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LIGA LIDSKÝCH PRÁV

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LIBERTIES

RULE OF LAW REPORT

2025



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CZECH REPUBLIC

FOREWORD

This country report is part of the Liberties Rule of Law Report 2025, which is the sixth annual report on the state of rule of law in the European Union (EU) published by the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties). Liberties is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the EU, and it is built on a network of national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU. Currently, we have member organisations in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, as well as a contributing partner organisation in Greece.

Liberties, together with its members and partner organisations, carries out advocacy, campaigning and public education activities to explain what the rule of law is, what the EU and national governments are doing to protect or harm it, and gathers public support to press leaders at EU and national level to fully respect, promote and protect our basic rights and values.

The 2025 report was drafted by Liberties and its member and partner organisations, and it covers the situation during 2024. It is a ‘shadow report’ to the European Commission’s annual rule of law audit. As such, its purpose is to provide the European Commission with reliable information and analysis from the ground to feed its own rule of law reports, and to provide an independent analysis of the state of the rule of law in the EU in its own right.

Liberties’ report represents the most in-depth reporting exercise carried out to date by an NGO network to map developments in a wide range of areas connected to the rule of law in the EU. The 2025 report includes 21 country reports that follow a common structure, mirroring and expanding on the priority areas and indicators identified by the European Commission for its annual rule of law monitoring cycle. Over forty member and local partner organisations contributed to the compilation of these country reports.

[Download the full Liberties Rule of Law Report 2025 here.](#)

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CZECHIA

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The League of Human Rights



LIGA LIDSKÝCH PRÁV

The League of Human Rights (LLP) is a non-governmental non-profit human rights organization that monitors the state of respect for fundamental rights in the Czech Republic and points out their violations. LLP has long advocated systemic changes in the area of violations of fundamental rights in the Czech Republic through various instruments. At present, we focus on the protection of the rights of vulnerable people, including patients, mothers, people with psychosocial disabilities, children and involuntarily sterilised women.

KEY CONCERNS

Justice System

The Czech judiciary has made progress this year, with more women in top positions at the Constitutional Court, advancements in prosecutorial reform, a two-tier disciplinary system, and slight pay increases for court staff. Trust in the judiciary remains solid, but challenges like incomplete digitalisation and criticism of the expert law persist.

In 2024, progress was made in addressing judicial employee remuneration. Salaries will increase by CZK 5,000 from January 2025, though administrative staff at district courts face a reduction of CZK 1,200. Nevertheless, unions demand systemic reforms, including a special salary table for judicial staff.

Anti-Corruption Framework

The first law regulating lobbying and the phenomenon of revolving doors is in the legislative process and it is a big step forward. Nevertheless, it contains multiple exceptions which could weaken the impact of the law.

The Act on lobbying regulation is in the legislative process. Yet, it is not satisfactory as it contains many exceptions which may weaken its impact. Insufficient steps have been taken to shorten proceedings in high-level corruption

cases. The Parliamentary Code of Ethics has not been adopted.

Media Environment and Media Freedom

The Czech Republic ranked 17th in the World Press Freedom Index, published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). This marks a decline of three positions compared to the previous year. RSF noted challenges such as the high concentration of private media ownership and increasing online hostility toward journalists. However, some legislative initiatives seem positive.¹

The implementation of both recommendations is in progress: the implementation of European Media Freedom Act (not implemented yet) and the planned increase of licence fees.

Checks and Balances

The National Human Rights Institution has not been established, nor has the Office of Ombudsperson for Children, but the legislation for both is in the process.

Civic Space







Cooperation between the government and the civil sector is functional. We do not agree with the unbalanced distribution of funds for the civil sector.

1 Lupa.cz, 'A New Global Media Freedom Ranking Released, Czechia Ranks 17th' ('Vyšel nový žebříček svobody médií ve světě, Česko je na 17. místě'), 3 May 2024, <https://www.lupa.cz/aktuality/vysel-novy-zebricek-svobody-medii-ve-svete-cesko-je-na-17-miste>.

Disregard of Human Rights Obligations and Other Systemic Issues Affecting the Rule of Law Environment

Several important legislative changes were passed in 2024.

State of play (versus 2024)

-  Justice system
-  Anti-corruption framework
-  Media Environment and Media Freedom
-  Checks and balances
-  Civic Space
-  Human Rights

Legend

Regression



No progress



Progress



JUSTICE SYSTEM



Key recommendations

- Accelerate the process of justice digitisation, avoid further delays, and ensure that the planned projects are functional by the end of 2026.
- Enhance access to justice for vulnerable people by ensuring accessible legal aid and providing regular training for judges in areas such as proceedings on involuntary hospitalisation, measures supporting individuals with impaired legal capacity, and proceedings on the limitation of legal capacity. Additionally, ensure training in effective communication with vulnerable individuals through clear written and oral information provided by courts, with all these measures implemented by the end of 2026.
- Identify and implement fixed, systemic solutions to ensure more adequate and dignified remuneration for court administrative staff, based on an assessment of the current situation, with these measures firmly established by the end of 2025.

Judicial independence

Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors and court presidents

In the Czech judiciary, women have long been in the majority, although their representation in high judicial positions remains lower. In

2023, women made up 65% of judges in general courts,² a trend that continued in 2024 with new appointments by President Petr Pavel. At the beginning of the year, he appointed 57 judges, 45 of whom were women.³ By the end of the year, he appointed an additional 60 judges, 40 of whom were women.⁴ A more balanced gender ratio is evident in the leadership

2 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), *Czech Judiciary 2023: Annual Statistical Report (České soudnictví 2023: Výroční statistická zpráva)*, Prague: Ministry of Justice, 2024, p. 19, https://msp.gov.cz/documents/d/msp/ceske_soudnictvi_2023-1.

3 'President appointed 57 new judges, including former lawyers' ('Prezident jmenoval 57 nových soudců, jsou mezi nimi i dosavadní advokáti'), *Advokátní deník*, 2024, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/02/23/prezident-pavel-jmenoval-57-novych-soudcu-jsou-mezi-nimi-i-dosavadni-advokati/>.

4 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), 'Press release: President appointed sixty judges of general courts' ('Tisková zpráva: Prezident jmenoval šedesát soudkyň a soudců obecných soudů'), Prague: Ministry of Justice, 18 December 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/prezident-republiky-jmenoval-%C5%A1edes%C3%A1t-soudky%C5%88-a-soudc%C5%AF-obecn%C3%BDch-soud%C5%AF>.

of regional courts, where 52% of chairpersons and 60% of deputy chairpersons are women.⁵ However, no woman leads any of the top courts. Women hold only deputy chairperson positions at the High Court in Olomouc,⁶ the Supreme Administrative Court,⁷ and the Constitutional Court.⁸

In 2024, the president appointed four new Constitutional Court judges: Milan Hulmák (academic, lawyer, and arbitrator),⁹ Tomáš Langášek (judge), Jiří Přibán (academic),¹⁰ and Dita Řepková (academic). These appointments were not accompanied by any

significant challenges. Additionally, the president appointed Daniela Zemanová as Deputy Chairperson of the Constitutional Court, alongside Kateřina Ronovská as another Deputy Chairperson. Women now constitute one-third of the Constitutional Court, the highest proportion in its history.

The process for selecting new judges is governed by relatively new legislation, which, while functional, is not without flaws.¹¹ According to researchers from the international project *The Portrait of a Judge*,¹² the selection process could be more transparent. Issues such as the

5 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), *Czech Judiciary 2023: Annual Statistical Report* (České soudnictví 2023: Výroční statistická zpráva), Prague: Ministry of Justice, 2024, p. 20, https://msp.gov.cz/documents/d/msp/ceske_soudnictvi_2023-1.

6 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), *Leadership of the High Court in Olomouc* (Vedení Vrchního soudu v Olomouci), Prague: Ministry of Justice, 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/web/vrchni-soud-v-olomouci/zakladni-informace/-/clanek/vedeni-vrchniho-soudu-v-olomou-1>.

7 Supreme Administrative Court (Czech Republic), *Officials of the Supreme Administrative Court* (Funkcionáři Nejvyššího správního soudu), Brno: Supreme Administrative Court, 2025, <https://www.nssoud.cz/o-soudu/organizace-soudu/funkcionari-nejvyssiho-spravniho-soudu>.

8 Constitutional Court (Czech Republic), *Current Officials and Judges* (Současní funkcionáři a soudci), Brno: Constitutional Court, 2025, <https://www.usoud.cz/soucasni-funkcionari-a-soudci>.

9 Office of the President of the Republic (Czech Republic), 'The President of the Republic Appointed Judges to the Constitutional Court', 1 February 2024, <https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-jmenuje-soudce-ustavniho-soudu-17591#from-list>.

10 Office of the President of the Republic (Czech Republic), 'Press Release: President Petr Pavel Appointed the Vice-President and Judges of the Constitutional Court' ('Tisková zpráva: Prezident republiky Petr Pavel jmenoval místopředsedkyni a soudce Ústavního soudu'), 25 June 2024, <https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-petr-pavel-jmenuje-soudce-a-mistopredsedykyni-ustavniho-soudu-17966#from-list>.

11 European Commission, *Rule of Law Report 2024: Chapter on the State of Rule of Law in the Czech Republic*, Brussels: European Commission, 2024, p. 5, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2024-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_cs.

12 *JudgePortrait: Project Description*, <https://judgeportrait.eu/project-description/>.

low remuneration for judicial assistants and the demanding judicial examination may deter potential candidates from pursuing a judicial career. The judicial examination places significant emphasis on legal knowledge but pays insufficient attention to other qualities and skills, such as analytical and logical thinking, stress management, or communication skills.¹³

Irremovability of judges; including transfers, dismissal and retirement regime of judges, court presidents and prosecutors

The legislature has adopted an amendment to the Act on Public Prosecution aimed at addressing previously unregulated or contentious issues and significantly strengthening the independence of the judiciary. A key aspect of the reform is the introduction of fixed seven-year terms for senior prosecutors, along with more transparent rules for their selection.¹⁴

One of the most debated provisions defines the conditions under which the government can

dismiss the Prosecutor General. Previously, the government could dismiss the Prosecutor General without providing reasons. Under the new legislation, dismissal is allowed only under specific legal conditions, and such decisions are now subject to review by the Supreme Administrative Court.¹⁵ This reform has been broadly well-received, and further details were included in last year's European Commission rule of law report on the Czech Republic.¹⁶

In 2024, President Pavel exercised his veto power for the first time, rejecting an amendment to the Act on Courts and Judges. This amendment stipulated that lay judges would no longer participate in certain court proceedings alongside professional judges, as had been the case until now. Exceptions include first-instance criminal proceedings for particularly serious crimes, excluding property and economic offenses. Lay judges would also participate in first-instance cases involving the murder of a newborn child by its mother.¹⁷

13 Echo24.cz, 'Czechia Aims to Improve the Selection of Judges' ('Česko chce zlepšit výběr soudců'), <https://www.echo24.cz/a/HXpAC/cesko-chce-zlepsit-vyber-soudcu>.

14 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), 'Senators Approved a Key Law for Independent Judiciary. It Took Almost 25 Years' ('Senátoři schválili klíčový zákon pro nezávislou justici. Trvalo to takřka 25 let'), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/senatori-schvalili-klicovy-zakon-pro-nezavislou-justici-trvalo-to-takrka-25-let>.

15 Ibid.

16 European Commission, *Rule of Law Report 2024: Chapter on the State of Rule of Law in the Czech Republic*, Brussels: European Commission, 2024, pp. 3–4, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2024-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_cs.

17 Advokátní deník, 'Limitation of Lay Judges Confirmed, Deputies Overrode the President's Veto' ('Omezení přísedících u soudu potvrzeno, poslanci přehlasovali prezidentovo veto'), 2024, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/10/23/omezeni-prisedicich-u-soudu-potvrzeno-poslanci-prehlasovali-prezidentovo-veto/>.

The President criticised the amendment, stating that such a significant reduction in the use of lay judges should have been preceded by a more thorough analysis.¹⁸ However, Parliament overrode the President's veto, and the amendment took effect in January 2025.¹⁹

Accountability of judges and prosecutors, including disciplinary regime and bodies and ethical rules, judicial immunity and criminal liability of judges

Lawmakers have recently amended the disciplinary procedure for judges, prosecutors, and executors, which is now becoming two-tiered. Until now, these proceedings were handled exclusively by the Supreme Administrative Court. Following the Court's decision, the only other options were to request a retrial or file a constitutional complaint. Under the new system, first-instance cases will be decided by the High Courts in Prague and Olomouc, while appeals will be heard by the Supreme Administrative Court or the Supreme Court.²⁰

The amendment also introduces the possibility of reaching an agreement on guilt and disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures for judges and prosecutors include a reprimand,

salary reduction, dismissal from office, or removal from the position of presiding judge (in the case of judges). For executors, measures may include a warning, a fine, or dismissal from office.²¹

Remuneration/bonuses for judges and prosecutors

In 2024, the Constitutional Court dealt with three cases concerning the freezing of judges' salaries in 2021, 2022, and 2024. It assessed the constitutionality of legislative measures restricting the growth of judges' salaries and examined whether these measures endangered the independence of the judiciary.

In the case of salary freezes in 2021, the legislature maintained judges' salaries at the 2020 level. The Constitutional Court found this measure constitutional, given the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Judges were required to show solidarity with society, but the intervention did not compromise their financial security or independence.

18 Office of the President of the Republic (Czech Republic), 'Press Release: The President of the Republic Vetoes the Law' ('Tisková zpráva: Prezident republiky vetoval zákon'), Prague: Prague Castle, 2024, <https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/prezident-republiky-vetoval-zakon-18090>.

19 Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, *House Document 598: Amendment to the Act on Courts and Judges - EU*, 2025, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=598>.

20 Deník N, 'Pavel Signed the Introduction of Two-Tier Disciplinary Proceedings with Judges and Prosecutors' ('Pavel podepsal zavedení dvoustupňových kárných řízení se soudci a žalobci'), 2024, <https://denikn.cz/minuta/1607204/>.

21 Ibid.

The salary freeze in 2022 was deemed unconstitutional on procedural grounds by the Constitutional Court because the restrictive measure was neither properly justified nor discussed with representatives of the judiciary. Furthermore, the law was passed under a state of legislative emergency, which was not warranted. Nevertheless, the Court ruled that the salary differences would not be reimbursed to the judges. The Court considered extraordinary circumstances, including the deteriorating economic situation, the energy crisis, and the war in Ukraine. According to the Constitutional Court, reimbursing salaries would not contribute to public trust in the judiciary.

The Constitutional Court emphasised that interventions in judges' salaries must be properly justified and discussed with the judiciary to avoid undermining the independence of the

judiciary. Salary restrictions are permissible only in exceptional circumstances, provided they are proportionate and respect constitutional principles. The material security of judges is essential not only for their independence but also for maintaining public trust in the judiciary.²²

In previous years, our rule of law report for the Czech Republic highlighted the lack of resources for the remuneration of judicial employees, particularly assistants and administrative staff. The situation escalated further in 2024. Employees of courts,^{23,24} as well as those of public prosecution offices,²⁵ the Probation and Mediation Service, and the Prison Service,²⁶ staged mass strikes throughout the year, which significantly disrupted court operations (e.g., hearings were postponed, and court filing offices were closed).

22 Constitutional Court (Czech Republic), 'Press Release: Judicial Salaries for 2021, 2022, and 2024 Back on the Constitutional Court's Table: Three Times the Same but Each Time Slightly Different' ('Tisková zpráva: Soudcovské platy 2021, 2022 a 2024 po čase opět na stole Ústavního soudu: třikrát stejně, ale pokaždé trochu jinak'), 28 May 2024, <https://www.usoud.cz/aktualne/soudcovske-platy-2021-2022-a-2024-po-case-opet-na-stole-ustavniho-soudu-trikrat-stejne-ale-pokazde-trochu-jinak>.

