Basic facts about the country

Population: 10.3 million
Area: 78,864 km²
Density of population: 131 inhabitants per km²
Structure of employment:
- Agriculture 5.2% (2000)
- Industry 30.2% (2000)
- Services 64.6% (2000)

Unemployment rate: 8.1% (May 2001)
Public expenditure on education: 4.6% GDP (2000)

Participation in education (1998):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>90.7</td>
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Tertiary education

A higher professional school (with editorial studies), ISCED 3B, provides the necessary qualifications for demanding technical activities which do not require a university degree. The programmes last a minimum of two years and a maximum of three and a half years. There are 170 of these schools (one third are private schools) teaching in approx. 200 branches. Students study for one year for a lower qualification and three years for an upper qualification. Higher education institutions can be either university or non-university types, both defined as vysoká škola. The type of institution is declared in its statute, and must correspond with the wishes of the Accreditation Commission. They offer education at three tertiary levels: bachelor study programmes (usually 3 years, ISCED 5B) and master study programmes (usually 5 years, ISCED 5A) are available for applicants who have passed the university exams and have met the other admission criteria. Bachelor study programmes conclude with a final exam (maturita) and sometimes also lower-level secondary vocational education (2 or 3 year courses). The school prepares students for technical work in one of about 260 branches. Students pay a fee for tuition.

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into three levels: the basic school, gymnázium, and secondary technical school. The curricula of all secondary schools must meet the requirements of the appropriate educational standards approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Pupils are assessed (by teachers) on the basis of written and oral tests, and in practical subjects (in laboratories) and projects. The final exam is a written exam and is also an important element of the school’s admission procedure. The school’s results are published in the students’ records, which is necessary for further studies. Assessment methods at gymnasiums cover all branches of the school subject curriculum and are designed to be fair and transparent. The school prepares students for university studies. The duration is 4 years after 9 years of basic school, although there are also other types of branches. The school prepares students for technical work in one of about 260 branches. Students pay a fee for tuition.

Administration

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the central managing body in the field of education. It administers all sectors of education (with exception of some schools in the sector of agriculture, defense and the interior). From 2002, when the reform of public administration has been completed, the nursery, primary and secondary schools will be administered by the departments of education within 14 newly-established self-governing regional bodies.

Financing

State schools are funded (with a few exceptions) by the state through the budget of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The funding method is based on the principle of financial resource allocation for operational costs to schools according to the number of students and the cost of their education programmes. The Ministry sets the standard rates annually. The municipalities co-finance nursery schools and schools providing compulsory education. The regions co-finance university schools. The reform of public administration will increase the role of municipalities in the financing of education. Public expenditure on education reached 4.6 % of GDP in 2000.
The Czech School Inspectorate is the central controlling body. It is responsible for the enforcement of the performance of educational institutions. The regulation of their activities is performed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The funding method is based on the principle of financial resource allocation for operational costs to schools according to the education level. The municipalities co-finance nursery schools and schools providing compulsory education. The regions co-finance secondary schools. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the central managing body in the field of public administration. The higher education institutions can be either university or non-university types, both of which provide study programmes. Most university-type institutions are divided into faculties. Traditional university-type institutions may offer all types of study programmes and prepare students for university studies. The duration is 4 years after 9 years of basic education. The national teaching standards authority sets the objectives and the basic curriculum. To achieve them, various educational programmes can be employed when approved. There are three national programmes. Each establishment is free to use teaching methods and textbooks (from a list approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). Pupils are assessed (by teachers) on the basis of written and oral performance (and homework) and classified on a scale of 1 to 5. Continuous assessment is summarised in a report at the end of each semester. Verbal assessment is authorised at the first stage of basic schooling. This kind of assessment is used by 8% of teachers. Meetings with parents are organised to discuss the progress made by their children. Pupils demonstrating learning difficulties have to repeat the year. The drop out rate is 5.9%.

Secondary education

There are three main types of secondary schools in the Czech Republic: general secondary school (gymnázium), secondary technical school (střední odborná škola, SOŠ) and secondary vocational school (střední odborná škola, SOU). A prerequisite for acceptance is successful completion of basic school and successful meeting of the entrance requirements. The standard entrance examination is open to some applicants without an entrance exam and to set the content of the exam. Gymnázium (ISCED 3) provides a general, academic education. Its main aim is to prepare students for university studies. The duration is 4 years after 9 years of basic schooling, although there are other types of gymnáziums (see above). At the end of their time at gymnázium, students take a final exam (maturita). Approximately 15% of young people entering all types of secondary schools at the age of 15 enrol in a gymnázium. Besides that approx. 7% of the population group is enrolled in a gymnázium at a lower age. There are 347 schools of this type (nearly one fifth of all secondary schools). A secondary technical school (ISCED 3) usually provides a complete secondary vocational education which takes 4 years and concludes with a final exam (maturita) and sometimes also lower-level secondary education (2 or 3 year courses). The school prepares students for technical work in one of about 280 branches. About 50% of teaching time is devoted to general education and 50% to vocational/technical education. Practical lessons are taught in laboratories and workshops at schools. Approx. 36% of youth enters this type of secondary school and this proportion is increasing. The number of these schools is approx. 1552 (about one quarter of them are private ones).

