

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



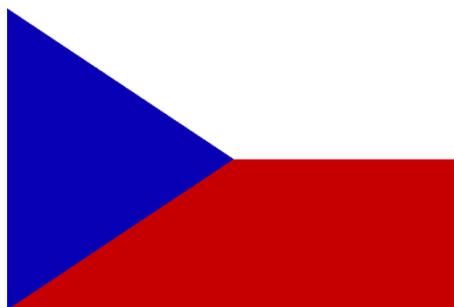
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COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH POLICY IN CZECH REPUBLIC



Last updated : 05/02/2016
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1. Statistics on young people

Children and youth are an integral, rapidly growing part of the Czech population (10 512 419 Czech population in total).

Number of all young people from the ages of 15 to 29 who live in the country: 1.124.517.

Percentage of young people from the ages of 15 to 29 in global population of the Czech Republic: 10,7%. (Data from Eurostat on 31.12. 2014)

2011 – the year of the most recent general census:

There were 1,968,595 young people aged 15-29 living in the Czech Republic in 2011– representing 18.86% of the total population. Unsurprisingly, the “youngest” of the 15 administrative regions of the country is the capital Prague, with more than 250,000 young residents, representing 13% of all young people living in the country. The geographic distribution of youth among the other regions is rather balanced with a share of young people within the overall population of the region ranging from 17.82% in Central Bohemian Region (area around Prague) to 19.37% in South-Moravian Region (southeast of the country). Obviously, the differences correspond to the presence/absence of large urban centres due to the tendency for their universities and other educational institutions to attract young people. It can be estimated that about 20-25% of the youth population lives in rural areas, i.e. in locations with up to 2000 inhabitants. In 2012, the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) recorded 108,955 births and 108,189 deaths in the Czech Republic; signifying a tiny natural increase of 387 individuals. A comparison with previous years shows a trend going from negative figures between 1994 and 2005 to positive numbers in the recent years. This trend can be clearly linked to the second generation of baby boomers born around 1975, who started having children in their late twenties and early thirties. Infant mortality is one of the lowest in Europe, whereas fertility rate is close to the average in the EU27.

2. National Youth Policy

2. 1. Context of national youth policy

The change of regime in November 1989 – ushered in by the “Velvet Revolution”– signified a complete change in state policy towards youth as well as in functioning of youth organisations. However since that time it took several years before the modern youth policy was created and basic legislative documents adopted. With the transition to democracy, organisations that had been banned during the normalisation period were also reconstituted. With the logic of democratic development, following 1989 hundreds of new non-governmental non-profit-making organisations (NNOs) and private entities appeared, whose alternative programmes began to fill the space in the field of leisure time activities of children and young people as well as non-formal education.

With decentralisation of political power, there was also a gradual transformation of the hitherto centrally-run system of the houses of pioneers and youth. A regulation issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Education in 1992 established “Child and Youth Leisure-Time Centres“ (SVČ), which became local government contributory organisations. In 2005, a new Schools Act introduced a new definition of school facilities of “leisure-based education”, comprising a) youth and child centres (Domy dětí a mládeže DDM), b) the school clubs (školní kluby ŠK) and c) after-school clubs (školní družina ŠD). These facilities considered as youth centres in general are part of the official school system in the Czech Republic and, as such, are funded out of the national budget. Employees at these facilities (youth leaders and youth workers) must meet the standard qualification criteria set up by the regulation.

2. 2. Government policy on children and young people for 2007-2013

The first official post-revolutionary attempt to build state support of youth policy and a transparent system of financing was adoption of a document “Government policy on children and young people for 2007-2013” (Koncepce státní politiky pro oblast dětí a mládeže na období 2007 – 2013; <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/koncepce-statni-politiky-pro-oblast-deti-a-mladeze-na-obdobi>) adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic, Decree no. 611 of 4 June 2007. It was implemented through two-year Action Plans which were regularly evaluated and were submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic for its approval together with a draft of the new Action Plan for the upcoming two-year period. The objectives were fixed in 19 thematic fields and were monitored by Youth Chamber, the advisory body of the minister responsible for youth.

Overview of the thematic fields: 1. Information about and for young people; 2. Youth and Europe; 3. Youth, leisure and lifestyle; 4. Youth and education; 5. Youth, employment and unemployment; 6. Protection of the rights of children and young people; 7. Participation of the young generation in social and political life; 8. Youth research; 9. Volunteering; 10. International co-operation and mobility in the area of children and youth; 11. Youth belonging to national minorities, young migrants, refugees; 12. Youth and housing; 13. Youth and culture; 14. Youth and the media; 15. Youth and family policy, family support and protection; 16. Youth and health; 17. Youth and the environment; 18. Youth, socio-pathological disorders, social prevention and inclusion; 19. Non-formal education in the area of children and youth.

The final evaluation was submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic for its approval and served as a base for drafting a new-generation youth policy for the period 2014 – 2020.

2. 3. National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020 (Youth Strategy 2020)

The current strategic document on national youth policy “National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020“ (Koncepce podpory mládeže na období 2014 – 2020) was adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic in May 2014, Decree no. 342 of 12 May 2014 (<http://www.msmt.cz/file/33599/>).