23 iRozhlas, 'Court Officials Strike Over Salaries: Thousands Stay Home for a Day' ('Soudní úředníci stávkují kvůli platům. Tisíce lidí zůstávají jeden den doma'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/soud-soudy-stavka-cesko-justice-platy-pavel-blazek_2405290715_ako.

24 ČTK, 'Ministers of Justice and Finance Plan Another Meeting with Judicial Unions' ('Ministři spravedlnosti a financí počítají s další schůzkou s justičními odbory'), České noviny, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/dnesnim-dnem-skonci-tridenni-stavka-pracovniku-soudu/2580000>.

25 Czech Television (Česká televize), 'Employees of the Prague Public Prosecutor's Office to Go on a Three-Day Strike' ('Zaměstnanci státních zastupitelství v Praze půjdou do třídní stávký'), 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/zamestnanci-statnich-zastupitelstvi-v-praze-pujdou-do-tridenni-stavky-353793>.

26 Czech Justice, 'Because of the Low Salaries, Even Probation Officers Have Turned to Blažek' ('Kvůli nízkým platům se na Blažka obrátili i probační úředníci'), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/06/kvuli-nizkym-platum-se-na-blazka-obratili-i-probacni-urednici/>.

According to the Deputy President of the Supreme Court, Petr Šuk, one of the main causes of underfunding in court budgets is that the judiciary has no direct influence in the adoption of its budget. This issue is compounded by high turnover among underpaid employees, which jeopardises the efficiency of the courts. Judicial proceedings may slow down as a result. Ultimately, insufficient funding for judicial employees could threaten the democratic rule of law by paralysing the judiciary.²⁷

The striking employees received support not only from Deputy President Šuk but also from other judges. For instance, judges from the High Court in Prague organised an informal fundraiser to compensate employees for the wages they lost when they had to take unpaid leave to join the strike.²⁸

After discussions with representatives of the Supreme, High, and Regional Courts, Justice Minister Pavel Blažek promised that the average budgeted salary for judicial employees would increase from the original CZK 37,370 by CZK 5,000 to CZK 42,370 starting in January 2025.²⁹ However, the Collegium of Regional Court Presidents decided to reduce this amount by CZK 1,200 for administrative staff at district courts, a decision that has understandably angered court employees.³⁰

The Judicial Trade Union remains dissatisfied with the measures and continues to demand the creation of a special salary table for judicial employees.³¹

27 Czech Justice, ‘Šuk: The Current Situation Is Already Jeopardizing the Functioning of Courts’ (‘Šuk: Současný stav již ohrožuje samotné fungování soudů’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/07/suk-soucasny-stav-jiz-ohrozuje-samotne-fungovani-soudu/>.

28 Czech Justice, ‘Judges of the High Court in Prague Financially Supported Striking Employees’ (‘Soudci z Vrchního soudu v Praze finančně podpořili stávkující zaměstnanci’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/08/soudci-z-vrchniho-soudu-v-praze-financne-podporili-stavkujici-zamestnanci/>.

29 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), ‘Press Release of 16 December 2024: Meeting of the Ministry of Justice Leadership with Representatives of the Supreme, High, and Regional Courts’, 2025, <https://msp.gov.cz/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/jedn%C3%A1n%C3%AD-veden%C3%AD-ministerstva-spravedlnosti-s-p%C5%99edstaviteli-nejvy%C5%A1%C5%A1%C3%ADch-vrchn%C3%ADch-a-krajsk%C3%BDch-soud%C5%AF-1>.

30 Czech Justice, ‘Employees of the District Courts Will Receive CZK 1,200 Less Than in the Regional Courts’ (‘Zaměstnanci okresních soudů dostanou o 1 200 Kč méně než u krajských soudů’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/12/zamestnanci-okresnich-soudu-dostanou-o-1200-kc-mene-nez-u-krajskych-soudu/>.

31 iDnes.cz, MAFRA, ‘The Salary of Court Employees Will Increase by CZK 5,000. Blažek Agreed with the Unions’ (‘Zaměstnanci soudů si polepší o 5 000 Kč. Blažek se dohodl s odbory’), 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/zamestnanci-soudy-prumerny-plat-narust.A241212_162847_domaci_misl.

Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers

The draft amendment to the Advocacy Act is heading to its third reading and introduces a number of changes.^{32,33} Among its key goals is to strengthen the confidentiality of communication between clients and lawyers, ensuring that all information exchanged in the context of legal services is protected. The amendment also allows for the General Assembly and elections to the bodies of the Czech Bar Association to be conducted online.

Another change involves removing certain barriers to the practice of trainee lawyers. This will support trainees who, for example, cannot work full-time due to caring for a family member or other serious reasons.

The amendment also introduces new rules to prevent the misappropriation of funds held in lawyers' escrow accounts. Escrow accounts will be specially designated, transactions will be restricted, and banks will be required to inform clients about account movements. The Czech Bar Association will gain broader supervisory powers in this area. Additionally, a compensation fund will be established to provide clients with reimbursements in cases of misappropriation.

The amendment further clarifies rules regarding the provision of legal services by unauthorised individuals. It also establishes procedures for lawyers in the official verification of a client's electronic signature.

The proposed changes to the Advocacy Act are mostly positive and help strengthen the professionalism, trust, and efficiency of the legal profession. Measures like stricter rules for escrow accounts or protecting confidentiality have a direct impact on the rule of law because they safeguard clients' rights, ensure legal certainty, and support the integrity of the profession. On the other hand, changes aimed at digitalisation or making the profession more accessible have an indirect effect – they make processes more efficient and inclusive, which helps the justice system function better overall. Importantly, none of the proposed measures seem to negatively affect the independence of lawyers.

In the third reading, lawmakers will also debate several proposed amendments.

32 Advokátní deník, 'Amendment to the Advocacy Act Passed Its Second Reading in the Chamber of Deputies' ('Novela zákona o advokacii prošla ve sněmovně druhým čtením'), 2025, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/10/29/novela-zakona-o-advokacii-prosla-ve-snemovne-druhym-ctenim/>.

33 Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, *House Document No. 623*, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=623&csnzp=1>.

Significant developments capable of affecting the perception that the general public has of the independence of the judiciary

According to the European Commission, in 2024, nearly half of respondents in Czechia (46%) view judicial independence as “fairly good”, with 9% rating it “very good”. However, 25% see it as “fairly bad”, and 13% as “very bad”.³⁴ Interestingly, the percentage of respondents rating judicial independence positively decreased by 11 percentage points compared to 2023, reflecting a notable decline in public trust.³⁵

Despite this, Czech courts enjoy the trust of 61% of the population.³⁶ Trust decreases with increasing age but grows with higher educational attainment.³⁷ Over the long term, trust in the judiciary among Czechs has increased.³⁸

Factors influencing the perception of justice include the previously mentioned issue of insufficient funding for court employees and, from

a different perspective, the newly introduced two-tier disciplinary proceedings for judges.

Another significant factor affecting the perception of justice is the length of court proceedings, which is also related to the aforementioned issues. According to the most recent annual report on the state of the judiciary (2023), the Czech judicial system is stable. Some areas, such as administrative cases handled by regional courts, have seen reductions in processing times. First-instance civil and criminal proceedings were 18 days shorter than in 2022. However, disparities remain significant across judicial regions and individual district courts.³⁹

Quality of justice

Accessibility of courts (e.g. court fees, legal aid, language)

Access to justice can be significantly supported by the amendment to the Ministry of Justice’s decree on lawyers’ fees, effective as of January 2025, which increases non-contractual fees

34 European Commission, *Perceived Independence of the National Justice Systems in the EU Among the General Public: Czechia*, 2024, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3193>.

35 European Union, *Flash Eurobarometer 540 – Perceived Independence of the National Justice Systems in the EU Among the General Public: Report*, 2024, pp. 3, 5, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3193>.

36 Center for Public Opinion Research, ‘Press Release of 19 September 2024: Trust in Selected Institutions of Public Life and Interpersonal Trust - Summer 2024’, 2024, pp. 1–2, <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/images/articles/files/5870/po240919.pdf>.

37 Ibid, p. 2.

38 Ibid, p. 3.

39 Czech Justice, ‘The Length of Proceedings in District Courts Decreased Last Year, by an Average of 18 Days’ (‘Délka řízení u okresních soudů se vloni zkrátila v průměru o 18 dní’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/09/delka-rizeni-u-okresnich-soudu-se-vloni-zkratila-v-prumeru-o-18-dni/>.

for lawyers. These fees were last increased in 2006. The proposal initially included an ‘inflation clause’ that would allow fees to adjust according to inflation, but this was ultimately not adopted. The amendment is the result of extensive discussion and represents a compromise solution.⁴⁰

Despite this, the decree still contains discrepancies in proceedings where it is difficult to determine the value of the matter or the right being protected. While the fee for such cases has generally increased from CZK 10,000 to CZK 30,000, proceedings concerning the care of minors, adoption, support measures, legal capacity, interventions in personal integrity, or detention proceedings in cases of involuntary hospitalisation have seen their fees increase only from CZK 5,000 to CZK 10,000. For example, when a lawyer acts as a guardian in a detention proceeding related to involuntary hospitalisation, the fee remains only CZK 5,000.⁴¹ This represents a significant disparity compared to other cases where the value of the matter is difficult to assess, but the fee is higher.

The proceedings mentioned above are often highly demanding in terms of legal

argumentation, effective communication with the client, and the time the lawyer must dedicate to the case.

While the overall increase in lawyers’ fees is a positive step forward, it has not been adequately addressed in some areas.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that the Czech Constitutional Court violated the right to a fair trial (Article 6 of the Convention) by failing to review the complaint of two U.S. citizens, Alice Crites and Michael Rabinovitz. The Constitutional Court dismissed their complaint, citing the failure to exhaust all available remedies, specifically an appeal to the Supreme Court. However, under the Czech Civil Procedure Code, such an appeal was inadmissible in their case due to the low monetary value of the dispute (CZK 42,000). The ECtHR concluded that the Constitutional Court’s procedural misjudgment effectively deprived the applicants of access to a court. As a result, the applicants’ rights were found to be violated, and they were awarded €1,300 in compensation for expenses.⁴²

40 Czech Justice, ‘Blažek Signed an Increase in the Lawyer’s Tariff. It Is a Maximum Compromise, Says the Head of the CBA Němec’ (‘Blažek podepsal zvýšení advokátního tarifu. Jde o maximální kompromis, říká šéf ČAK Němec’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/08/blazek-podepsal-zvyseni-advokatniho-tarifu-jde-o-maximalni-kompromis-rika-sef-cak-nemec/>.

41 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), *Decree No. 177/1996 Coll., on Lawyers’ Fees and Attorneys’ Fees for the Provision of Legal Services (Advocates’ Tariff)*, § 9, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1996-177?citace=1>.

42 Czech Justice, ‘The Constitutional Court Has Deprived Two People of Their Right of Access to the Courts, Strasbourg Has Ruled’ (‘Ústavní soud připravil dvě osoby o právo na přístup k soudu, rozhodl Štrasburk’), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/06/ustavni-soud-pripravil-dve-osoby-o-pravo-na-pristup-k-soudu-rozhodl-strasburk/>.

Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff)

The Chamber of Deputies has passed the first reading of a proposal by a group of MPs to amend the Courts and Judges Act, focusing on improving ongoing judicial education, particularly in dealing with victims of crimes and other vulnerable individuals.⁴³ The amendment is called ‘Lex Anička’ as it responds to widespread criticism of the judiciary in cases where judges failed to adequately consider the needs of victims of sexual violence, including a widely publicised case of the sexual abuse of a minor by her stepfather.⁴⁴

The aim of the amendment is to introduce individualised education plans for judges to increase their participation in training programs focused on sensitive areas, such as interviewing children and working with victims of sexual violence or other traumatised individuals.

The proposal also includes increasing compensation for victims of crimes, which has not been adjusted since 2013. The amendment foresees regular indexation of these amounts based on the average wage.

Additionally, the amendment introduces the possibility of replacing expert opinions and expert testimony in legal capacity limitation proceedings with a written report from the attending physician, combined with an assessment of the individual’s need for support in legal acts, prepared by a court social worker. This approach is inspired by Austria, where similar assessments have proven effective. However, the government has criticised this part of the amendment, arguing that it requires more comprehensive development.⁴⁵

The President of the Judges’ Union, Libor Vávra, supports the proposal but highlights the long-standing issue of underfunding in the judiciary and the fact that the preparation of the amendment did not involve consultation with representatives of the judiciary.⁴⁶

43 Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, *House Document No. 747: Amendment to the Act on Courts and Judges*, 2024, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=747>.

44 Czech Radio (iRozhlas), ‘Lex Anička: The Justice Department Wants More Training for Judges on How to Deal with Rape Victims’ (‘Lex Anička: Ministerstvo spravedlnosti chce více školit soudce, jak jednat s oběťmi znásilnění’), 2025, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/lex-anicka-ministerstvo-spravedlnosti-chce-vice-skolit-soudce-jak-jednat-s_2407080700_job.

45 Government of the Czech Republic, *Opinion on the Proposal of the MPs Pavel Blažek, Marie Jílková, Klára Kocmanová, Taťána Malá, Barbora Urbanová, and Michal Zuna to Issue an Act Amending Act No. 6/2002 Coll., on Courts, Judges, and the State Administration of Courts and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts (Act on Courts and Judges), as Amended, and Other Related Acts (Parliamentary Document No. 747)*, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/orig2.sqw?idd=244115>.

46 Czech Radio (iRozhlas), ‘Lex Anička: The Justice Department Wants More Training for Judges on How to Deal with Rape Victims’ (‘Lex Anička: Ministerstvo spravedlnosti chce více školit soudce, jak jednat s oběťmi znásilnění’), 2025, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/lex-anicka-ministerstvo-spravedlnosti-chce-vice-skolit-soudce-jak-jednat-s_2407080700_job.

If the amendment is approved, it could come into effect in 2025. However, its successful implementation will depend on securing sufficient financial resources and support from the judicial community.

The proposed change to replace expert opinions in legal capacity limitation proceedings with reports from attending physicians and court social workers has potential but requires further development. The Czech Republic faces a chronic shortage of qualified experts, particularly in psychiatry, and courts often misuse expert opinions, adopting conclusions without proper scrutiny.⁴⁷ While systemic reform to improve evidence processes could enhance judicial efficiency and fairness, the proposed amendment needs refinement to ensure adequate assessments. Adequate funding for the judiciary is also crucial—not just for evidence processes but for the effective functioning of courts overall. These are relevant issues for the rule of law in the Czech Republic.

Digitalisation (e.g. use of digital technology, particularly electronic communication tools, within the justice system and with court users, including resilience of justice systems in COVID-19 pandemic)

The Czech government is overall failing to manage the topic of digitalisation. In autumn, Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and Minister for Regional Development Ivan Bartoš was removed from office.⁴⁸ No one has replaced him as Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation. Shortly before the Christmas holidays, the government coalition pushed through a two-year postponement of the digitalisation of state services in the Chamber of Deputies by attaching a legislative rider, i.e. amendment loosely related to the original subject of the bill, to the Act on Electronic Communications.⁴⁹ The completion of digitalisation in the judiciary is also being delayed, although some digitalisation programs are already operational or will be soon (e.g., e-Collection and e-Legislation).⁵⁰

The digitalisation of the judiciary in the Czech Republic is progressing, but it is far from

47 Crossroads of Autonomy, *Court Practices in Deciding on Support Measures*, Research by the Public Defender of Rights, 2020, p. 27-29, https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/Krizovatky_autonomie.pdf.

48 Czech Television (Česká televize), 'Pavel Dismissed Bartoš, Fiala Says There Will Be No Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation' ('Pavel odvolal Bartoše, Fiala říká, že nebude vicepremiér pro digitalizaci'), 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/zive-spicky-petikoalice-jednaji-s-prezidentem-o-vladni-krizi-353493>.