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Pre-school education

Vocational schools (částečné zájmové učiliště) are part of the educational system. The basic age group is from 3 to 5. Although attendance is not compulsory, it includes 88% of the population. The majority of schools are free, but parents can be asked to pay a maximum of 30% of the running costs.

Compulsory education

School attendance has been compulsory since 1774. It lasts for a period of 9 years, usually from 6 to 15, mostly at the basic school (základní škola). Catchment areas are defined, but the choice of school is free. Pupils can leave a základní škola at the end of the 8th year for an eight-year course at a gymnázium or at the end of the 9th year for a six-year course in a gymnasium after passing the entrance examination set by the school.

The school year begins on 1st September and ends on 31st August of the following year. Lessons of 45 minutes are spread over 5 days a week. There are 22 - 25 lessons in the first stage (year 1 - 5), 27 - 30 lessons in the second stage (year 6 - 9). The teacher-pupil ratio was 1.12 in 1999/2000, the average class size was 22.1 pupils. The coeducational classes are made up of pupils of the same age. At the first stage, all subjects are taught by the same teacher, whereas at the second stage teachers usually specialise in two subjects.

The national teaching standards authority sets the objectives and the basic curriculum. To achieve them, various educational programmes can be employed when approved. They are three national programmes. Each establishment is free to use teaching methods and textbooks (from a list approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). Pupils are assessed by teachers on the basis of written and oral performance (and homework) and classified on a scale of 1 to 5. Continuous assessment is summarised in a report at the end of each semester. Verbal assessment is authorised at the first stage of basic school. This kind of assessment is used by 8% of teachers. Meetings with parents are organised to discuss the progress made by their children. Pupils demonstrating learning difficulties have to repeat the year. The drop-out rate is 5.9%.

Secondary education

There are three main types of secondary schools in the Czech Republic: general secondary school (gymnázium), technical secondary school (technikum), and vocational school (technická odborná škola, TOS) and secondary vocational school (technická odborná akademie, TOA). For acceptance is successful completion of basic school and successful meeting of the entrance requirements. The admittance is to accept some applicants without an entrance exam and to set the content of the exam. The entrance exam is the subject of further discussion. Up to July 2000, the general secondary education (gymnázium) was the most popular form of education. In 2000, the proportion of pupils at gymnázium was 79%. In 2000, the number of pupils attending technical secondary schools was 16%, and vocational schools 6%.

The gymnázium (ISCED 3) provides a general, academic education. Its main aim is to prepare students for university studies. The duration is 4 years after 9 years of basic school, although there are also other types of gymnázium (see above). At the end of the 7th year, students of gymnázium take a final exam (maturita). Approximately 19% of young people entering all types of secondary schools at the age of 15 are accepted into a gymnázium. Besides that, approx. 10% of the population group is enrolled in the gymnázium at a younger age. There are 347 schools of this type (nearly one fifth of secondary schools). The average class size is 20.7 pupils. The coeducational classes are made up of pupils of the same age. At the first stage, all subjects are taught by the same teacher, whereas at the second stage teachers usually specialise in two subjects.

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Proportion of pupils of the given age group in %

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Tertiary education

A three-year professional school (vocational school), ISCED 5B, provides the necessary qualifications for demanding technical activities which do not require a university degree. The programmes last a minimum of two years and a maximum of three and a half years. There are 174 of these schools (one-third are private schools) teaching in approximately 200 branches. Students gain entry to these programmes by successfully passing the entrance examination for the vocational school. Higher education institutions can be either university or non-university types, both defined as vysoká škola. The type of institution is declared in its statute, and must comply with the verdict of the Accreditation Commission. They offer education at four levels: bachelor, master, doctoral, and post-doctoral. Bachelor study programmes and master study programmes (usually 3 years, ISCED 5A) are available for applicants who have passed the matriculation exam and have met the basic admission criteria for particular study programmes. The third level of education, doctoral study programmes (usually 4 years, ISCED 5B), is open to graduates of the master study programmes. Traditionally, university-type institutions provide study programmes at both the bachelor and master levels, while non-university-type institutions are characterised by offering mainly bachelor level study programmes. Most university-type institutions are divided into faculties. There are more than 40 higher education establishments in the Czech Republic, both state and private. Approx. one-third of all admitted applicants study in the shorter bachelor study programmes and two-thirds in the longer master study programmes. The demand for higher education is high, only one half of applicants is admitted.

Administration

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The Czech School Inspectorate is the central controlling body. It is responsible for monitoring education results, the quality of management, the efficient use of funds and ensuring compliance with binding regulations at all levels except for universities.

Financing

State schools are funded (with a few exceptions) by the state through the budget of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The funding method is based on the principle of financial resource allocation for operational costs to schools according to the number of students and the cost of their education programmes. The Ministry sets the standard rates annually. The municipalities co-finance nursery schools and schools providing compulsory education. The regions co-finance tertiary schools. The reform of public administration will increase the role of municipalities in the financing of education. Public expenditure on education reached 4.6 % of GDP in 2000.
Educational System of the Czech Republic