In 2013-2014, the government’s New Youth Strategy was being discussed with a large-scale youth participation. This situation created a high potential for the process of the policy review not only to evaluate the achievements and gaps in the public policies pertaining to youth, but also for advocacy work to widen young people’s access to social rights.

The starting point for the continuous, mid-term and final evaluation of the impact of Youth Strategy 2020 on the target group is the national youth report (Mgr. Hana Maříková, 2013, <http://www.msmt.cz/mladez/zprava-o-mladezi-2013-1>) which was presented to the professional public at the National Conference on Youth in Prague on 8 – 9 November 2013 and the Comparative Study of the Situation of Youth in the Countries of the Visegrad Group (Ewa Krzaklewska; partnership in the field of youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission 2013, presented at an expert seminar on youth policies to representatives of the Visegrad group countries (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland) and the Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) in Sulejówku, Poland from 15 – 17 April 2013.

The target group for Youth Strategy 2020 are young people under 30 years of age. Pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined in the Czech Republic as a person under the age of 18. Young people are defined as those between 18 and 26 years of age, with the understanding that under the law, a person becomes an adult upon reaching 18 years of age. However, young people between 16 – 18 years are generally not considered children: they do not behave or consider themselves as such. Indeed, even certain legal norms give this age group certain rights and responsibilities, though they have yet to achieve full criminal liability. Therefore the primary target group for Youth Strategy 2020 is youth between 13 and 30 years of age, in accordance with EU documents in the youth field. This is a definition of a social group, where the definition of 13 – 30 years of age is the sociological period of “youth“. The successful implementation of many of the strategic goals and operational goals of Youth Strategy 2020 also requires a systematic approach to working with children falling below the lower age threshold of the primary target group. This reality is taken into account in the wording of relevant objectives that focus on children younger than 13. Youth Strategy 2020 thus covers a very wide social group with a specific position and role in society.

Youth Strategy 2020 works with the terms *pillars, horizontal priorities, strategic goals, operational goals and measures*:

Pillars determine the set principles upon which the expected impact of Strategy 2020 on young people is based. **Horizontal priorities** take into account the priority areas of intervention across all strategic and operational goals. **Strategic goals** refer to a defined idea of how Youth Strategy 2020 should contribute in specific areas of youth policy in the long term, until 2020. **Operational goals** break down this vision in terms of the short, medium and long-term fulfilment of the strategic goals. **Measures** define specific steps taken to achieve the desired operational goals.

Youth Strategy 2020 pillars:

Young people get married and become parents later in life, they also delay their transition into an independent adult life. The transitional period, during which young people test out life before they fully enter the adult world is getting increasingly longer. This reality is also reflected in the three pillars of Strategy 2020:

1. pillar: Facilitating the transition of young people into independent individuals responsible for their own lives, their family, community and society

All young people are in a phase of their lives where they have to make many major decisions which will have significant impact on their entire lives. In many respects, however, the transition from childhood to adulthood is far from self-evident. Young people must successfully undertake the significant task of assuming their independence, mainly from their parents and others, to whom they have so far related as children. True independence, however, is not only independent decision-making, but also entails the ability to adopt a responsible approach to the decision-making process, with an understanding of the extent of the impact of a decision not only on oneself, but on others as well.

It is a well-known fact that in the Czech Republic, as in many other countries, there is a growing proportion of young people who, after reaching adult age, do not become independent, but prefer a lifestyle in which they are reliant on the care of their family and their environment, including society in general. Adulthood should be associated with a degree of human maturity, with a person being able to assume responsibility firstly for themselves and their lives, but secondly for others, especially their family. A truly mature person is also aware of the fact that they bear a degree of responsibility for the society as a whole, and learns to live with the consequences of their actions. Youth policy should facilitate this process.

2. pillar: A focus on realistic needs and opportunities of young people

Youth policy should respect real needs and opportunities of young people. Above all it is necessary to find a right balance in the areas and the extent to which young people should be

supported. Many young people urgently need support for their development in order to become as independent as possible and to contribute to society as fully participating members. However, they often lack this support. Help in meeting the needs of young people, however, must not exceed a certain limit beyond which it is no longer an impetus for their development but becomes an obstacle for growth. This can happen especially when a particular situation requires that a young person takes on an activity and initiative independently, or at least partially, into their own hands despite limited or no experience. This line is not easy to determine because it is very individual, and therefore must take account of the young person's life situation in all its complexity.

It is also important to help young people to take on activities and initiatives freely even though they may fail or be wrong, and to teach them to take responsibility for their failures, to learn from them and to see them as an impetus for positive change in the future.

3. pillar: Promoting young people's potential for societal development

Young people are not only the future, and those who will eventually replace the current productive generation in all critical areas, but they are already, whether they know it or not, an indicator of the most important challenges that society is facing today. It is therefore important for society to react to the problems and challenges of young people, or they will be confronted by them eventually in less opportune circumstances. It is no less important to help the society to realise that young people serve as a mirror, reflecting our own flaws, especially those to which we have resigned ourselves and become apathetic.