49 iDnes.cz, 'Bartoš Asks Fiala How He Will Intervene with Ministers Where Digitisation Is Slowed Down' ('Bartoš interpelace: premiér Fiala, jak zakročíte tam, kde je zpomalena digitalizace'), 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/bartos-interpelace-premier-fiala-jak-zakrocite-tam-kde-je-zpomalena-digitalizace.A250103_104425_domaci_kop.

50 zakony.gov.cz, <https://zakony.gov.cz/>.

complete. Some projects are already operational, such as e-Collection, which provides electronic access to current legal regulations, and e-Legislation, a tool streamlining the preparation and publication of legislation. These systems significantly facilitate access to law and legislative processes. However, significant shortcomings remain.⁵¹

The eISIR project, aimed at digitising the insolvency agenda in the Czech judiciary, faces significant delays. Initially scheduled for completion in autumn 2023, the current timeline indicates that full-scale operations will not begin until May 2025, with gradual implementation in other insolvency courts by November 2025.⁵² The Ministry of Justice attributes the delays to the previous administration, which struggled with preparations and the selection of a supplier. Current Minister of Justice Pavel

Blažek (ODS) emphasises that digitalisation is a priority for him and that intensive efforts are underway to complete the project.⁵³

On the other hand, the supplier, IBM, criticises the Ministry for insufficient cooperation and a lax approach, which it claims contributes to the delays.

Additionally, the eFILE project, focused on digitising court files, is also behind schedule. The Ministry of Justice has been working on this project since 2008.⁵⁴ According to the Ministry, the project is still in the preparation phase, with gradual implementation planned, though no specific details about the delays or their causes have been provided. The system is expected to be fully operational in the coming years.⁵⁵

51 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), 'The Electronic Drafting of Regulations Is Gradually Starting; Laws Will Be Drafted with Its Help Next Year at the Earliest' ('Elektronická tvorba předpisů se postupně rozbíhá; zákony se s její pomocí budou psát nejdříve příští rok'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/esbirka-elegislativa-pravo-zakon-ministerstvo-vnitra_2412092030_cib.

52 Seznam Zprávy, 'Digital Justice Is Delayed Again. This Time to May 2025' ('Digitální spravedlnost se zase odkládá. Tentokrát na květen 2025'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-digitalni-spravedlnost-se-zase-odklada-264898>.

53 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), Press Release of 24 November 2024: 'The Ministry of Justice Sets the Record Straight on the Digitalisation of Justice', 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/ministerstvo-spravedlnosti-uvadi-na-pravou-miru-informace-k-digitalizaci-justice-kopirovat->.

54 Seznam Zprávy, 'Digital Justice Is Delayed Again. This Time to May 2025' ('Digitální spravedlnost se zase odkládá. Tentokrát na květen 2025'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-digitalni-spravedlnost-se-zase-odklada-264898>.

55 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), Press Release of 24 November 2024: 'The Ministry of Justice Sets the Record Straight on the Digitalisation of Justice' (Tisková zpráva: 'Ministerstvo spravedlnosti uvádí na pravou míru informace k digitalizaci justice'), 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/ministerstvo-spravedlnosti-uvadi-na-pravou-miru-informace-k-digitalizaci-justice-kopirovat->.

Full integration of all digital tools into a unified system has not yet been achieved, limiting their efficiency. While some areas of digitalisation are already delivering results, the judicial system is still awaiting comprehensive implementation to ensure greater efficiency and modernisation across the entire judiciary.⁵⁶

Overall, the digitalisation of the judiciary, which is intended to streamline and accelerate the work of courts and lawyers, is now expected to be completed no earlier than 2025, representing a delay of at least two years from the original plans.⁵⁷ This remains a fact despite the Ministry of Justice's objections.⁵⁸

Another aspect of digitalisation is the potential introduction of AI into the judiciary,⁵⁹ which is one of the topics the Ministry of Justice is

exploring as part of its digitalisation efforts.⁶⁰ Key discussions include ethical and moral considerations, with experts emphasising the need for clearly defined rules for AI integration. There is also debate over the automation of routine tasks, such as anonymising court rulings or analysing legal documents, which could significantly improve the efficiency of the judicial system. AI could also assist lawyers with text processing, finding connections, and conducting deeper analysis of larger datasets.

Cybersecurity is another critical area of discussion, as it is essential to protect sensitive data from potential threats. Lastly, Government Commissioner for Human Rights Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková has urged the government to ensure that digitalisation efforts do

56 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), 'The Electronic Drafting of Regulations Is Gradually Starting; Laws Will Be Drafted with Its Help Next Year at the Earliest' ('Elektronická tvorba předpisů se postupně rozbíhá; zákony se s její pomocí budou psát nejdříve příští rok'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/esbirka-elegislativa-pravo-zakon-ministerstvo-vnitro_2412092030_cib.

57 Seznam Zprávy, 'Digital Justice Is Delayed Again. This Time to May 2025' ('Digitální spravedlnost se zase odkládá. Tentokrát na květen 2025'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-digitalni-spravedlnost-se-zase-odklada-264898>.

58 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), Press Release of 24 November 2024: 'The Ministry of Justice Sets the Record Straight on the Digitalisation of Justice' ('Tisková zpráva: 'Ministerstvo spravedlnosti uvádí na pravou míru informace k digitalizaci justice'), 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/ministerstvo-spravedlnosti-uvadi-na-pravou-miru-informace-k-digitalizaci-justice-kopirovat->.

59 Advokátní deník, 'Experts Discussed the Advantages and Pitfalls of Using AI Not Only in the Czech Justice System' ('O výhodách i úskalích využití AI nejen v české justici diskutovali odborníci'), 2024, <https://advokatnid-enik.cz/2024/10/21/o-vyhodach-i-uskalich-vyuziti-ai-nejen-v-ceske-justici-diskutovali-odbornici/>.

60 Czech Justice, 'Artificial Intelligence Is Changing the World of Law. The Association Is Addressing How to Work with It Ethically' ('Umělá inteligence mění i svět práva. Asociace řeší, jak s ní pracovat eticky'), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/10/umela-inteligence-meni-i-svet-prava-asociace-resi-jak-s-ni-pracovat-eticky/>.

not overlook vulnerable groups and to retain offline alternatives alongside online systems.⁶¹

Other

The proposed amendment to the Act on Experts, which has passed its first reading in the Chamber of Deputies,⁶² aims to stabilise the situation and prevent further decreases in their numbers, which have dropped by one-fifth since 2021. The amendment eliminates mandatory relicensing and insurance for individual experts, extends deadlines for entering data into the records, and allows experts to continue their activities without a new license beyond 2025.⁶³

However, the Public Defender of Rights (and other stakeholders) warns that the amendment addresses issues only superficially and may lead to greater confusion. The Ombudsman

criticises the abolition of relicensing and mandatory insurance, highlights unclear entry conditions and lengthy licensing processes, and proposes better privacy protection for experts. The Ombudsman also opposes the principle of collective liability for the misconduct of expert offices.⁶⁴

Fairness and efficiency of the justice system

Length of proceedings

As mentioned earlier, courts have slightly improved their efficiency year-over-year, and statistically, they now handle cases relatively quickly. However, there are notable differences between individual courts, as previously highlighted. Additionally, shorter case durations do not necessarily mean that all matters are reviewed thoroughly.⁶⁵

61 CzechJustice, 'Digitisation Without Alternative May Lead to Violation of Right to Fair Trial, Writes Commissioner' ('Digitalizace bez alternativy může vést k porušení práva na spravedlivý proces, píše komisař'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-digitalni-spravedlnost-se-zase-odklada-264898>.

62 House Print 750, Amendment to the Act on experts, expert offices. and expert institutes, Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2024, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=750>.

63 Advokátní deník, 'The House Could Approve the Relaxation of the Conditions for Expert Witnesses Without Changes' ('Zmírnění podmínek pro soudní znalce by mohla sněmovna schválit beze změn'), 2024, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/10/09/zmirneni-podminek-pro-soudni-znalce-by-mohla-snemovna-schvalit-beze-zmen/>.

64 Office of the Public Defender of Rights (Czech Republic), *Comments on the Draft Law Amending Act No. 254/2019 Coll., on Experts, Expert Offices, and Expert Institutes, and Other Related Acts*, ODOk Portal, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2025, <https://www.odok.cz/portal/veklep/material/pripominky/KORNCXKG9LQO/>.

65 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), 'Czech Courts Have Accelerated Year-on-Year. Judgments Are Announced in Record Time, Yet Some Disputes Drag On for Years' ('České soudy meziročně zrychlily. Rozsudky vyhláší v rekordním čase, některé spory se ale vlečou roky'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/ceske-soudy-mezirocne-zrychlily-rozsudky-vyhlasuji-v-rekordnim-case-nektere_2407311012_tko.

Regarding legislative measures, a proposal for a comprehensive amendment to the Code of Administrative Procedure is currently under consideration in the Chamber of Deputies. However, it has not yet progressed to its first

reading. This raises concerns about whether the amendment will complete the legislative process before the end of the electoral term in autumn 2024.⁶⁶

ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

Key recommendations

- *The Parliament should enact the Act on lobbying regulation (including parliamentary and senatorial assistants in the scope of the proposed law)*
- *The Legislature and the government should ensure more efficient investigation of corruption cases*
- *The Legislature should adopt a Code of Ethics for both Houses of Parliament*

Levels of corruption

Public perception studies reflected concerns about corruption. A survey by the Public Opinion Research Center (CVVM) in the summer of 2024 revealed that citizens perceive corruption as widespread among public officials and institutions, indicating a significant impact on public trust and the perceived integrity of services. Only 7% of respondents believe that very few public officials are corrupt. 14% of respondents believe that almost

all these officials are involved in corruption. In an overall comparison of different institutions and areas of public life, citizens are most sceptical about corruption within political parties, with just under a third (30%) describing it as almost the highest and two-fifths (34%) of respondents describing it as the highest. The public perceives banks, financial institutions and education as the areas least affected by corruption. At the same time, the level of beliefs about corruption is decreasing compared to previous periods.⁶⁷

66 Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, *House Print 777: Amendment to the Administrative Procedure Act (Novela správního řádu)*, 2024, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=777>.

67 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění (CVVM), *Opinion on the Prevalence and Degree of Corruption Among Public Officials and Institutions – Summer 2024 (Názor na rozšířenost a míru korupce u veřejných činitelů a institucí – léto 2024)*, 2024, <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/politicke/politicke-ostatni/5887-nazor-na-rozsi-renost-a-miru-korupce-u-verejnych-cinitelu-a-instituci-leto-2024>.

In 2024, the National Centre for Combating Organised Crime (NCOZ) released its annual report detailing activities of the previous year. The report highlighted that in 2023, NCOZ obtained judicial authorisation for wiretapping and surveillance in 94 cases (more than in previous years), reflecting the agency's ongoing efforts to combat organised crime and corruption within the Czech Republic.⁶⁸

The Czech Republic is still one of the most attractive countries to launder the proceeds of crime. One of the tools used to conceal the illegal origin of money is so-called 'flow-through' or 'transit' accounts.

In July 2024, the National Centre against Organised Crime (NCOZ) released its annual report for 2023, which shows, among other things, the deteriorating security situation in the Czech Republic. According to the report, there have been significant movements of post-Soviet criminal organisations into the Czech Republic and an increase in efforts to circumvent national and international sanctions. These are accompanied by the transfer of criminal capital, with attempts to invest and

subsequently legalise it in the country. Moreover, according to the report, criminal groups will continue to try to move their people, influence and assets to the EU, including the Czech Republic.⁶⁹ Recent data from the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic and the Czech National Bank (CNB) investigation show that since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, so-called 'grey exports' (sending key goods - often intended for warfare - to Russia via third countries) have increased by hundreds of percent. The total value of Czech exports to Turkey has risen from less than CZK 11 billion to CZK 20 billion in the last two years, with the increase more than doubling in the case of Kazakhstan and tenfold in the case of Kyrgyzstan. According to the Security Information Service (BIS), sanctions evasion in the Czech Republic is mostly committed by domestic companies, often backed by hidden Czech and foreign entities.⁷⁰

The amendment to the anti-money laundering law has still not been adopted and the strengthening of the Czech Republic's resilience is not sufficient, according to security analysts. The platform *Odolnější Česko* has therefore called

68 Czech Justice (Česká justice), 'NCOZ Had Authorization for Wiretapping in Less Than a Hundred Cases Last Year, Anti-Drug Unit in Sixty' ('NCOZ mělo loni povolení na odposlech necelé stovky případů, protidrogovka na šedesát'), 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/12/ncoz-melo-loni-povoleni-na-odposlech-necele-stovky-pripadu-protidrogovka-na-sedesat/>.

69 Police of the Czech Republic, *Annual Report of the National Centre Against Organized Crime 2023* (Výroční zpráva NCOZ 2023), 2024, <https://policie.gov.cz/clanek/vyrocní-zpráva-ncoz-2023.aspx>.

70 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), *Call to the Government to Accelerate the Adoption of Measures to Support the Security and Resilience of Czechia* (Výzva vládě k urychlení přijetí opatření na podporu bezpečnosti a odolnosti Česka), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/download/RCgfoA/vyzva-vlade-k-urychleni-prijeti-opatreni-na-podporu-bezpecnosti-a-odolnosti-ceska.pdf>.

on Prime Minister Petr Fiala and members of the government to focus on accelerating the approval of legislative and other measures to strengthen the Czech Republic's resilience to undemocratic regimes and organised crime towards the end of their term in office. In addition to the aforementioned amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering Act, they also call for an amendment to the Criminal Code to criminalise certain sanctions violations committed negligently. They also draw the government's attention to the European anti-money laundering package, which has not yet been implemented in the Czech Republic.⁷¹

Framework to prevent corruption

Although the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) finds the Czech legislation on the prevention of corruption among top executive public officials in good condition, it points to several serious problems. These include slow progress in the passing of the Lobbying Act and reforming the Civil Service Act and the Public Prosecutor's Act. It points out that the whole system is based on the principle of trust, which is that people in office know the rules and will abide by them. They also point to the absence of a strategic objective on integrity,

even at the highest political levels. Another major criticism is the fragmented and ineffective regulation of incompatibility of functions, where there is no general comprehensive regulation of this issue, which leads to the creation of a list of incompatibilities for each public institution. Last but not least, one of the main criticisms is directed at the absence of common and sufficiently clear rules for the engagement of advisers to ministers. There are no similar rules for those who are employed, for example, based on task contracts, as they are not covered by the Civil Service Act. At the same time, advisers to ministers are not subject to disclosure requirements on assets, interests and activities, which should, moreover, be subject to a control mechanism.⁷²

In response, the government approved the Action Plan for Combating Corruption for 2025 and 2026. This plan aims to implement measures to reduce corruption and enhance transparency in public administration, focusing on improving the management of public resources and promoting accountability.⁷³

71 Resilient Czechia (Odolnější Česko), *Text of the Call to the Government, Members of Parliament, and Senators for a More Resilient Czechia* (Text výzvy vládě, poslancům a senátorům za Odolnější Česko), 2022, <https://odolnejsicesko.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Text-vyzvy-vlade-poslancum-a-senatorum-za-Odolnejsi-Cesko.pdf>.

72 Transparency International (Czech Republic), *Fifth GRECO Report: Czechia Underestimates Nepotism and Integrity Control* (Pátá zpráva GRECO: Česko podceňuje nepotismus a kontrolu integrity), 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/pata-zprava-greco-cesko-podcenuje-nepotismus-a-kontrolu-integrity/>.

73 Korupce.cz, *Action Plan for the Fight Against Corruption for 2025 and 2026* (Akční plán boje proti korupci na roky 2025 a 2026), 2024, <https://korupce.cz/vlada-schvalila-akcni-plan-boje-proti-korupci-na-roky-2025-a-2026/>.

