  
entrust the agenda to an independent authority.**

- 🔍 Support implementation of the Whistleblower Protection Law by strengthening the relevant capacities in the Ministry of Justice.**



## About the author

Glopolis is a Czech-based CSO, established in 2004, connecting the non-profit sector, government and business and facilitating collaboration to create comprehensive solutions for democracy, coherent society and sustainable living. Glopolis has an outstanding experience in research, policy analysis, advocacy and campaigning at the Czech Republic's and EU levels. It serves as the backbone organisation of NeoN - Network of 20 Czech umbrella organisations and networks, associating 600 CSOs and striving for an accountable state that adheres to democratic principles and works with the civil society sector, and for the civil society sector that can work together to solve societal problems across disciplines. <https://glopolis.org/> <https://neon-cooperation.org>

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## About this report

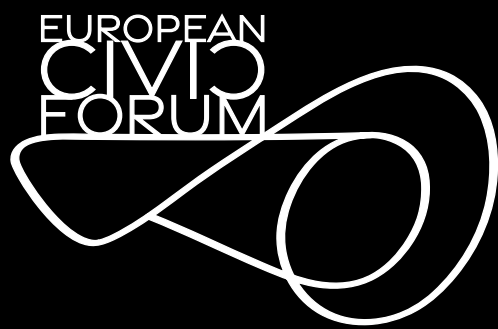
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