We need to make appropriate use of this potential of youth, as with adequate support young people are capable of being major drivers of positive change in society, not only thanks to their critical perspective and sensibility, but also due to the idealism, faith in change and the boundless energy that is typical to them.

Youth Strategy 2020 horizontal priorities:

First: Equal opportunities

Youth Strategy 2020 guarantees the right of every young person to respect, support from the state, and equal treatment. In this context, Youth Strategy 2020 facilitates the full integration of young people into society and gives support to both organised and non-organised¹ young people, and to those who work with them, following the principle of equal opportunity so that they are

¹ By organised youth it is understood registered individual members of nongovernmental nonprofit organisations or registered visitors of youth centers and other facilities working with children and youth, who are involved in regular activities or traditional once-off activities of these facilities. Non-organised youth are young people who have not committed to regular participation in organised activities and are not associated with the organisers of these activities as members of the same organisation.

ensured the same opportunities in everyday life, regardless of gender, disability, race, nationality, religious belief or other discriminating factors.

Second: Inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial approach

Government policy in relation to the younger generation covers areas of the lives of young people that fall under the agendas of different state authorities. The creation and implementation of an effective youth policy therefore inevitably requires cooperation between ministries and other state administration bodies, whose areas of responsibility include measures affecting young people. In Youth Strategy 2020 this inter-ministerial approach is ensured by the Youth Chamber - an advisory body to the minister responsible for the youth field, and the activity of the cross-sectorial thematic groups coordinated by the Youth Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The fulfilment of goals requires cooperation with regional and municipal authorities and the National Network of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in their application of Youth Strategy 2020 through their own plans, strategies and measures for the benefit of the younger generation.

Third: Support for non-formal education (including leisure-based education) and quality youth work

The implementation of Youth Strategy 2020 is based on the support for non-formal education (including leisure-based education) and quality youth work. Youth Strategy 2020 reinforces in particular the form of non-formal education which allows equal opportunities for young people to learn skills that can be used in employment or society through activities, during which young people are guided by professional youth workers to develop, in particular, so-called “soft skills”. Emphasis is also placed on the recognition of the results of non-formal education during work with children and youth, in particular by employers, representatives of state and local authorities, formal education and organisations working with youth. Equally important is the promotion of leisure-based education pursuant to the Education Act, No. 561/2004 Coll. Education takes place on the basis of school curriculums under the guidance of qualified educators. Although it does not provide a formal level of education, it deals with activities that are necessary for the development of children and youth, and helps to fill leisure time in a meaningful way. The goal of Youth Strategy 2020 in the field of youth work is to create conditions for systematic support of quality youth work across the entire primary target group of young people, including support for effective tools for youth work in the whole range of various events and activities. The essential tools for this priority are based on the results of the individual national projects “Keys for Life“ (<http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot>) and “K2 – quality and competitiveness in non-formal education“ (<http://www.nidm.cz/k2>) financed by the European Social Fund, which were created and implemented with the active participation of the National Institute for Children and Youth and are further implemented by the National Institute for Further Education.

Fourth: Involving young people in the decision-making process and participation

Effective youth-related policy is based on active cooperation between all interested participants and thorough consultation with young people. The strategic goals and operational goals of Youth Strategy 2020 were developed on the basis of broad consultation with experts in the form of round tables (2011 – 2013), on discussions with experts and youth at the National Conference on Youth (November 2013), and take into account the outcomes of the structured dialogue with young people through the Czech Council of Children and Youth project “Kecejme do toho – Have your say” (<http://www.kecejmedotoho.cz>). The effective involvement of young people in the decision-making process in the areas of implementation and evaluation of Youth Strategy 2020 will be ensured by a National Working Group for Structured Dialogue with Youth established in January 2014, whose leadership was entrusted to the Czech Council of Children and Youth. Another priority in this area also includes *support for youth volunteering*, which stimulates active and responsible citizenship and contributes to social cohesion by creating bonds of trust and solidarity.

Fifth: Intergenerational solidarity

Youth Strategy 2020 is primarily focused on young people, but it fully respects the need for intergenerational solidarity and dialogue across generations in the interest of sustainable development and to meet the needs of various age groups of citizens. It uses the principle of intergenerational dialogue and emphasises the role of empathy and the ability to listen to one another in intergenerational relations, especially in areas of employment, and the mutual sharing of cultural and societal norms.

The main body of Youth Strategy 2020 defines 13 strategic goals for government policy in relation to young people, which are further developed into operational goals and specific measures for the achievement of these goals. The first two strategic goals are cross-sectional. Their importance for the implementation of Youth Strategy 2020 is so crucial, that they have been broken down into individual operational goals and measures.