Integrity framework including incompatibility rules (e.g.: revolving doors)

In 2024, the phenomenon of ‘revolving doors’ (the movement of individuals between public and private sectors) remained an area of concern in the Czech Republic. The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) criticised the Czech Republic in its fifth evaluation report for inadequate regulation of conflicts of interest and the revolving doors phenomenon. GRECO emphasised the lack of comprehensive rules governing incompatibilities, recommending the introduction of a ‘cooling-off period’ to prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of sensitive information. It also recommends the introduction of ‘integrity tests’, which would take place before appointment to a post, so that there are clear rules for recruitment and employment. There should also be corrective measures if such rules are broken.⁷⁴

The Ministry of Justice, as part of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for 2025–2026, announced plans to commission a qualitative analysis of this

issue. The study aims to assess the frequency, motivations, and impacts of such transitions, with recommendations for preventive measures. Based on the findings, amendments to the Conflict of Interest Act are being considered.⁷⁵

General transparency of public decision-making (including public access to information such as lobbying, asset disclosure rules and transparency of political party financing)

The Czech government introduced in Parliament a draft law on lobbying that aims to regulate lobbying activities and increase transparency in public decision-making processes. It is currently in its second reading. However, significant exemptions have been added to the proposed regulation, weakening its impact.⁷⁶ For example, the Constitutional Law Committee supported exemptions for assistants to MPs and senators, allowing lobbyists to bypass registration requirements. In practice, assistants are involved in consulting on the substance of comments on legislation. Experts

74 Transparency International (Czech Republic), *Fifth GRECO Report: Czechia Underestimates Nepotism and Integrity Control (Pátá zpráva GRECO: Česko podceňuje nepotismus a kontrolu integrity)*, Transparency.cz, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/pata-zprava-greco-cesko-podcenuje-nepotismus-a-kontrolu-integrity/>.

75 Korupce.cz, *Action Plan for the Fight Against Corruption for 2025 and 2026 (Akční plán boje proti korupci na roky 2025 a 2026)*, 2024, <https://korupce.cz/vlada-schvalila-akcni-plan-boje-proti-korupci-na-roky-2025-a-2026/>.

76 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), ‘The Government Passed a Law on Lobbying, Mayors Negotiated an Exception for ČEZ’ (‘Vládou prošel zákon o lobbingu, starostové si vyjednali výjimku pro ČEZ’), 6 March 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/vladou-prosel-zakon-o-lobbingu-starostove-si-vyjednali-vyjimku-pro-cez_2403062101_dno; and Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), ‘The Government Approved the Draft Lobbying Act and the Related Amending Act’ (‘Vláda schválila návrh zákona o lobbování a související změnový zákon’), *Justice.cz*, 2024, <https://justice.cz/web/msp/tiskove-zpravy/-/clanek/vlada-schvalila-navrh-zakona-o-lobbovani-a-souvisejici-zmenovy-zakon>.

point to the risk that has emerged from the amendments. Lobbyists would, in future, not have to be transparent about their lobbying on government bills. MP Marek Benda from the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) submitted an amendment to allow lobbyists to comment on government proposals in the inter-ministerial process. A related amendment by MPs from the ruling coalition states that those who comment within the inter-ministerial framework do not have to report on their further lobbying on the same issue. The Constitutional Law Committee gave a neutral position to the proposal by MP Mark Benda. A blanket exemption from the law would also apply to municipalities and counties. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the law in its current form. On the other hand, according to the recommendation of the House Constitutional Law Committee, lobbyists should include representatives of professional associations as well as representatives of local government associations in the future.⁷⁷

A group of MPs has submitted an amendment to the Public Support Act proposing

transparency improvements for small public contracts. This responds by increasing the limits for small-scale contracts from CZK 2 million (€82,000) to CZK 3 million (€123,000) for supplies of goods and services and from CZK 6 million (€246,000) to CZK 9 million (€369,000). The proposal by a group of MPs introduces the principle that the contracting authority for contracts worth more than CZK 1 million (€41,000) will make public how the winner was selected. It will also disclose whether an unlimited number of suppliers were approached for the contract, whether the contracting authority narrowed down the number of suppliers, or whether it dealt with only one supplier. This would allow a higher degree of public scrutiny.⁷⁸ While the Economic Committee approved an increase in the limits for small contracts, it rejected an increase in transparency. The results of the third reading in the Chamber of Deputies are now awaited. There is still a risk that small contracts worth up to CZK 23 billion a year will not be controlled, which poses a major risk of corruption.⁷⁹

77 Reconstruction of the State, ‘Will the Lobbyist Register Be Completely Empty? MPs Step by Step Undermine the Functionality of the Lobbying Regulation Act’ (‘Bude registr lobbyistů úplně prázdný? Poslanci krok za krokem boří funkčnost zákona o regulaci lobbování’), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/bude-registr-lobbistu-uplne-prazdny-poslanci-krok-za-krokem-bori-funkcnost-zakona-o-regulaci-lobbovani>.

78 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), ‘Two in One: Small Public Contracts Will Be Larger but More Transparent, and Future Contracts Will Not Be Awarded to Ministers’ Companies’ (‘Dva v jednom: malé veřejné zakázky budou větší, ale transparentnější, a zakázky v budoucnu nezískají firmy ministrů’), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/dva-v-jednom-male-verejne-zakazky-budou-vetsi-ale-transparentnej-si-a-zakazky-v-budoucnu-neziskaji-firmy-ministru>.

79 Transparency International (Czech Republic), ‘Some Government MPs Actively Vote Against Addressing Conflicts of Interest in Public Contracts’ (‘Část vládních poslanců aktivně hlasuje proti tomu, aby se řešil střet zájmů ve veřejných zakázkách’), *Transparency.cz*, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/cast-vladnich-poslancu-aktivne-hlasuje-proti-tomu-aby-se-resil-stret-zajmu-ve-verejnych-zakazkach/>.

Rules on preventing conflicts of interest in the public sector

In 2024, the issue of conflicts of interest in the Czech Republic's public sector remained a significant challenge. Although existing laws regulate this area, their enforcement has faced criticism. Notably, some government MPs actively opposed measures aimed at addressing conflicts of interest in public procurement. This resistance has undermined efforts to establish a transparent and accountable framework for managing public resources.⁸⁰

Specifically, it was a draft law on public support, which added conditions for the exclusion of the selected supplier with regard to the requirements of the Conflict of Interest Act. Even though the Conflict of Interest Act already states that the Prime Minister and ministers cannot receive public contracts, in the past, the Office of Public Procurement insisted that it could only exclude a supplier on the basis of the Public Procurement Act. This proposal corresponds with a Constitutional Court

ruling which has previously concluded that the Conflict of Interest Act takes precedence over the Public Procurement Act in application.⁸¹ Despite the promise of the five ruling political parties to tighten the conditions for preventing conflicts of interest of members of the government in public procurement, three ruling political parties voted against this proposal. Thus, companies controlled by government members can still receive public money after 3 years of parliamentary debate.

The European Commission, in its *2024 Rule of Law Report*, highlighted the need for further reforms to strengthen the legal framework addressing conflicts of interest in the Czech Republic. The report emphasised the importance of stricter enforcement mechanisms and greater transparency in decision-making processes.⁸²

Despite international pressure and recommendations, progress in implementing robust mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest remains slow. Advocacy groups and

80 Transparency International (Czech Republic), 'Some Government MPs Actively Vote Against Addressing Conflicts of Interest in Public Contracts' ('Část vládních poslanců aktivně hlasuje proti tomu, aby se řešil střet zájmů ve veřejných zakázkách'), *Transparency.cz*, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/cast-vladnich-poslancu-aktivne-hlasuje-proti-tomu-aby-se-resil-stret-zajmu-ve-verejnych-zakazkach/>.

81 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), 'Two in One: Small Public Contracts Will Be Larger but More Transparent, and Future Contracts Will Not Be Awarded to Ministers' Companies' ('Dva v jednom: malé veřejné zakázky budou větší, ale transparentnější, a zakázky v budoucnu nezískají firmy ministrů'), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/dva-v-jednom-male-verejne-zakazky-budou-vetsi-ale-transparentnej-si-a-zakazky-v-budoucnu-neziskaji-firmy-ministru>.

82 European Commission, *2024 Rule of Law Report*, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2024-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_en.

international organisations continue to call for urgent legislative and practical improvements.⁸³

Measures in place to ensure whistleblower protection and encourage reporting of corruption

In 2024, the Czech Republic marked one year since the Whistleblower Protection Act came into force. During its first year, the Ministry of Justice, which manages the external reporting system, received 166 reports. Some of the reports contained suspected violations of the Whistleblower Protection Act itself, with the most common being suspected retaliation. These include loss of employment, bullying, or threats to the whistleblower's safety or their loved ones in connection with the report. More than a third of the reports received were assessed as potentially substantiated and were subsequently referred to the relevant public authorities for further investigation.⁸⁴

While the law represents a significant step forward, its implementation has revealed several strengths and weaknesses. Key strengths include clear mechanisms for submitting

reports and legal protections for whistleblowers. However, critics highlight issues such as the absence of protection for anonymous whistleblowers, the complicated definition of the categories of violations in which whistleblowers are protected by the law, and the lack of tools to assist whistleblowers in resolving their cases. Civil servants are in a weaker position. Unlike in the private sector, civil servants cannot seek preventive judicial protection and ask the court to issue interim measures.⁸⁵

The first few cases have shown that it is possible to seek protection. The court has twice ruled in favour of Pavel Kodym, the former director of the Office for Access to Transport Infrastructure, who was not reappointed to his post after drawing attention to suspicious transactions of the state with the railway operator Czech Railways. During the same period, his post was abolished.⁸⁶ Thanks to the new legislation, Jan Benýšek, the director of the Ministry of Justice's insolvency department, has returned to the ministry after his position was terminated the day after he filed a report against Deputy Minister Antonín Stanislav

83 Tvoříme Evropu, 'Rule of Law Report: What Is Czechia Planning in the Area of Recommendations?' ('Zpráva o právním státu: Co Česko plánuje v oblasti doporučení?'), 2024, <https://tvorimevropu.cz/2024/08/05/zprava-o-pravnim-statu-co-cesko-planuje-v-oblasti-doporuceni/>.

84 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), 'One Year of the Whistleblower Protection Act' ('Rok fungování zákona o ochraně oznamovatelů'), *MSP.gov.cz*, 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/web/msp/tiskove-zpravy/-/clanek/rok-fungov%C3%A1n%C3%AD-z%C3%A1kona-o-ochran%C4%9B-oznamovatel%C5%AF>.

85 Transparency International ČR, 'Zákon o ochraně oznamovatelů platí v Česku jeden rok. Jaké jsou jeho silné a slabé stránky?', *Transparency.cz*, 2024. Dostupné z: <https://www.transparency.cz/zakon-o-ochrane-oznamovatelu-plati-v-cesku-jeden-rok-jake-jsou-jeho-silne-a-slabe-stranky/>

86 Seznam Zprávy, 'Fiala's Government Lost a Court Case with a Whistleblower Whose Office Was Abolished' ('Fialova vláda prohrála soud s whistleblowerem, jemuž zrušila úřad'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzy-fialova-vlada-prohrala-soudu-s-whistleblowerem-jemu-zrusila-urad-253058>.

regarding the manipulation of insolvency trustee examinations.⁸⁷

The Ministry of Justice has also conducted training sessions for representatives of obligated entities to improve the understanding and implementation of whistleblower protection measures. In November, it organised a conference titled ‘Experience with the Application of the Whistleblower Protection Act in the Private and Public Sector’. These efforts aim to enhance the law’s practical application and encourage reporting of misconduct.⁸⁸

Advocacy organisations continue to monitor the law’s impact and advocate for its refinement, aiming to create a more supportive environment for whistleblowers and enhance their contributions to anti-corruption efforts.

List the sectors with high-risks of corruption in your country and list the relevant measures taken/envisaged for preventing corruption and conflicts of interest in these sectors. (e.g. public procurement, health-care, other)

In February 2024, the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) in Prague led an investigation into a corruption ring involving public contracts for medical supplies to hospitals. The operation resulted in ten arrests and included 36 searches, highlighting systemic vulnerabilities in the sector. The government has emphasised the need for stricter oversight and transparent procurement processes in response.⁸⁹

In 2024, the Czech government attempted to freeze the salaries of judges and other high-ranking officials by lowering the coefficient used to calculate their base salaries. The reduction brought the multiplier down from three times the average gross monthly wage to 2.822 times. This legislative change was part of broader efforts to address economic challenges but faced significant legal scrutiny.⁹⁰

87 Czech Television (Česká televize), ‘168 Hours: Whistleblower Benýšek Returns to the Ministry of Justice. Deputy Stanislav Resigns After a Series of Scandals’ (‘168 hodin: Whistleblower Benýšek se vrací na resort spravedlnosti. Náměstek Stanislav po sérii afér rezignuje’), 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/168-hodin-whistleblower-benysek-se-vraci-na-resort-spravedlnosti-namestek-stanislav-po-serii-afér-346713>.

88 *Training for Representatives of Obligated Entities on the Whistleblower Protection Act* (Školení pro zástupce povinných subjektů k zákonu o ochraně oznamovatelů), *Oznamovatel.justice.cz*, 2024, <https://oznamovatel.justice.cz/>.

89 European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO), ‘Czechia: Ten Arrested in Probe into Corruption Ring Involving Medical Supplies to Hospitals’, 15 February 2024, <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/media/news/czechia-ten-arrested-probe-corruption-ring-involving-medical-supplies-to-hospitals>.

90 Novinky.cz, ‘The Constitutional Court Overturned the Freezing of Judges’ Salaries’ (‘Ústavní soud zrušil zmrazení soudcovských platů’), 15 May 2024, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-ustavni-soud-zrusil-zmrazeni-soudcovskych-platu-40473709>.

Any other relevant measures to prevent corruption in public and private sector

The Ministry of Regional Development has introduced a draft reform to change the lengthy and unclear review of public procurement. Instead of a chairman, reviews would now be decided by specialised panels in a single instance. Currently, the Czech Republic reviews public procurement in up to five instances. Other proposals include shortening the time limit for filing a lawsuit against a decision of the Office of Public Procurement Review from two months to 14 days. The amendment is intended to ensure faster and more transparent decision-making that is resistant to political and business pressures.⁹¹

This reform has long faced criticism and obstruction from the chairman of Úřad pro ochranu hospodářské soutěže (ÚOHS), Petr Mlsna, who would lose some of his extensive powers because of it.⁹² Mlsna's decision to

dismiss several anti-corruption experts has raised concerns about the institution's ability to address corruption effectively. Observers fear that the loss of these experts weakens ÚOHS's capacity to monitor and investigate complex cases of corruption, which are critical to ensuring the integrity of public procurement processes.⁹³ In response to growing concerns, the Czech government has proposed reforms limiting the extensive powers of the ÚOHS chairman. These changes include transferring some of the chairman's authority to other institutional bodies and implementing stricter oversight mechanisms to ensure balanced decision-making. This reform is expected to reduce delays in public procurement reviews and increase accountability.⁹⁴

The Anti-Corruption Action Plan for 2025–2026, approved in late 2024, outlined strategic goals such as enhancing whistleblower protection mechanisms, strengthening oversight of lobbying activities, and increasing public

91 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), 'Public Investments Without Unnecessary Delays: The Government Decided to Reform the Office for the Protection of Competition' ('Veřejné investice bez zbytečných průtahů: vláda se rozhodla k reformě ÚOHS'), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/verejne-investice-bez-zbytecnych-prutahu-vlada-se-rozhoupala-k-reforme-uohs>.

92 Transparency International (Czech Republic), 'Czech Television Reporters Provide Evidence of Sabotaging the Reform of the Office for the Protection of Competition by Its Chairman Petr Mlsna' ('Reportéři ČT přinášejí důkazy o sabotování reformy ÚOHS ze strany jeho předsedy Petra Mlsny'), *Transparency.cz*, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/reporteri-ct-prinaseji-dukazy-o-sabotovani-reformy-uohs-ze-strany-jeho-predsedy-petra-mlsny/>.