Overview of the strategic goals of the Youth Strategy 2020:

SG 1: To facilitate equal access of children and youth to rights

SG 2: To facilitate equal access of children and youth to information

SG 3: To create favourable and sustainable conditions for the participation of children and youth in leisure-based and non-formal education

SG 4: To expand and make more attractive the offer of leisure activities and to motivate children and youth to make active use of them

- SG 5: To support the increase of cross-border mobility of young people
- SG 6: To improve conditions for employment and employability of youth
- SG 7: To promote comprehensive and harmonious development of children and youth with emphasis on their physical and mental health and moral responsibility
- SG 8: To promote active involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes and in influencing the social and democratic life
- SG 9: To create favourable conditions for volunteering for young people including valuation and recognition of voluntary activities
- SG 10: To facilitate inclusion of children and young people with fewer opportunities
- SG 11: To motivate children and youth towards a life based on the principles of sustainable development and to develop their environmental literacy
- SG 12: To encourage the development of competencies in children and young people for safe and creative use of media
- SG 13: To offer children and young people a variety of paths to culture, art and traditions

The evaluation of the impact of Youth Strategy 2020 on the target group will be carried out through national youth reports at the mid-term and the end of the period covered by Youth Strategy 2020 in 2017 and 2020. Thematically oriented inter-ministerial working groups will participate in the drafting of the national youth reports (preparation of background materials) as well as cross-cutting working group of researchers (data collection, report processing). During the preparation of the national youth reports, the periodic Youth reports of the European Commission will also be taken into account, using indicators for the youth field at the European level (the so-called EU youth indicators). The evaluation of the impact of the Youth Strategy 2020 in the form of youth reports in 2017 and 2020 will monitor the trends set by the indicators used for the various thematic areas of Youth Strategy 2020. The mid-term youth report will be presented at a meeting of the Government of the Czech Republic for information by 30 April 2017. The overall evaluation of the impact of Youth Strategy 2020, in the form of a final youth report and the draft of a new strategic document on youth policy in the Czech Republic after 2020 will be presented at a meeting of the Government of the Czech Republic without debate by 30 November 2020. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for finalising the reports and the draft of a new strategic document to cover the period after 2020 and for presenting them at the meetings of the Government of the Czech Republic

3. Actors and Structures

3.1 Public authorities

3.1.1 Context

The main coordinator for drafting, implementing and evaluating National Youth Strategy for 2014 - 2020 (Youth Strategy 2020) is **Youth Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**, which ensures an inter-ministerial approach to achieving the objectives, through:

- the activities of the **Youth Chamber**, an inter-ministerial advisory body to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, responsible for the youth field in the Czech Republic, which holds a management role in meeting the objectives of Youth Strategy 2020 (The members of the Chamber are representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment, at least at the level of Head of Department, representatives of the National Institute of Children and Youth, representatives of the Czech Council of Children and Youth, representatives of leisure centres, employer representatives, representatives of the Association of Youth Centres' Workers, representatives of religious societies, representatives of municipal authorities and experts in the field of promotion and protection of youth. Candidates for membership in the Chamber are nominated by the institutions and organisations represented in the Chamber of Youth);
- the activities of **thematic inter-ministerial working groups** in direct coordination with the Department for Youth of the MEYS, which is responsible for the professional aspects of implementing Youth Strategy 2020, monitoring and data collection for continuous and periodical evaluation;

In addition to its coordination role, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has also taken on other tasks within the framework of the implementation structure for Youth Strategy 2020:

- it communicates and promotes Youth Strategy 2020 in cooperation with other bodies, while also appointing institutions and organisations it directly manages to carry out selected tasks;
- it ensures the performance of Youth Strategy 2020 in the respective areas within its competence, such as, for example, in areas of formal and non-formal education, participation, volunteer work and the mobility of young people, etc.;
- it creates conditions to support systems established for quality work with young people and for the recognition of outputs from non-formal education and informal learning in the field of youth work;
- it ensures the performance of Youth Strategy 2020 in close cooperation with leisure centres (youth centres and hobby centres), school clubs and after-school activity centres;

- it supports synergies between the Youth Strategy 2020 objectives and the activities of regional and municipal authorities and the National Network of Local Action Groups (LAG) including collaborating with them to develop and implement their own strategies for the benefit of the younger generation;
- it promotes close cooperation between the Czech Council of Children and Youth and NGOs involved in youth work, including cooperation with church youth organisations;
- it creates conditions for the implementation of a structured dialogue with young people and supports the work of the National Working Group for structured dialogue with young people.

Other ministries (namely the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industry and Trade) and **government authorities**, including advisory bodies and government committees are adopting measures to meet the objectives of Youth Strategy 2020 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, on the principle of inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial cooperation through their grant programmes, ESF national projects and their representatives in the Youth Chamber as well as in the thematically focussed inter-ministerial working groups.

Progress made towards meeting strategic goals and operational goals of the Youth Strategy 2020 is monitored on an on-going basis and evaluated by **national thematically oriented working groups**, whose inter-ministerial activities are coordinated by the Department for Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The format for the activities of these working groups will be expanded each year through the organisation of round tables on different thematic areas that are covered by the activities of these groups. These working groups will also be responsible for the collection of data summarising the tools currently used by the individual resorts to meet the objectives of Youth Strategy 2020 (strategic, conceptual and grant programmes, projects, round tables, conferences, etc.).