93 Seznam Zprávy, 'Zeman's Favourite Got Rid of Corruption Experts in the Antimonopoly Office' ('Zemanův favorit se v antimonopolním úřadu zbavil expertů na korupci'), 28 February 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzy-zemanuv-favorit-se-v-antimonopolnim-uradu-zbavil-expertu-na-korupci-244542>.

94 Deník N, 'The Change in the Review of Public Contracts Should Reduce the Powers of the Chairman of the Office for the Protection of Competition' ('Změna přezkumu veřejných zakázek by měla zmenšit pravomoci předsedy ÚOHS'), 18 June 2024, <https://denikn.cz/minuta/1375728>.

awareness of anti-corruption laws. The plan also highlighted the need to promote integrity in the private sector by encouraging ethical business practices and compliance programs.⁹⁵

Investigation and prosecution of corruption

Criminalisation of corruption and related offences

Corruption and related offences are criminalised under Czech law, with the Penal Code covering a broad range of corrupt practices, including bribery, abuse of power, and embezzlement. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in complex or high-level cases. The latest GRECO evaluation report emphasised the need for stricter enforcement and clearer definitions of some corruption-related offences to enhance legal certainty and application.⁹⁶

In its *Rule of Law Report 2024*, the European Commission drew attention to the lengthy judicial procedures for high-level corruption at all stages of the process, including investigation, prosecution and adjudication. Even in 2024, many cases did not reach a final verdict, and new cases emerged. The case of subsidy fraud allegedly committed by former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš in 2008 (the *Čapí hnízdo* case) is now before the Supreme Court in Prague. The public prosecutor has appealed to the Supreme Court against the decision of the Municipal Court in Prague, which ruled this February that the act was not a criminal offence.⁹⁷ The decision of the European Parliament Committee on the waiver of the immunity of the newly elected MEP Jana Nagyová, who is an accused in the case, is currently pending.⁹⁸

The *Dozimeter* case in Prague uncovered a large-scale corruption network involving municipal politicians. The case revealed extensive fraud and abuse of public procurement

95 Korupce.cz, *Action Plan for the Fight Against Corruption for 2025 and 2026 (Akční plán boje proti korupci na roky 2025 a 2026)*, 2024, <https://korupce.cz/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Akcni-plan-boje-proti-korupci-na-roky-2025-a-2026.pdf>.

96 LINHART, Tomáš, 'Progress Has Been Very Slow Recently. How Does the Council of Europe Evaluate the Fight Against Corruption in Czechia?' ('Pokrok je poslední dobou velmi pomalý. Jak Rada Evropy hodnotí boj s korupcí v Česku?'), *Deník N*, 2024, <https://denikn.cz/1368027/pokrok-je-posledni-dobou-velmi-pomaly-jak-rada-evropy-hodnoti-boj-s-korupci-v-cesku/?ref=list>.

97 KUBANT, Vít, 'The judges of the Supreme Court will hear the case of the Čapí hnízdo case behind closed doors. They will not yet rule on the appeal' ('Soudci vrchního soudu projednají kauzu Čapí hnízdo za zavřenými dveřmi. O odvolání zatím nerozhodnou'), *iROZHLAS*, 30 September 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/soudci-vrchniho-soudu-projednaji-kauzu-capi-hnizdo-za-zavrenymi-dvermi-o_2409300612_vtk

98 ČTK, 'EP Committee to discuss lifting Nagy's immunity in the Čapí hnízdo case' ('Výbor EP projedná zbavení imunity Nagyové v kauze Čapí hnízdo'), 29 November 2024, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/2602201>

processes, which remain a high-risk area for corruption in the Czech Republic.⁹⁹ The perpetrators were first charged in 2022. In 2024, the case gained renewed attention due to judicial complications. A Prague judge publicly stated that he could not proceed with one of the trials because the alleged bribe amounts exceeded the court's jurisdiction. This revelation underscored the systemic issues in handling large-scale corruption cases effectively.¹⁰⁰

In August, the police postponed a case involving hospital contracts at the Institute of Clinical and Experimental Medicine (IKEM) in Prague.¹⁰¹ The second branch, which concerns the extortion of doctors by IKEM management, is where the police have submitted a proposal to the prosecutor's office to file charges.¹⁰²

Bakery Zelená Louka is facing new charges of subsidy fraud and damage to EU financial

interests. The bakery is owned by the company Penam from the Agrofert Group, which belongs to the trust fund of former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš. The company applied for a CZK 100 million subsidy for an innovative production line and received it in 2018. According to European auditors, the project focused on a product that was already being produced within the Agrofert holding.¹⁰³

Effectiveness of investigation and application of sanctions for corruption offences (including for legal persons and high level and complex corruption cases) and their transparency, including as regards to the implementation of EU funds. Please provide data where available.

In 2024, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the Office for the Protection of Competition (ÚOHS) in addressing unfair

99 Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Czech Republic: Challenges in Public Procurement*, 10 March 2024, <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/CZE>.

100 Seznam Zprávy, 'The Judge Explained Why He Cannot Handle the Dozimetr Case: It's About the Amount of the Bribe' ('Soudce napsal, proč nemůže řešit kauzu Dozimetr: Jde o výši úplatku'), 15 November 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzu-soudce-napsal-proc-nemuze-resit-kauzu-dozimetr-jde-o-vysi-uplatku-264808>.

101 Seznam zprávy and ČTK, 'Police postponed the case of possible manipulation of public contracts in IKEM' ('Policie odložila kauzu možné manipulace s veřejnými zakázkami v IKEM'), 16 August 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-policie-odložila-kauzu-mozne-manipulace-s-verejnymi-zakazkami-v-ikem-257845>

102 BLAŽEK, Vojtěch and VALÁŠEK, Lukáš, 'Investigators have proposed to indict former IKEM bosses for extortion of doctors' ('Vyšetřovatelé navrhli obžalovat bývalé šéfy IKEM za vydírání lékařů'), *Seznam zprávy*, 30 October 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-kauzu-vysetrovatele-navrhli-obzalovat-byvale-sefy-ikem-za-vydirani-lekaru-263454>

103 DOSTÁLOVÁ, Kateřina, 'Police seized 100 million worth of assets of the Zelená louka Bakery' ('Policie zajistila majetek Pekárny Zelená louka za sto milionů'), ČT24, 29 October 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/policie-zajistila-majetek-pekarny-zelena-louka-za-sto-milionu-354821>

practices and market distortions. Political efforts to reform ÚOHS were launched in response to rising food prices. However, experts criticised the proposed reforms for failing to tackle systemic issues undermining the Office's effectiveness. These issues include a lack of resources, insufficient independence, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms, which hinder the Office's ability to investigate and sanction corrupt practices effectively.

Such weaknesses in the ÚOHS reflect broader challenges in ensuring transparency and accountability in market regulation and combating corruption. Strengthening oversight mechanisms and providing the Office with adequate resources and independence are critical to improving its role in addressing market manipulation and corruption.¹⁰⁴

Potential obstacles to investigation and prosecution of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation)

The GRECO 2024 evaluation report criticised the Czech Republic for the lack of robust mechanisms to address immunity-related barriers. The report highlighted cases where immunity was used to delay legal proceedings, particularly in corruption investigations involving public officials.¹⁰⁵

Another significant barrier is the limited independence and resources of investigative bodies. In cases involving high-ranking officials or complex corruption schemes, investigators often face pressure from political or institutional actors. Advocacy organisations have called for stronger safeguards to protect investigators and ensure their ability to pursue cases without undue influence.¹⁰⁶ However, no new measures have been adopted.

104 ÚŠELA, Jan, 'Politicians Want to Revitalize the Antimonopoly Office Due to Food Prices, but Experts Say the Reform Misses the Main Issues' ('Politici chtějí kvůli cenám potravin rozhybat antimonopolní úřad. Reforma ale podle expertů má hlavní problémy'), *Deník N*, 12 March 2024, <https://denikn.cz/1370396/politici-chteji-kvuli-cenam-potravin-rozhybat-antimonopolni-urad-reforma-ale-podle-expertu-miji-hlavni-problemy/>.

105 Reconstruction of the State (Czech Republic), 'Czechia Underestimates the Risk of Abuse of Power, Warns GRECO' ('Česko podceňuje riziko zneužití moci, upozorňuje GRECO'), 2024, <https://www.rekonstrukcestatu.cz/archiv-novinek/cesko-podcenuje-riziko-zneuziti-moci-upozorňuje-greco>.

106 Transparency International (Czech Republic), 'Anti-Corruption Priorities of the Czech Office of Transparency International 2024–2025' ('Protikorupční priority české kanceláře Transparency International 2024–2025'), *Transparency.cz*, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/protikorupcni-priority-ceske-kancelare-transparency-international-2024-2025/>.

Other

The Customs Administration updated its Internal Anti-Corruption Program in June 2024. This program identifies and mitigates key corruption risks in its operations.¹⁰⁷

The Ministry of Justice also updated its Internal Anti-Corruption Program, emphasising leadership's role in promoting anti-corruption

attitudes, adherence to ethical standards, and staff training.¹⁰⁸

The Czech Republic's ranking in the *Corruption Perceptions Index* (CPI) highlights ongoing challenges in combating corruption effectively. The 2023 CPI report, published in early 2024, placed the country below the EU average, pointing to insufficient prevention measures and regulatory gaps, including in lobbying.¹⁰⁹

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND MEDIA FREEDOM -

Key recommendations

- Parliament should enact legislation to enhance transparency in media ownership, ensuring clear and accessible information about media proprietors.
- Parliament should enact legislation to increase public media license fees to ensure their independence and sustainability.
- Parliament should enact legislation to establish specialised procedures for media mergers to ensure fair competition and audience-focused oversight.
- Parliament should adopt legal regulation of online media.

107 Customs Administration of the Czech Republic, *Internal Anti-Corruption Program of the Customs Administration of the Czech Republic (Interní protikorupční program Celní správy ČR)*, *Celnisprava.gov.cz*, 2024, https://celnisprava.gov.cz/cz/o-nas/spolecne-proti-korupci/Documents/24_26346_IPP%20CS%20%C4%8CR_%20aktualizace%2010%20%C4%8Dervna%202024.pdf.

108 Ministry of Justice (Czech Republic), *Departmental Internal Anti-Corruption Program of the Ministry of Justice (Resortní interní protikorupční program Ministerstva spravedlnosti)*, *Msp.gov.cz*, 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/documents/d/msp/resortni-interni-protikorupcni-program-msp-pdf>.

109 Transparency International (Czech Republic), 'Czechia Still Lags Behind the EU Average, Corruption Perceptions Index Shows' ('Česko stále zaostává za průměrem EU, ukazuje Index vnímání korupce'), *Transparency.cz*, 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/cpi2023/>.

Media and telecommunications authorities and bodies

Independence, enforcement powers and adequacy of resources of media and tele- communication authorities and bodies

In June 2024, Karel Novák was re-elected as the Czech Television Council (ČT Council) Chairman, with Ivan Tesař appointed as the Vice-Chairman. The Council also approved the appointment of new members to the Ethical Panel, reinforcing its commitment to ethical standards in broadcasting.¹¹⁰

A legislative amendment was proposed to establish a more sustainable financing model for public service media in the Czech Republic. The amendment addresses the financial instability faced by Czech Television and Czech Radio by revising the mechanism for calculating and collecting license fees. Additionally, it includes provisions to ensure better oversight of public media's financial activities, which has been a longstanding issue in the Czech media

landscape. The proposal aims to safeguard the independence of public service media by reducing their reliance on state subsidies, which are often subject to political influence.¹¹¹

The proposed changes sought to modernise the framework for public broadcasting fees, which had remained unchanged for nearly two decades.

- The fees for Czech Radio (CZK 45 per month) and Czech Television (CZK 135 per month) have not been adjusted since 2005 and 2008, respectively. According to the Minister of Culture, Martin Baxa, these amounts no longer cover the rising costs of public service broadcasting, putting the quality and independence of these institutions at risk.
- The amendment proposes raising the fees to CZK 55 for Czech Radio and CZK 150 for Czech Television. The enactment of the amendment is crucial for public media independence.¹¹²

110 Mediaguru.cz, 'Novák Remains at the Head of the Czech Television Council, New Czech Television Ethics Panel Introduced' ('V čele Rady ČT je dál Novák, nový je etický panel ČT'), June 2024, <https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2024/06/v-cele-rady-ct-je-dal-novak-novy-je-eticky-panel-ct/>.

111 Nezávislá média, 'The Amendment Aims to Provide More Sustainable Financing for Public Service Media' ('Novela má přinést udržitelnější financování médií veřejné služby'), November 2024, <https://nezavisla.media/novela-ma-prinest-udrzitelnejsi-financovani-medii-verejne-sluzby/>.

112 Ministry of Culture (Czech Republic), 'The Chamber of Deputies Approved the So-Called Large Media Amendment in the First Reading: Amendment to the Act on Czech Television, Czech Radio, and Television and Radio Fees' ('Poslanecká sněmovna schválila v prvním čtení tzv. velkou mediální novelu: novelu zákona o České televizi, Českém rozhlase a televizních a rozhlasových poplatcích'), 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.cz/novinky-a-media-cs-4/5806cs-poslanecka-snemovna-schvalila-vprvnim-cteni-tzv-velkou-medialni-novelu-novelu-zakona-o-ceske-televizi-ceskem-rozhlase-a-televiznich-a-rozhlasovych-poplaticich>.

- The definition of a ‘broadcast receiver’ would expand to include devices such as smartphones, computers, and tablets that can access content via the internet. This means households with internet access or smart devices would be obligated to pay the fees, a measure criticised by opposition parties like ANO.
- Martin Baxa emphasised that the amendment aims to ensure independent financing of public service media, removing their reliance on the state budget and preserving their quality. The law also addresses the growing trend of consuming broadcast content via the Internet and mobile devices.¹¹³

The ČT Council postponed its decision on the 2025 budget until January 2025 due to uncertainties over potential increases in television license fees. If the fees are not increased, they will have to dismiss employees. This delay underscores the financial instability faced by public broadcasters.¹¹⁴

Other

According to other experts from platform *Nezávislá média (Independent media)*, the biggest challenges of the Czech media law are as follows:¹¹⁵

- political influence over public media
- absence of control over the financial activities of public media
- absence of a legal framework against media owner censorship
- absence of a legal framework for online media
- decline of regional media
- digital magnates may suppress the existence of smaller media
- absence of self-regulatory activities
- boom of disinformation servers with no respect for journalist ethics¹¹⁶

113 Media Guru, ‘It Won’t Be Armageddon, but We Must Start Thinking About the Budget Differently, Says Czech Television Head Souček’ (‘Armagedon to nebude, ale musíme začít o rozpočtu uvažovat jinak, říká šéf ČT Souček’), October 2024, <https://www.mediary.cz/armagedon-to-nebude-ale-musime-zacit-o-rozpocet-uvažovat-jinak-rika-sef-ct-soucek>.

114 Seznam Zprávy, ‘The Czech Television Council Postponed the Approval of the Television Budget to January’ (‘Rada ČT odložila schvalování rozpočtu televize na leden’), December 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-zivot-v-cesku-rada-ct-odložila-schvalovani-rozpocet-televize-na-leden-266215>.

115 Nezávislá média, <https://nezavisla.media/>.

116 Ibid.

The list aligns with our perspective on Czech media law and journalism.