Since 2012, in response to the need for the creation, implementation and evaluation of Youth Strategy 2020, the Department for Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has coordinated 12 working groups focusing on the following topics in the youth field:

1. rights of children and youth
2. information for youth
3. leisure-based and non-formal education
4. leisure time
5. youth mobility
6. employment and employability

7. lifestyle and health
8. participation
9. volunteering
10. young people with fewer opportunities
11. environment
12. media and culture

Furthermore, cross-cutting working group of youth researchers operates across all the themes.

The results of the monitoring activities of the working groups are presented at least twice a year at meetings of the Youth Chamber (an inter-ministerial advisory body reporting to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports).

It is recommended that the regional and municipal authorities and the National Network of Local Action Groups (LAG), apply Youth Strategy 2020 within the context of their own plans, strategies and measures, for the benefit of the younger generation, and that they cooperate on substantive tasks with the individual ministries.

It is also recommended that NGOs working with children and youth apply Youth Strategy 2020 within the context of their own strategic and conceptual activities and that they work closely together to meet the substantive tasks of Youth Strategy 2020 with the individual ministries.

3.1.2 Main national public authorities:

On the national level, the field of children and youth falls within the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic** (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy; MŠMT) www.msmt.cz.

Minister of youth: Ms. Katerina Valachova - Czech Social Democratic Party (katerina.valachova@msmt.cz)

Deputy minister for Sports and Youth Administration: Mr. Pavel Sulc – politically independent (pavel.sulc@msmt.cz)

Youth Department in the Ministry has two units: **Youth Policy Unit** and **Non-formal Education Unit** (<http://www.msmt.cz/mladez>; <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/sport-and-youth/youth-2>)

- is responsible for supporting children and youth in non-formal learning settings, leisure-time activities and training
- implements and coordinates youth policy in a wide spectrum of thematic fields, which affect the lives of young people

- aims to promote and provide equal approach to organised and non-organised youth as well as stakeholders involved in youth work.

Main activities of Youth Department:

- legislative, political, conceptual and consultative work
- enhancing extra-curricular and non-formal education
- supporting non-governmental non-profit organisations (NGOs) by means of State Subsidy Programmes for NGOs Supporting Youth Work for 2011 - 2015
- supporting the care of talented pupils and students
- enhancing youth participation and structured dialogue with young people
- encouraging youth volunteering
- facilitating inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities
- providing information for and about young people
- implementation of ESF projects in the youth field
- promotion of EU youth programmes
- international relations and cooperation in the field of youth.

Each year, the Youth Department, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, offers **short-term internships** to young people who finished at least their secondary-school education and are involved in non-formal education activities. The selection is made on basis of open calls. The interns are required to complete 90 hours of the internship in accordance with their time flexibility. At the beginning, they are provided with an overview of the working agenda of Youth Department. Afterwards, based on discussions with the civil servants, they are offered a couple of administrative tasks they would like to fulfil with an assistance of an experienced employee. If agreed on, they can be involved also in strategic planning, and more importantly, in different phases of youth policy agenda – drafting, implementing or evaluating national youth policy. At the end, they go through evaluation interviews and are encouraged to make recommendations, proposals etc. concerning the challenges in the youth sector. Since 2011, there were 18 interns in Youth Department (2011 - three, 2012 - three, 2013 – six, 2014 – six). Youth Department has a methodology for the whole process of launching the open calls, selecting the interns, preparing the plan of the internship and leading the evaluation interview.

Number of people who work in the youth department: 12

Director responsible for Youth in the Ministry: Mr. Michal Urban (michal.urban@msmt.cz)

Head of Youth Policy Unit: Mrs. Zdenka Maskova (zdenka.maskova@msmt.cz)

Country sheet on youth policy – Czech Republic

Head of Non-formal Education Unit: Mrs. Andrea Simakova (andrea.simakova@msmt.cz)

Contact person responsible for national and European youth policies: Mrs. Zdenka Maskova (Tel.: +420 234 811 103, E-mail: zdenka.maskova@msmt.cz)

Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies:

Other Ministries:

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Regional Development, Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Industry and Trade. Other ministries including advisory bodies and government committees are adopting measures to meet the objectives of Youth Strategy 2020 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, on the principle of inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial cooperation through their grant programmes, ESF national projects and their representatives in the Youth Chamber as well as in the thematically focussed inter-ministerial working groups.

Governmental Offices:

Committee for Education, Science, Culture, Human Rights and Petitions of the Senate of the Czech Republic (Výbor pro vzdělávání, vědu, kulturu, lidská práva a petice Senátu ČR).

- name of the president / chair: Mr. Jaromír Jermar (Czech Social Democratic Party);
jaromir.jermar@seznam.cz

Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (Výbor pro vědu, vzdělávání, kulturu, mládež a tělovýchovu) is the parliamentary commission in charge of youth issues.

- name of the president / chair: Mr. Jan Hamacek (Czech Social Democratic Party);
hamacek@psp.cz

Subcommittee on Youth and Sport (Podvýbor pro mládež a sport)

- name of the president / chair: Subcommittee Head: Mr. Jiri Holecek (political movement ANO);
holecek@psp.cz

3.1.3 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field

The territory of the Czech Republic is divided into regions (higher units of territorial self-government), consisting of municipalities (lower units of territorial self-government). There are 14 higher units of territorial self-government (=regions). Regions have their own independent jurisdiction (self-governing) and delegated (state administration). Public administration is ensured mainly by the regional authority, which can be divided into departments and sections for particular spheres of activity. The bodies coordinating the activities of the regional authorities are the respective ministries.

Roles and competences of regional authorities in the sphere of youth policy:

Regional authorities elaborate, assess and complement long-term objectives in the sphere of education and development of educational system in the region. They present the long-term objectives and an annual report for the previous year to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and to the Board of Representatives of the region. They deal with the topics brought up by school councils operating at basic schools. They also cooperate with the Czech School Inspection (Česká školní inspekce). They perform the tasks ensuing from the strategic documents of the region for the spheres of free-time activities, physical education and sports, crime prevention, activities aimed at protection against misuse of drugs, at the integration of national minorities and at the prevention of socially undesirable phenomena. They ensure conditions for the integration of disabled pupils into ordinary schools and educational institutions. They create conditions for the development of free-time activities of children and youth. They cooperate with non-governmental non-profit organizations in materializing the state policy related to the young generation and sports. They are responsible for organizing competitions announced by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. They are also responsible for materializing the funding programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic in the sphere of the integration of the Romani community, education in the languages of national minorities and multicultural upbringing.

Current state of play of regional youth policies

In order to map the state of play of the youth policies in the regions the National Institute of Children and Youth carried out a research study titled "The Youth Policies at the level of the Regions in the Czech Republic", describing the situation at the end of 2010. The main aim of this qualitative research was to gain information about actual situation in the youth policy field (with a special focus on educational programs, leisure time activities, volunteering etc.) within the regions of the Czech Republic both at the level of its conceptions and implementation. Partial objectives of the research was to describe an elementary structure of particular departments, sections of Czech regional authorities involved in the youth policy and to gain information about their mutual communication and cooperation, grant policy and development conceptions and their cooperation with representatives of diverse organizations working with youth. The study was based on structured interview with the staff of regional authorities' offices and formulated the following conclusions:

- Regional youth policies are typically dealt with in context of formal education, sport and leisure time activities. There is usually no special staff member dealing solely with the youth issues in the particular department.
- All regions have produced regional development strategies and other conceptual documents in which youth issues are included, nevertheless only in a general or marginal way. Only a

minority of regions have developed a specific conceptual document in which youth issues are covered together with leisure time activities and sport. Other conceptual materials, e.g. from national or European levels, are not used or reflected only exceptionally.

- Regional conceptual documents are mainly produced by the staff of the respective departments of the regional authorities. Young people are consulted rather rarely and if they are involved, established youth organisations or Regional Youth Councils (if they exist) are typically used as the “voice” of young people.
- Regional Youth Parliaments, representing the second most common participatory structure, are operating in a minority of regions. This is explained by the fluctuation of their members, too long travel distances or simply by lack of regional topics relevant for youth.
- Although the regional authorities are aware of a cross-sectorial nature of youth policy, a continuous structured and conceptual cooperation between different departments of the regional authority office is not happening in any of the regions. The exchange of information and cooperation runs exclusively on bilateral basis and is often based on personal connections.
- The structure of grant schemes supporting youth activities is very heterogeneous. Some regions have only two or three programmes defined in a broad way, others run thoroughly designed grant schemes with specific priorities, including the focus on youth activities.
- The regional authorities see their role in the youth policy mainly as administrators of grant schemes and providers of information. Their operation is, on the one hand, determined by political decision making at the regional level, on the other hand, they also reflect on recommendation from the national level. However, these two strands of influence are not always in accordance, as many respondents pointed out.

3.1.4 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field

Municipalities have their own independent jurisdiction (self-governing) and delegated (state administration). Public administration is ensured mainly by the municipal authority, which can be divided into departments and sections for particular spheres of activity (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on municipalities).

Current state of play of youth policies at local level

There are more than 6000 municipalities in the Czech Republic. Their number of inhabitants ranges from units or several dozens in case of small villages in rural areas, to several hundreds of thousands, in case of the largest regional capitals and industrial hubs. Accordingly, a more diverse situation of young people living in these municipalities results in a greater variety of youth policy measures at the municipal level.

Unfortunately, there is no recent research study which would provide an overview of the state of play of youth policy at local level. Based on occasional reports from municipalities and personal experiences, the main challenge affecting the willingness of municipalities to deal with youth policy issues is the draining of young people from their original residential places to larger towns that offer more study, job and cultural/entertainment opportunities. As a result, it can be assumed that these smaller towns have a great potential to be or become active and concerned youth policy players, compared to large regional centers experiencing an influx of young people. In addition, smaller towns seem to have better preconditions for a functional cross-sectorial cooperation, both within the municipality office and beyond, due to the smaller extent of their administration. On the other hand, the motivation of larger industrial municipalities to be active in youth policy is often driven by issues linked with young people living in socially excluded neighborhoods, drug users, law offenders etc. However, the common answer to these problems is often restricted to prevention of these negative phenomena, on the one hand, and the support of leisure time facilities and organizations, on the other.