Pluralism and concentration

Rules governing ownership in different segments of the media market, and their application (print, television, radio, online media)

In December 2024, the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic ruled that significant parts of the ‘Lex Babiš II’ amendment to the conflict of interest law were unconstitutional. The court determined that the law, which aimed to prevent high-ranking politicians from owning media outlets, included provisions introduced as an ‘unconstitutional rider’, meaning they were added during the legislative process without proper discussion or relevance to the original law. Consequently, the court annulled these provisions, weakening the amendment’s scope and impact on media ownership regulations. The ruling reignited debates about legislative practices and media independence in the Czech Republic.¹¹⁷

Fairness and transparency of licencing procedures (including allocation of licences, fines and penalties)

In 2024, the Czech media regulatory authority, the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV), granted several new broadcasting licenses. Notably, in December 2024, licenses were awarded to channels such as CS Film, TV Roma, TV Noe, and Sporty TV. This demonstrates ongoing efforts to diversify the media landscape.¹¹⁸

RRTV actively monitored compliance with broadcasting standards, issuing fines for violations where necessary. For instance, in February 2024, proceedings were initiated against a broadcaster for non-compliance with content regulations, showcasing the authority’s commitment to enforcing legal standards.¹¹⁹

Other

In July 2024, Czech Television announced the cancellation of its investigative journalism program *168 hodin*, which had been on air since 2006. The program was known for its critical reporting and had garnered both praise and criticism over the years. The official reasons cited for its cancellation included internal

117 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), ‘The Constitutional Court Overturned Significant Parts of Lex Babiš II as an Unconstitutional Add-On’ (‘Ústavní soud zrušil podstatné části Lex Babiš II jako neústavní přílepek’), December 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/lex-babis-ii-zakon-verdikt-rozhodnuti-ustavni-soud_2412100914_hof.

118 Parabola.cz, ‘New Licenses for CS Film, TV Roma, TV Noe, and Sporty TV’ (‘Nové licence pro CS Film, TV Roma, TV Noe či Sporty TV’), December 2024, <https://www.parabola.cz/clanky/7879/nove-licence-pro-cs-film-tv-roma-tv-noe-ci-sporty-tv>.

119 Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV), *Decision (Rozhodnutí)*, February 2024, <https://rrtv.gov.cz/files/Pokuty/d1850afb-fc52-4ee0-8cc0-24ec008c1dd4.pdf>.

editorial disputes, criticisms from the Council of Czech Television regarding alleged breaches of the broadcaster's code, and recent controversies involving key personnel. Nora Fridrichová, the long-standing presenter of the program, remained with Czech Television, with discussions about her involvement in future projects. The decision to terminate the program sparked debates about the state of investigative journalism and media freedom in the country.¹²⁰

In October 2024, Czech Television ended its collaboration with Slovak public broadcaster RTVS (Slovenský telerozhlas). The decision followed concerns raised by Czech Television over RTVS's independence and perceived political interference in its operations. This marked the end of a long-standing partnership and highlighted ongoing challenges in safeguarding media independence across Central Europe.¹²¹

Transparency in media ownership

The transparent allocation of state advertising (including any rules regulating the matter)

In 2024, the Czech government approved the National Public Procurement Strategy for 2024–2028. This strategy represents the first comprehensive policy document in the field of public procurement in the Czech Republic. Its primary goal is to shift the focus from formal processes to a strategic approach that emphasises value for money, thereby promoting transparency and efficiency in public spending.¹²²

Rules governing transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, and their application

Currently, the rules for the evidence of media owners are the same as for any business owner. However, access to the register of ultimate beneficial owners is limited. In October 2024, a roundtable discussion was held in the Senate of the Czech Republic to address the implementation of the European Media Freedom

120 iDNES.cz, '168 Hours Ends, Nora Fridrichová Remains at Czech Television' ('168 hodin končí, Nora Fridrichová v ČT zůstává'), July 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/mediahub/168-hodin-ceska-televize-konec-nora-fridrichova-marek-wollner.A240729_193531_mediahub_pari.

121 HlídacíPes.org, 'Slovak Public Broadcaster Loses Czech Ally Due to Concerns About Independence' ('Slovenský telerozhlas přichází o spojence z Česka kvůli pochybám o nezávislosti'), October 2024, <https://hlidacipes.org/slovensky-telerozhlas-prichazi-o-spojence-z-ceska-kvuli-pochybam-o-nezavislosti>.

122 Ministry of Regional Development (Czech Republic), *National Strategy for Public Procurement in Czechia for the Period 2024–2028 (Národní strategie veřejného zadávání v ČR pro období 2024–2028)*, January 2024, <https://mmr.gov.cz/cs/ministerstvo/verejne-zakazky-a-elektronizace/narodni-strategie-verejneho-zadavani-v-cr>.

Act (EMFA). The discussion focused on transparency in media ownership, rules for allocating public advertising, and the role of media regulators. Participants emphasised the need to strengthen media independence and prepare for the new obligations under the EMFA, which will be fully effective from August 8 2025. They agreed with the proposal to create a database of the ultimate beneficial media owners that would be fully accessible.¹²³

Other

Surveys in 2024 indicate declining public concern over the political independence of the media in the Czech Republic. This trend may reflect persistent media ownership concentration and public skepticism regarding the influence of political and economic elites on media content.¹²⁴

Public concern over media independence in the Czech Republic remained significant. A survey conducted in March 2024 revealed that 51% of Czech respondents were worried about

the state of media freedom in their country, indicating a growing apprehension compared to previous years.¹²⁵

Public service media outlets such as Czech Television and Czech Radio continued to be among the most trusted news sources. Trust in these individual news brands increased in 2024, with public broadcasters maintaining their reputation for credibility.¹²⁶

Public service media

Independence of public service media from economic interference

In November 2024, over 60 Czech institutions, including cultural and humanitarian organisations, called on government leaders to ensure the independence and financial stability of public media. They emphasised the crucial role of independent public service media in a democratic society and urged for the swift adoption of the proposed amendments.¹²⁷

123 ČTK, 'Live: Round Table "Media Freedom Act in Czechia"' (Živě: Kulatý stůl „Media Freedom Act v ČR“), České noviny, October 2024, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/pr/zpravy/zive-kulaty-stul-media-freedom-act-v-cr/2579621>.

124 Mediaguru.cz, 'Perception of the Importance of Political Independence of Media Is Declining in Czechia' (Vnímání důležitosti politické nezávislosti médií se v Česku snižuje), April 2024, <https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2024/04/vnimani-dulezitosti-politicke-nezavislosti-medii-se-v-cesku-snizuje>.

125 VSquare.org, 'Public Concern Over Media Independence in V4 Region Is Growing', March 2024, <https://vsquare.org/public-concern-over-media-independence-in-v4-region-is-growing>.

126 ŠTĚTKA, Václav, *Digital News Report 2024: Czech Republic*, Reuters Institute, June 2024, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/czech-republic>.

127 Brno Daily, 'Over 60 Institutions Call on Government to Support Public Media', November 2024, <https://brno-daily.com/2024/11/19/news/politics/over-60-institutions-call-on-government-to-support-public-media>.

Editorial standards (including diversity and non-discrimination)

Editorial standards are enshrined in Czech legislation, specifically in the Act on Czech Television and the Act on Czech Radio. However, certain analyses suggest that the content of Czech Television news may lack objectivity and balance. One cited reason is the alignment of coverage with values perceived as inherent to Czech society. For instance, critics argue that Czech Television allocates disproportionately more airtime to topics related to Israel while allegedly censoring certain content concerning Palestine.¹²⁸

Online media

In 2024, the Czech Republic reaffirmed its commitment to digital transformation and online media ecosystem regulation by publishing the *Czech Priorities for European Digital Policy 2024–2029*. This document outlines strategies to safeguard internet freedom, promote transparency, and foster innovation in the digital space. The roadmap emphasises

sustainable digital transformation aligned with human rights and democratic values.¹²⁹

Impact on media of online content regulation rules (including content removal obligations, liability rules)

There is still no legal definition or comprehensive legal framework for online media in the Czech Republic.

In 2024, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade approved a draft law on the digital economy to complement EU regulations. The law introduced content moderation rules designed to protect users from illegal content while safeguarding freedom of expression. It also established mechanisms for appeals and resolving out-of-court disputes to ensure fairness and transparency. The law is not in effect yet.¹³⁰

In November 2024, RRTV announced that internet content creators, such as YouTubers and influencers who publish videos for profit, must register with the Council. The measure aims to align with the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive, focusing on

128 LINHART, Tomáš, ‘Czech Television Published Analyses of Broadcasts on Israel and Gaza, One Suggests It Created the Impression That Palestinians Are to Blame for Their Suffering’ (‘ČT zveřejnila analýzy vysílání o Izraeli a Gaze, podle jedné vytvářela dojem, že Palestinci si za utrpení mohou sami’), *Deník N*, October 2024, <https://denikn.cz/1411224/ct-zverejnila-analyzy-vysilani-o-izraeli-a-gaze-podle-jedne-vytvarela-dojem-ze-pal-estinci-si-za-utrpeni-mohou-sami>.

129 Digital Czechia (Digitální Česko), *Czech Priorities for European Digital Policy 2024–2029 (Priority České republiky pro evropskou digitální politiku 2024–2029)*, January 2024, https://digitalnicesko.gov.cz/media/files/FIN_Priorities-of-the-Czech-Republic-for-European-Digital-Policy_2page.pdf.

130 Ministry of Industry and Trade (Czech Republic), ‘Safer Online Environment: Government Approves the Draft Law on the Digital Economy’ (‘Bezpečnější online prostředí: Vláda schvaluje návrh zákona o digitální ekonomice’), *MPO*, June 2024, <https://www.mpo.gov.cz/en/guidepost/for-the-media/press-releases/a-safer-online-environment-government-approves-the-draft-law-on-the-digital-economy---282797>.

protecting minors and regulating commercial communications. However, the announcement was criticised by experts and also by Minister of Culture, Martin Baxa, who questioned its utility and called for revisions.¹³¹

Competence and powers of bodies or authorities supervising the online ecosystem, including the digital services coordinators role

The Czech Telecommunication Office (ČTÚ) has been designated as the Digital Services Coordinator, responsible for overseeing compliance with the DSA within the country. However, ČTÚ can actively exercise its competencies under the DSA only after the relevant adaptation law, currently still in the legislative process, is approved and comes into effect.¹³²

Public trust in media

In 2024, public trust in media in the Czech Republic remained relatively low. According to the *Digital News Report 2024* by the Reuters Institute, only 31% of Czechs expressed trust in the news, representing a slight increase from 30% in 2023. This places the Czech

Republic below the global average in media trust. The report attributes this low trust to factors such as perceived political bias and sensationalism, particularly among commercial media outlets.¹³³

According to a survey by the Czech Academy of Sciences' Center for Public Opinion Research (CVVM), trust in public service media in the summer of 2024 was higher than trust in commercial outlets. The study also found that interpersonal trust among Czechs is significantly higher than institutional trust, reflecting broader societal dynamics.¹³⁴

Safety and protection of journalists and other media actors

Frequency of verbal and physical attacks

In 2024, incidents of online harassment and threats against Russian journalists in the Czech Republic were reported. Exiled Russian journalists residing in the country faced intimidation, raising concerns about their safety and the broader need for protection for media professionals. The Association of European Journalists has joined nine other European media

131 Mediaguru.cz, 'YouTubers and Influencers Must Register with RRTV, Baxa Opposes' ('Youtuberi a influenceři se musí registrovat u RRTV, Baxa je proti'), November 2024, <https://www.mediaguru.cz/clanky/2024/11/youtuberi-a-influenceri-se-musi-registrovat-u-rrtv-baxa-je-proti/>.

132 Czech Telecommunication Office (Český telekomunikační úřad), *European Digital Services Act (DSA)*, February 2024, <https://ctu.gov.cz/en/european-digital-services-act-dsa>.

133 Reuters Institute, *Digital News Report 2024: Czech Republic*, June 2024, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/czech-republic>.

134 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění (CVVM), 'Trust in Selected Institutions of Public Life and Interpersonal Trust – Summer 2024' ('Důvěra k vybraným institucím veřejného života a mezilidská důvěra – léto 2024'), September 2024, <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/tiskove-zpravy/politicke/politicke-ostatni/5870-duvera-k-vybranim-institucim-verejneho-zivota-a-mezilidska-duvera--leto-2024>.

freedom organisations in a letter to the Czech government expressing deep concern about the security of exiled Russian journalist Irina Dolinina and others.¹³⁵

In December 2024, the Director General of Czech Television (Česká televize), Jan Souček, and the Head of News, Petr Mrzena, publicly called on parliamentarians to cease personal attacks against journalists during debates on the media law amendment. They emphasised that journalists cannot adequately defend themselves in such situations, highlighting the vulnerability of media professionals to verbal abuse.¹³⁶

Amending existing national laws or drafting and adopting new laws, which regulate the use of spyware, including safeguards and remedies

The draft of the new Cybersecurity Act is based on the provisions of the existing Cybersecurity Act and fulfills the minimum requirements set by the European Security Directive (a.k.a. NIS2). The Directive's changes are thus being integrated into Czech legislation. Additionally, the draft reflects the experiences and

insights gathered by the Czech National Cyber and Information Security Agency (NÚKIB) since its inception.

The primary purpose of this regulation is to establish at least a basic level of security for organisations providing services in economically, socially, or security-critical sectors, meeting other criteria of significance. The scope of regulated sectors and specific services within these sectors has been expanded under the Directive, meaning the new law will apply to a significantly broader range of organisations.

The changes introduced by the NIS2 Directive are so substantial that NÚKIB approached this task by preparing an entirely new Cybersecurity Act and its implementing decrees.

The draft law was approved by the government on 17 July 2024.¹³⁷

Access to information and public documents

A critical issue in 2024 is the **malfunctioning e-Legislation portal**, a platform intended to provide public access to legislative processes.

135 Association of European Journalists (AEJ), 'AEJ Warns of Threats to Exiled Russian Journalists in the Czech Republic', March 2024, <https://aej-uk.org/2024/03/21/aej-warns-of-threat-to-exiled-russian-journalists-in-czech-republic>.

136 Novinky.cz, 'Stop Attacking Journalists, Czech Television Head Stands Up Against MPs' ('Přestaňte útočit na novináře, postavil se šéf ČT proti poslancům'), December 2024, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-prestan-te-utocit-na-novinare-postavil-se-sef-ct-proti-poslancum-40500913>.

137 National Cyber and Information Security Agency (NÚKIB), *Cybersecurity Act (Zákon o kybernetické bezpečnosti)*, July 2024, <https://portal.nukib.gov.cz/informace/legislativa/zakon-o-kyberneticke-bezpecnosti>.

The portal remains largely inoperative, undermining transparency efforts.¹³⁸

Other

A 2024 survey conducted by Czech Radio highlighted significant issues faced by journalists in the Czech Republic. Key findings

revealed that a large number of journalists struggle with balancing work and family life, experience workplace harassment or violence, and feel undervalued due to low salaries. Despite these challenges, the survey underscored the resilience of media professionals and their commitment to the profession, even under difficult conditions.¹³⁹

138 *Lupa.cz*, “‘There Is Nothing to Display,’ Interior Ministry Responds to the Non-Functional Public e-Legislation Portal’ (‘Není co zobrazovat, reaguje vnitro na nefungující veřejný portál e-Legislative’), January 4 2024. Available online: <https://www.lupa.cz/clanky/neni-co-zobrazovat-reaguje-vnitro-na-nefungujici-verejny-portal-e-legislative/>.

139 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), ‘Research: Journalists Face Low Salaries, Violence, and Harassment’ (‘Výzkum: Žurnalisté se potýkají s nízkými platy, násilím i obtěžováním’), February 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/vyzkum-zurnalistika-rodina-prace-obtezovani-nasili-platove-ohodnoceni_2402271107_fil.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Key recommendations

- *The Ministry of Justice should speed up the implementation of European Court of Human Rights rulings.*
- *The Senate should approve the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in accordance with the Paris Principles and ensure adequate funding.*
- *The Senate should approve the establishment of the Office of Ombudsperson for Children.*

Process for preparing and enacting laws

Rules and use of fast-track procedures and emergency procedures (for example, the percentage of decisions adopted through emergency/urgent procedure compared to the total number of adopted decisions)

In September 2024, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Markéta Pekarová Adamová, declared a state of legislative emergency, facilitating the expedited approval of a proposed amendment to the 2024 state budget. This fast-track procedure enabled the Chamber of Deputies to deliberate and approve the amendment promptly, addressing urgent fiscal requirements.¹⁴⁰

Regime for constitutional review of laws

In 2024, the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic actively engaged in the review of laws, resulting in the annulment of several provisions that were deemed unconstitutional. Below are key rulings:

Judgment No. Pl. ÚS 52/23, 24 April 2024

The Constitutional Court annulled Section 29(1) (first sentence) of the Civil Code, which required gender reassignment to be conditioned on surgical procedures. The Court found this provision unconstitutional, with annulment effective 30 June 2025.¹⁴¹

140 Ministry of Finance (Czech Republic), 'MPs Approved the Amendment to the 2024 Budget' ('Poslanci schválili novelu rozpočtu 2024'), 20 September 2024, <https://www.mfcr.cz/cs/ministerstvo/media/tiskove-zpravy/2024/poslanci-schvalili-novelu-rozpocet-2024-57211>.