3.2 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field

3.2.1 Youth councils

Czech Council of Children and Youth (Česká rada dětí a mládeže; ČRDM) <http://crdm.cz/>

Česká rada dětí a mládeže (Czech Council of Children and Youth) is a democratic, voluntary association, independent of any political party or movement. It was established in June 1998 by eight organizations of children and youth. It is the national youth council in the Czech Republic and a reliable partner of government administration. It is composed of almost 100 non-governmental children and youth organizations with more than 205 000 individual members. The organizations range from very small to the biggest ones; 6 regional youth councils are members of ČRDM as well.

Its mission is to promote conditions for quality life and overall development of children and young people. The Council fulfils its mission by supporting non-formal education and activities of its members, especially by creating legal, economic, social and cultural conditions suitable for their activities. It represents interests of its members towards home and foreign bodies, organizations and institutions. Its mission is also to support justified interests of children and youth in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child aimed at assisting a versatile development of young people as regards their spiritual, psychic, physical and social aspects.

The Council respects the sovereignty and independence of all its member organisations in compliance with their statutes and has towards these no supervisory or senior power, while representing them in dealing with authorities, organisations and institutions both at the national level and abroad.

Moreover, the Council exercises assignments and powers it is charged and endowed with by its members through the Council's bodies.

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Regional councils of children and youth:

They associate children and youth organizations on a regional level; they serve as places for promoting the individual associations and other organizations and provide regional authorities with advice on out-of-school upbringing and education. Their mission is to promote the children movement as such, enforce the requirements of its member organizations and serve as the place for mutual communication among its members.

Jihomoravská rada dětí a mládeže www.jmdeti.cz (South Moravian Region)

Rada dětí a mládeže Jihočeského kraje (RADAMBUK) www.radambuk.cz (South Bohemian Region)

Rada dětí a mládeže kraje Vysočina www.rdmkv.cz (Highlands Region)

Krajská rada dětí a mládeže Karlovarského kraje www.volny.cz/krdmk (Carlsbad Region)

Aliance dětí a mládeže Královéhradeckého kraje aliancehk.adam.cz (Hradec Kralove Region)

Rada dětí a mládeže Libereckého kraje (RADAMLK) www.radamlk.cz (Liberec Region)

Rada dětí a mládeže Moravskoslezského kraje (RADAMOK) www.radamok.cz (Moravian-Silesian Region)

Plzeňská krajská rada dětí a mládeže www.pkrdm.org (Pilsen Region)

Rada dětí a mládeže hl. m. Prahy www.prazskarada.cz (Prague Region)

Středočeská rada pro děti a mládež www.srdm.cz (Central Bohemian Region)

Ústecká krajská rada dětí a mládeže www.ukrdm.net (Usti nad Labem Region)

Sdružení dětských a mládežnických organizací SPEKTRUM (Zlínský kraj) www.krdmzk.cz (Zlin Region)

3.2.2 Youth NGOs

Non-profit organisations engaged in the work with children and youth represent a necessary complement to school facilities for extra-curricular education. Their unique mission lies especially in that they provide children and young people with a background of strong personal relationships that often last throughout their lives. Many organisations of this type offer not only “a way to spend the leisure time” but a long-term educational forming of the whole child’s or teenager’s personality.

Belonging to a good group gives to many young people not only five, eight or twelve years spent in a happy bunch of friends but also a lifelong orientation based on a solid and well-reflected value foundation as well as a lot of skills and knowledge that help them find their way in the complex world of today. One of the most important experiences young people gain in children and youth associations is an understanding that the most valuable things in human life cannot be bought and that “gratis” does not at all mean “worthless”.

There is a plurality of NGOs working with children and young people in the Czech Republic. Their tradition dates back to the 19th century when an active participation in different associations and societies was an important part of the social movement that led to the creation of independent Czechoslovakia.

The work of NGOs is supported by the state to a significant degree. The responsibility lies on the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The support of NGOs was included into the “Government policy on children and young people for 2007–2013”. On this ground the MoEYS announced State Subsidy Programmes for NGOs Working with Children and Youth for 2006–2010 and **State Grant Programmes for NGOs Supporting Youth Work for 2011–2015**. These programmes lay down content orientation, programme priorities and conditions that have to be fulfilled to be eligible for state subsidies. These programmes apply to youth NGOs as well as to other NGOs that systematically work with children and youth, and are open to the target group throughout the year. The priorities of the subsidy programmes are annually reviewed. An integral part of the programmes is an open call for NGOs to enable them to apply for an honorary title “Organisation recognised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the field of children and youth work”.

There are five programmes providing a financial support for the youth sector development:

1. Ensuring regular activities of NGOs that work with organised children and youth
2. Supporting successful forms of work with non-organised children and youth
3. Investment development of the materially and technical platform in the field of after-school activities of children and youth
4. Special case grants
5. Supporting activities of youth information centres.