141 Constitutional Court (Czech Republic), *Judgment Pl. ÚS 52/23* (Nález Ústavního soudu: Pl. ÚS 52/23), *Zákony pro lidi*, 24 April 2024, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2024-144>.

Judgment No. Pl. ÚS 39/21, 31 July 2024

The Court annulled Sections 50(2–6), 51a, and part of Section 75(e) of the Act on Assistance in Financial Need. These provisions allowed for deductions from financial need benefits as a sanction for minor offenses, which the Court ruled unconstitutional.¹⁴²

Judgment No. Pl. ÚS 41/23, 4 December 2024

The Court annulled provisions of Act No. 253/2023 Coll., which amended the Act on Political Parties and Movements. These provisions were found to be adopted in violation of constitutional principles.¹⁴³

Independent authorities

In 2024, the Czech Republic faced continued criticism for lacking a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and a dedicated children’s ombudsman.¹⁴⁴ The Czech Republic remains one of the few EU countries without an NHRI

despite repeated recommendations from international organisations. Discussions in 2024 focused on expanding the mandate of the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) to serve as an NHRI. While the government supported this approach, the legislative process remains incomplete.¹⁴⁵ Criticism for the absence of a children’s ombudsman has been mounting. In April 2024, the Czech government approved a draft amendment to establish this role within the Public Defender of Rights Office. The position is proposed to function independently but within the broader structure of the ombudsman’s institution. However, concerns about funding and staffing remain unresolved. Public Defender of Rights Stanislav Křeček raised concerns about the feasibility of the children’s ombudsman role without sufficient resources. Critics argue that underfunding could render the position symbolic rather than impactful.¹⁴⁶

142 Constitutional Court (Czech Republic), *Judgment Pl. ÚS 39/21* (Nález Ústavního soudu: Pl. ÚS 39/21), *Zákony pro lidi*, 31 July 2024, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2024-289>.

143 Constitutional Court (Czech Republic), *Judgment Pl. ÚS 41/23* (Nález Ústavního soudu: Pl. ÚS 41/23), *Zákony pro lidi*, 4 December 2024, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2024-427>.

144 As of today (22. 1. 2025) both Children’s Ombudsman and NHRI were approved by the Chamber of Deputies, now it has to be approved by the Senate and signed by the president.

145 Ombudsman (Czech Republic), ‘The Government Approved the Establishment of a Children’s Ombudsman and a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)’ (‘Vláda schválila vznik dětského ombudsmana i národní lidskoprávní instituce (NHRI)’), 10 April 2024, https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/vlada_schvalila_vznik_detskeho_ombudsmana_i_narodni_lidskopravni_instituce_nhri/.

146 Advokátní deník, ‘If the State Does Not Provide Resources, the Children’s Ombudsman Will Not Operate Fully’ (‘Pokud stát nezajistí zdroje, nebude dětský ombudsman naplno fungovat’), 26 April 2024, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/04/26/pokud-stat-nezajisti-zdroje-nebude-detsky-ombudsman-naplno-fungovat/>.

Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (including their publication and the availability and publicity of data concerning administrative decisions)

The proposal to amend the Code of Administrative Procedure in 2024 reflects a proactive approach by the Czech government to address long-standing inefficiencies in the judicial review of administrative decisions. The amendment seeks to create a more effective and transparent system by streamlining procedural rules and clarifying judicial powers. Additionally, the government's commitment to publishing comprehensive data on administrative decisions and sanctions enhances public awareness and ensures that individuals and organisations can hold administrative bodies accountable. If adopted, these measures could significantly strengthen the administrative justice system in the Czech Republic, fostering greater public confidence in the fairness and efficiency of administrative processes.¹⁴⁷

Electoral framework

Limitations on the right to vote

In the Czech Republic, it is common for people to be restricted in their voting rights, both active and passive, as part of a proceeding to restrict their legal capacity. This problem persists.¹⁴⁸

Enabling environment for the exercise of the right to vote: voter registration systems, accessibility of polling stations, remote/e-voting arrangements, threats and intimidation

In 2024, the Czech Republic made strides in facilitating postal voting for citizens living abroad. The Chamber of Deputies approved an amendment to the electoral law that would allow Czech citizens to vote by post in elections for the Chamber of Deputies, the European Parliament, and the presidency. This proposal awaits final approval by the Senate and the President, with implementation anticipated for the 2025 parliamentary elections.¹⁴⁹

147 Advokátní deník, 'The Draft Comprehensive Amendment to the Code of Administrative Justice Heads to Parliament' ('Návrh komplexní novely soudního řádu správního míří do parlamentu'), August 22 2024, <https://advokatnidenik.cz/2024/08/22/navrh-komplexni-novely-soudniho-radu-spravniho-miri-do-parlamentu/>.

148 Ombudsman (Czech Republic), 'What Are the Pitfalls of Election Accessibility? People with Disabilities and Those Deprived of Liberty May Face Challenges' ('Jaká jsou úskalí přístupnosti voleb? S naplněním volebního práva mohou mít problém nejen lidé s postižením, ale například i ti omezení na svobodě'), 2024, https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/jaka_jsou_uskali_pristupnosti_voleb_s_naplnenim_volebniho_prava_mohou_mit_problem_nejen_lide_s_postizenim_ale_naprıklad_i_ti_omezeni_na_svobode/.

149 Tvoříme Evropu, 'The Chamber of Deputies Approved the Introduction of Postal Voting for Czechs Living Abroad' ('Sněmovna schválila zavedení korespondenční volby pro Čechy žijící v cizině'), 21 June 2024, <https://tvorimeevropu.cz/2024/06/21/snemovna-schvalila-zavedeni-korespondencni-volby-pro-cechy-zijici-v-cizine/>.

Rules on political advertising and their enforcement

Disinformation played a significant role in campaigns leading up to the European Parliament elections, with Facebook identified as a key platform for spreading misleading content. According to Transparency International Czech Republic, several actors actively disseminated narratives aimed at influencing voter behavior and undermining trust in democratic institutions. The report highlights the urgent need for stricter regulation of online platforms and greater transparency in political advertising to counter the spread of disinformation during election periods.¹⁵⁰

Access to balanced and reliable information online and offline during electoral campaign: campaigning, media coverage, disinformation and misinformation

While media coverage of the electoral campaigns was largely balanced, the dissemination of disinformation online posed a challenge. According to the Center for Democracy and Media Studies (CEDMO), the Czech public remained highly influenced by disinformation, with debates often polarised by manipulative narratives during the campaign period.¹⁵¹

150 Transparency International ČR, 'Disinformation in European Parliament Election Campaigns: Actors on Facebook' ('Dezinformace v kampaních do Evropského parlamentu: Aktéři na Facebooku'), 2024, <https://www.transparency.cz/dezinformace-v-kampanich-do-evropskeho-parlamentu-akteri-na-facebooku/>.

151 CEDMO, 'What Are the Trends in the Development of Disinformation Narratives in Czechia and Slovakia in the First Quarter of 2024?' ('Jaké jsou trendy ve vývoji dezinformačních narativů v Česku a na Slovensku za první čtvrtletí roku 2024?'), 2024, <https://cedmohub.eu/cs/jake-jsou-trendy-ve-vyvoji-dezinformacnich-narativu-v-cesku-a-na-slovensku-za-prvni-ctvrtleti-roku-2024/>.

CIVIC SPACE

Key recommendations

- *The Legislature should effectively address the issue of so-called flow-through accounts*
- *The Government should ensure sustainable funding of NGOs from the state budget by increasing funding programmes for underfunded topics*

Freedom of association

Equal treatment among CSOs, including by reference to CSOs' focus of activities, type of activities, and geographical location of activities

There are significant differences in support for different types of CSOs (e.g. sports organisations versus human rights organisations). Human rights and social inclusion organisations often face limited funding, whereas sports or cultural organisations have access to more public funding. There is also a geographical inequality, with organisations operating in rural areas having more limited access to funding and support programmes than those in large cities.¹⁵²

Financing framework for CSOs, including availability of and access to public funding, rules on fundraising, rules on foreign funding, tax regulations (e.g. tax advantages for organisations with charitable or public benefit status, eligibility to receive donations via citizens' allocation of income tax to charitable causes, eligibility to use public amenities at low or no cost, etc)

According to the European Civic Forum's *Civic Space Report*, systemic problems persist in public funding, such as the absence of multi-year funding, a long and bureaucratic grant process, strict co-financing requirements, and different award methodologies across calls for proposals.¹⁵³

State financial support to the state's nonprofit space did not change significantly in 2024 compared to 2023; however, subsidies lost real value due to inflation. At the same time, it was noted that some organisations, particularly

152 European Civic Forum, *Civic Space Report 2024*, May 2024, https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Civic-Space-Report-2024_ECF.pdf.

153 Ibid.

those that promote citizens' rights, such as gender equality, saw a decrease in financial support. In contrast, other areas, such as sports associations, received more funding.¹⁵⁴ In the middle of the year, the government approved the main areas of state grant policy towards non-governmental non-profit organisations for 2025. According to the policy document, the overall financial support will be increased, however, a large part will be dedicated to organisations that are dedicated to culture and sport. Organisations dedicated to the fight against corruption, equal opportunities for women and men, the environment, health and education will receive less financial support than in 2024. On the positive side, organisations dedicated to national minorities will receive more support.¹⁵⁵

The process of obtaining grants is lengthy and bureaucratic, with strict co-financing requirements. This places a significant burden on NGOs, which have to spend considerable effort on administrative tasks instead of their core activities. There is also a lack of multi-year funding, which leads to uncertainty and limits the ability of NGOs to plan and implement

long-term projects. This situation negatively affects the stability and sustainability of organisations.

Another problem is the lack of funding for digitalisation, which puts NGOs at a disadvantage compared to other sectors. The lack of funding for modern technologies limits the effectiveness and reach of their activities. These factors combine to create an environment that complicates the functioning of civil society in the Czech Republic and limits its ability to fulfill its mission effectively.

Travel restrictions/visa bans

In February 2024, the Czech government decided to extend its ban on issuing visas and residence permits to citizens of Russia and Belarus. This measure, originally introduced in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has been declared 'indefinite' due to pressing national security interests. The ban aims to align with broader European Union sanctions and reflects the Czech Republic's stance on maintaining pressure against these nations in response to the ongoing conflict.¹⁵⁶

154 Glopolis, *Civic Space Report 2024: Czech Republic*, 2024, <https://glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1439/civic-space-report-2024-czech-republic.pdf>.

155 Government of the Czech Republic, 'Main Areas of State Grant Policy Towards Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations for 2025' ('Hlavní oblasti státní dotační politiky vůči nestátním neziskovým organizacím pro rok 2025'), 2024, <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/hlavni-oblasti-statni-dotacni-politiky-vuci-destatnim-neziskovym-organizacim-pro-rok-2025-214054/>.

156 Czech Justice (Česká justice), 'The Ban on Issuing Visas to Russians and Belarusians for Entry to the Czech Republic Will Remain in Place as an Urgent Interest' ('Zákaz vydávání víz Rusům a Bělorusům do ČR bude v naléhavém zájmu setrvalý'), February 2024, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/02/zakaz-vydavani-viz-rusum-a-belorusum-do-cr-bude-v-nalehavem-zajmu-setrvaly/>

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Bans on protests

The Czech Republic respects the right to protest, and all demonstrations this year have been peaceful. However, it is worth paying attention to anti-government demonstrations. In March, farmers spread manure in protest outside the Government Office. They demanded that the government support rural employment, refrain from cutting support for animal welfare, and return land taxation to pre-consolidation package levels or not tax European operating subsidies.¹⁵⁷

An anti-government demonstration was held that same month, with an estimated 1000 people attending. It was organised by the non-parliamentary party PRO (Pravo Respekt Odbornost) and the allied association Czech Republic Against Poverty. They criticised President Petr Pavel and the European Union's green policies,

such as the emission allowance system and the planned ban on internal combustion engines. They also spoke out against the war in Ukraine and the alleged dragging of the Czech Republic into it. They called for an end to aid to Ukrainian refugees.¹⁵⁸ The speakers spread misinformation about Ukrainians coming to the Czech Republic for economic reasons, not because of the war. This year's relatively peaceful demonstration was a follow-up to last year's protests, during which participants attempted to storm the National Museum to remove the Ukrainian flag.¹⁵⁹ Anti-government protesters demanded the removal of the Ukrainian flag from the National Museum building again on 17 November (the day of the fight for freedom and democracy).¹⁶⁰ The rally was called for by Ladislav Vrabel, who has been fined in the past for spreading false news.¹⁶¹

The demonstrations were also about the war in Gaza. In May, a demonstration was held in front of Czech Television against how

157 Deník.cz, 'Farmers Protest in Front of the Government Office with Manure' ('Zemědělci protestují před Úřadem vlády s hnojem'), 7 March 2024, <https://www.denik.cz/regiony/zemedelci-hnuj-urad-vlady-vyborny-20240307.html>.

158 ČTK, 'Anti-Government Protest of Thousands Lasted About 2.5 Hours in the Center of Prague' ('Protivládní protest tisíců lidí trval v centru Prahy zhruba 2,5 hodiny'), České noviny, 2024, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/2495985>.

159 Novinky.cz, 'Anti-Government Protest on Wenceslas Square' ('Protivládní protest na Václavském náměstí'), 2024, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-protivladni-protest-na-vaclavskem-namesti-40465185>.

160 Pražský deník, 'Opponents of Aid to Ukraine Protest in Front of the National Museum' ('Odpůrci pomoci Ukrajině protestují před Národním muzeem'), 2024, https://prazsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/odpurci-pomoc-ukrajina-narodni-muzeum.html.

161 ČTK, 'Vrabel Filed a Constitutional Complaint Against a Fine for Spreading a False Alarm' ('Vrabel podal ústavní stížnost proti peněžitému trestu za šíření poplašné zprávy'), České noviny, 2024, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/2543891>.

television broadcasting, as a public institution, has long reported on events in Palestine and Israel. According to the protesters, broadcasters normalises the Israeli genocide. A study by Masaryk University also drew attention to the bias of the television broadcasting.¹⁶² In October, the protesters demanded a reassessment of the Czech government's stance towards Israel, which they consider uncritical.¹⁶³

Freedom of expression and information

Criminalisation of speech

For the first time, a man was convicted for approving of a mass shooting at a university in December 2023. The convicted man claimed in a bar that he intended to shoot his co-workers at the bank where he worked at the time while praising the act of the university killer. The court gave him a sentence of 250 hours of community service. This was not an isolated case of approval of a shooting. By mid-2024,

there were 327 cases in which people either approved of the shooter's act or threatened to shoot others.¹⁶⁴

Spread of and responses to disinformation

The Czech Republic continues to face disinformation campaigns, particularly in connection with the war in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees on Czech territory, but also with the war in Gaza. Among other things, disinformation spread about the floods in the autumn, causing distrust in experts, politicians, institutions and the system itself. First, the existence of the floods was questioned, and then whether those affected were being helped.¹⁶⁵ According to the current advisor to the Prime Minister on disinformation, disinformation is still being spread by politicians, both opposition and government. The most common topics warped by these disinformation campaigns include the impact of the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, the war in Ukraine, the payment of

162 Deník Referendum, 'A Demonstration Took Place in Prague Against the Way Czech Television Reports on the War in Gaza' ('V Praze se demonstrovalo proti způsobu, jímž ČT informuje o válce v Gaze'), 2024, <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/36353-v-praze-se-demonstrovalo-proti-zpusobu-jimz-ct-informuje-o-valce-v-gaze>.

163 iDNES.cz, 'Protests Across Europe on the Anniversary of the War in Gaza, Including in Prague' ('Protesty po celé Evropě k výročí války v Gaze, včetně Prahy'), 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/izrael-gaza-valka-protesty-evropa-vyroci-praha.A241005_181610_zahranicni_ikro.

164 Czech Television (ČT24), 'The First Sentence for Approving the Shooting at the Faculty Has Been Handed Down' ('Padl první trest za schvalování střelby na fakultě'), 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/regiony/hn-padl-prvni-trest-za-schvalovani-strelby-na-fakulte-352596>.

165 iDNES.cz, 'Advisor to the Prime Minister on Disinformation: Miloš Gregor Talks About Floods and Fundraising' ('Poradce premiéra o dezinformacích: Miloš Gregor hovoří o povodních a vybírání peněz'), 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/poradce-premiera-dezinformace-milos-gregor-rozhovor-povodne-vybirani-penez.A241010_105327_domaci_vank.

social benefits, and the implementation of marriage for all.¹⁶⁶

At the beginning of the year, President Petr Pavel also expressed concern that the fight against disinformation in the Czech Republic is slow.¹⁶⁷ Despite the government's previous declarations, even in 2024, a law was not passed that was supposed to, among other things, establish the conditions under which the State can shut down so-called disinformation websites.¹⁶⁸

A step forward in this area is the mid-year creation of the position of 'strategic communications coordinator' at the Office of the

Government, which was taken over by veteran and former military police director Otakar Foltýn. His task is to get the State's strategic communications moving and combat disinformation. In his words, the Czech Republic has a big deficit in this area.¹⁶⁹ The post would only run on a temporary basis for six months. However, this period can be extended.¹⁷⁰ Foltýn is assisted by the Department of Strategic State Communication at the Government Office.¹⁷¹

The Czech Republic has prepared several information campaigns. These included a campaign by the Ministry of the Interior to inform the public that Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic are working in places where

166 Novinky.cz, 'Even Politicians Spread Disinformation, Including Those in Government, Say Experts' ('I politici šíří dezinformace, a to i ti vládní, říkají experti'), 2024, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-i-politici-siri-dezinformace-a-to-i-ti-vladni-rikaji-experti-40459669>.

167 Český rozhlas (Radiožurnál), 'The Government Is Not Doing Even the Minimum in the Fight Against Disinformation, Says President Petr Pavel' ('Vláda nedělá v boji s dezinformacemi ani minimum, myslí si prezident Petr Pavel'), 2024, <https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/vlada-nedela-v-boji-s-dezinformacemi-ani-minimum-mysli-si-prezident-petr-pavel-9163315>.

168 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), 'Otakar Foltýn Joins the Government Office to Address Strategic Communication and Disinformation' ('Otakar Foltýn nastupuje na Úřad vlády k řešení strategické komunikace a dezinformací'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/otakar-foltyn-urad-vlady-strategicka-komunikace-dezinformace_2405211708_gut.

169 Deník N, 'Foltýn: We Are Not Threatened by Russian Tanks, but by Propaganda. Social Networks Are Our Vulnerable Spot' ('Foltýn: Nejsme ohroženi ruskými tanky, ale propagandou. Sociální sítě jsou naše zranitelné místo'), 2024, <https://denikn.cz/1444029/foltyn-nejsme-ohrozeni-ruskymi-tanky-ale-propagandou-socialni-site-jsou-nase-zranitelne-misto/>.

170 Czech Radio (iRozhlas.cz), 'Otakar Foltýn Joins the Government Office to Address Strategic Communication and Disinformation' ('Otakar Foltýn nastupuje na Úřad vlády k řešení strategické komunikace a dezinformací'), 2024, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/otakar-foltyn-urad-vlady-strategicka-komunikace-dezinformace_2405211708_gut.

171 Seznam Zprávy, 'Podcast: How Effective Is the State's Strategic Communication?' ('Podcast: Daří se strategická komunikace státu?'), 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/audio-podcast-ptam-se-ja-dari-se-strategicka-komunikace-statu-266587>.

they are needed. The second information campaign prepared by the Ministry together with the Human Rights Commissioner Klara Šimáčková Laurenčíková raised awareness on what to do when witnessing verbal violence in public space.¹⁷²

Public service media play a critical role in combating disinformation by providing reliable and objective information to the public. According to the report by the Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI), these media outlets should serve as a counterbalance to disinformation by adhering to high journalistic standards and actively promoting media literacy among citizens. Strengthening public trust in these institutions is essential to ensuring their effectiveness in addressing the challenges posed by disinformation in the digital age.¹⁷³

Online civil space

Digital attacks to IT infrastructure

In 2024, the Czech Republic continued to face challenges related to disinformation,

particularly from foreign actors. Russian hybrid operations targeted the Czech population through cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, aiming to destabilise democratic processes. Although some efforts to counter disinformation were made, experts noted stagnation in the systematic approach to addressing fake news and incitement to hatred.¹⁷⁴

Attacks, threats and hate speech online

Young Romani activists in the Czech Republic led initiatives to combat online hate speech targeting the Roma community. Their efforts included documenting instances of racism and advocating for policy changes. These actions led to several criminal filings against perpetrators, highlighting the persistence of discrimination based on Roma origin in the Czech online space.¹⁷⁵

On November 4, 2024, the Czech Government's Commissioner for Human Rights, Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková, hosted a conference titled 'Disinformation and Hate Speech in the Online World: Challenges of

172 iDNES.cz, 'Advisor to the Prime Minister on Disinformation: Miloš Gregor Talks About Floods and Fundraising' ('Poradce premiéra o dezinformacích: Miloš Gregor hovoří o povodních a vybírání peněz'), 2024, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/poradce-premiera-dezinformace-milos-gregor-rozhovor-povodne-vybirani-penez-A241010_105327_domaci_vank.

173 Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI), *The Role of Public Service Media in Combating Disinformation* (Role médií veřejné služby v postupu proti dezinformaci), 2024, https://www.pssi.cz/download//docs/11417_role-me-dii-verejne-sluz-by-v-postupu-proti-dezinformaci-m.pdf.

174 Prague Forum, 'Czech Republic Faces Russian Hybrid Operations in 2024', July 20, 2024, <https://www.pragueforum.cz/czech-republic-faces-russian-hybrid-operations-in-2024-interior-ministry-reports/>.

175 European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), 'New Czech Volunteer-Led Research & Legal Action Shows How Roma Can Combat Online Hate', 2024, <https://www.errc.org/press-releases/new-czech-volunteer-led-research--legal-action-shows-how-roma-can-combat-online-hate>.

the Current Information Environment' at the Hrzánský Palace in Prague. The event brought together experts from various fields to address

the growing threats of disinformation and hate speech in the Czech Republic and beyond.¹⁷⁶

176 Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, *Disinformation and Hate Speech in the Online World* (Dezinformace a hate speech v online světě), 2024, <https://www.flu.cas.cz/cz/akce-filosofickeho-ustavu-av-cr/21-konference-a-workshopy/4767-dezinformace-a-hate-speech-v-online-svete>.

DISREGARD OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS AND OTHER SYSTEMIC ISSUES AFFECTING THE RULE OF LAW ENVIRONMENT

Key recommendations

- Parliament should pass the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- The Ministry of Health should ensure that compensation for unlawful sterilisations is an effective mechanism.
- The Ministry of School, Youth and Education should take action to end systemic discrimination against Romani children in education and ensure equal access to quality schooling for all.

Systemic human rights violations

Victims of unlawful sterilisations conducted between 1966 and 2012 have been eligible since 2022 to apply for a one-time compensation of CZK 300,000. However, the Ministry of Health has faced criticism for delays in processing these claims. The Ombudsman reported significant administrative delays and

improper evidence assessment by the Ministry, urging governmental intervention.¹⁷⁷

As the original application deadline approached, there was a push to extend it. Justice Minister Pavel Blažek and MP Eva Decroix proposed a two-year extension to ensure all eligible victims have the opportunity to apply.¹⁷⁸

177 Ombudsman (Czech Republic), 'The Ombudsman Summarized for the Government the Offenses of the Ministry of Health in Compensation for Unlawful Sterilizations: Extreme Delays, Poor Evaluation of Evidence, Decisions Contrary to Court Opinions, and Ignoring the Content of Repeated Requests' ('Ombudsman shrnul vládě prohršky Ministerstva zdravotnictví při odškodňování za protiprávní sterilizace: extrémní průtahy, špatné hodnocení důkazů, rozhodování v rozporu s názorem soudu i ignorování obsahu opakovaných žádostí'), 2024, https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/ombudsman_shrnul_vlade_prohresky_ministerstva_zdravotnictvi_pri_odskodnovani_za_protipravni_sterilizace_extremni_prutahy_spatne_hodnoceni_dukazu_rozhodovani_v_rozporu_s_nazorem_soudu_i_ignorovani_obsahu_opakovanych_zadosti/.

178 Česká televize (ČT), 'Události: Segment from December 13, 2024' ('Události: Část z 13. prosince 2024'), 2024, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1097181328-udalosti/224411000101213/cast/1085242/>.

The Czech Parliament has been unable to pass legislation granting equal marriage rights to same-sex couples. However, an amendment to the Registered Partnership Act was approved, effective 1 January 2025. This amendment grants same-sex couples rights similar to those of married couples, with certain exceptions, particularly concerning adoption. While this represents progress toward equality, full parity has yet to be achieved.¹⁷⁹

A significant legislative change redefined the crime of rape, emphasising consent as the key element. This shift moves away from the previous requirement of proving the use of violence, aligning Czech law with modern standards and strengthening protections for sexual violence victims.¹⁸⁰

The amendment to the Criminal Code introduced stricter penalties for sexual acts involving children under 12. Such acts will now be classified as rape or sexual assault rather than

the lesser offence of sexual abuse, thereby providing greater protection for the youngest and most vulnerable members of society.¹⁸¹

The Czech government has introduced a new requirement, referred to as the ‘Child Certificate’, aimed at preventing individuals with a history of child-related offences from working with children. Starting in 2025, all professionals and volunteers in child-related roles will be required to provide proof of a clean criminal record, ensuring they have no convictions for crimes involving children. This measure is part of broader efforts to enhance child protection and strengthen safeguards within educational and social care settings.¹⁸²

As part of child welfare reforms, it was decided that children under the age of three will no longer be placed in institutional care. This change promotes family-based care and foster parenting, which are considered more conducive environments for healthy child development.¹⁸³

179 Jsme Fér, ‘Questions and Answers: Amendment to the Registered Partnership Act’ (‘Otázky a odpovědi: Novela zákona o registrovaném partnerství’), 10 November 2024, https://www.jsmefer.cz/otazky_odpovedi_partnerstvi_prijato.

180 Czech Radio (Radio Prague International), ‘Senate Approves “No Means No” Definition of Rape’, 2024, <https://english.radio.cz/senate-approves-no-means-no-definition-rape-8818495>.

181 Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, ‘MPs Unanimously Approved the Redefinition of Rape’ (‘Poslanci jednomyslně schválili redefinici znásilnění’), 2024, <https://msp.gov.cz/en/web/msp/rozcestnik/-/clanek/poslan-ci-jednomysl%C4%9B-schv%C3%A1lili-redefinici-zn%C3%A1siln%C4%9Bn%C3%AD>.

182 Czech Television (ČT24), ‘Child Certificate Aims to Prevent Abusers from Working with Children’ (‘Dětský certifikát má zabránit násilníkům v práci s dětmi’), 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/detsky-certifikat-ma-zabranit-nasilnikum-v-praci-s-detmi-355540>.

183 Zdravotnický deník, ‘Infant Institutions to Close in Two Weeks: Care Secured for the Last Hundred Children Remaining’ (‘Za dva týdny skončí kojenecké ústavy: Péče je zajištěna i o poslední stovku dětí, kteří v nich ještě jsou’), December 2024, <https://www.zdravotnickydenik.cz/2024/12/za-dva-tydny-skonci-kojenecke-ustavy-pece-je-zajistena-i-o-posledni-stovku-deti-kteri-v-nich-jeste-jsou/>.

The Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MŠMT) launched measures aimed at addressing ethnic segregation in schools. The goal was to ensure inclusive education for children of various ethnic backgrounds, particularly focusing on the integration of Romani pupils. These initiatives are seen as crucial steps toward resolving the longstanding issue of segregated education.¹⁸⁴

Widespread human rights violations and/or persistent protection failures

In response to the increasing number of Ukrainian students, the Czech Parliament passed an amendment in December 2024, granting school principals the authority to organise separate enrollment processes for Ukrainian children. This separate enrollment is scheduled to occur one month after the standard enrolment period for Czech children. Proponents of the amendment argue that this approach will help distribute Ukrainian students more evenly across classes, facilitating better integration and language acquisition. However, some critics view this measure as discriminatory.¹⁸⁵

Other systemic issues

In January 2024, the Czech Senate narrowly failed to ratify the Istanbul Convention, a Council of Europe treaty aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The ratification fell short by two votes, with only 34 out of 71 senators in favour. This decision means that the Czech Republic remains among the minority of European countries that have signed but not ratified the Convention.¹⁸⁶

FOSTERING A RULE OF LAW CULTURE

Contribution of civil society and other non-governmental actors

The Czech NGO Síť k ochraně demokracie (Network for Protection of Democracy) initiated a critical dialogue with the government by publishing an open letter to the Prime Minister, emphasising the urgent need to strengthen democratic safeguards ahead of the upcoming elections. The letter outlined concerns about the potential risks to democratic institutions

184 Seznam Zprávy, ‘Breakthrough in School Segregation of Roma: Schools Could Be Closed’ (‘Průlom v segregaci Romů na školách: Můžou se rušit i školy’), 5 March 2024, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-zivot-v-cesku-prulom-v-segregaci-romu-na-skolach-muzou-se-rusit-i-skoly-247080>.

185 Czech Radio (Radio Prague International), ‘MPs Approve Bill Opening the Way for Separate Enrolment of Ukrainian Children in Czech Schools’, 2024, <https://english.radio.cz/mps-approve-bill-opening-way-separate-enrolment-ukrainian-children-czech-schools-8837994>.

186 Expats.cz, ‘An International Disgrace: Czech Senate Does Not Pass Istanbul Convention’, January 25 2024, <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/an-international-disgrace-czech-senate-doesn-t-pass-istanbul-convention>.

and urged the government to take proactive steps to enhance transparency, accountability, and public trust.

In response, the Prime Minister acknowledged the importance of these issues, highlighting ongoing efforts by the government to reinforce democratic processes. However, *Sít k ochraně demokracie* followed up with a statement reiterating the need for more concrete actions. The organisation proposed that a parliamentary debate and active communication by government members could raise awareness about the necessity of democratic safeguards, fostering public understanding and support for reforms aimed at protecting democracy.¹⁸⁷

187 *Sít k ochraně demokracie*, ‘Response to the Prime Minister: Strengthening Democratic Safeguards Before the Elections Is Key’ (‘Odpověď premiérovi: Klíčové je posílit demokratické pojistky do voleb’), 2024, <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/aktuality/odpoved-premierovi-klicove-je-posilit-demokraticke-pojistky-do-voleb-povedomi-o-jejich-potrebnosti-by-mohla-zlepsit-debata-v-parlamentu-a-aktivni-komunikace-clenu-vlady>

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The League of Human Rights (LIGA) is a Czech human rights non-governmental organisation that advances the rights and freedoms of all people of the Czech Republic. In our work, we mainly focus on the rights of especially vulnerable persons or those facing social exclusion, such as children, people with disabilities, or victims of police violence.

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The Civil Liberties Union for Europe

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of 21 national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU.

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