NGOs can use these programmes to submit projects concerning the support and development of their own activities as well as other activities destined for the general public. The MoEYS will assess these projects and provide financial support to them according to their quality. An open call for an honorary title “Organisation recognised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the field of children and youth work” is announced as part of the programmes. To organisations whose quality the MoEYS rates as high is awarded a statute of an **organisation recognised by the state**.

Three main groups can be identified within the wide range of NGOs working directly with children and youth in the Czech Republic:

Traditional children and youth associations

This group is represented first of all by scouts, young tourists and pioneers, but also by woodcrafters, campers, trappers, young fire fighters, YMCA members, and the majority of small associations. These associations are characterised by a general orientation and the use of games, camping and outdoor activities as key methods. They have local units all over the country. The educational process in traditional associations is grounded on a “law”, code or principle that expresses an ideal the education strives for. The educators (leaders, instructors, assistants, etc.) typically do not get any remuneration for their work; on the contrary, they often have additional expenses related to their work for the association. Most of the traditional associations belong to international or worldwide youth movements. Another characteristic is that the majority of events is organised for permanent members who attend the sessions regularly within a year-round programme of activities. It typically includes weekly meetings, monthly hikes, and winter and summer camps. In the last decade, approximately 5–6 % of children and 2–3 % of young people participated in regular activities of these associations. The rates are quantitatively low (although comparable to European average), but it needs to be said that these children and young people tend to become, in relatively higher proportions, active members of civil society associations, high-quality teachers, and experts in helping professions and other areas when they grow up.

“New wave” associations

A number of associations whose orientation and methodology take into account expected development of children, society and technology emerged in the Czech Republic after 1990. An increased concern about environmental, social, and most recently also intercultural issues was significant, as well. Exemplary representatives of these “new wave” associations are Duha, AFS Intercultural Programmes, Association of Young Debrouillards, LATA or AMAVET. They typically do not only use modern technology (also the traditional associations do it today), but the interest in it constitutes one of their programme priorities. They also promote modern approaches to education – the use of experiential pedagogy is taken for granted. Members and “non-members” often blend together; many events they organise are open to public. After all, their membership is substantially smaller than that of the main traditional children and youth organisations. An intensive international co-operation as well as co-operation with experts and professionals are used as a matter of course.

Associations related to political parties

The experience with exploitation of children and youth for the benefit of a totalitarian political regime resulted in a caution against any connection between political institutions and children and youth associations after 1990. By the end of the 1990ties, however, youth organisations declaring their

adherence to a political orientation (conservative, liberal, social democratic, and Christian democratic) were formed as a consequence of the creation of new political parties and movements. Small political youth organisations represent Young European Democrats with markedly fewer members (about 100) and youth organisations related to other minor political bodies whose membership is even smaller.

3. 3 Youth Information Centres

Youth information centres are places that provide, on an anonymous basis and free of charge, complex and up-to-date information on various aspects of young people's life according to their demands and needs, proportionately to their age and capacities. The information shall be provided in compliance with the European Youth Information Charter and the Principles for Online Youth Information. The target groups of the youth information centres are, above all, young people up to 30 years of age. The YICs guarantee an equal access to information for all young people. The total numbers of YICs registered in the Czech Republic were 40 in 2008 and 2009, 39 in 2010, 34 in 2011 and 36 in 2012 and 2013 and 42 in 2014 and 2015. They are run mainly by school facilities for leisure-based education and by NGOs.

Main areas covered by youth information centres include:

- Education in the Czech Republic and abroad
- Working in the Czech Republic and abroad
- Travelling in the Czech Republic and abroad
- Leisure time
- Socio-pathological disorders
- Citizens and society
- Youth and the EU
- Regional information

All youth information centres in the Czech Republic have a uniform look that strengthens their client-centred approach. This is achieved by:

- Uniform name – Youth information centre
- Uniform classification of information they provide
- Uniform logo adopted in 2009
- Uniform web domains for all YICs of the Czech Republic
- Joint promotion of all high-quality YICs
- Uniform methodology and adherence to the National Code of Standards
- Focus on quality
- Adherence to the European Youth Information Charter

The current **Youth Information System Development Framework** for the Czech Republic was completed in the course of 2008. Its objectives are to improve the quality of the YIC network in the Czech Republic and set up basic parameters of the youth information environment in order to ensure one of the fundamental rights, namely the right to free access to information. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports supported the formation of the National Youth Information Centre (NYIC) in 2008, which is an umbrella organisation for all YICs of the Czech Republic and their advisor as regards the methodology. Besides, the National Youth Information Centre co-operates with other organisations providing information services both within and outside the Czech Republic. Currently, a new-generation Youth Information System Development Framework is being drafted (in 2015).

The National Youth Information Centre is engaged in the following activities:

- Data processing and distributing up-to-date information directly to regional centres on a regular basis, publishing NYIC newsletters
- Administering and updating the NYIC information portal www.nicm.cz. Its monthly attendance is around 45 000 visits, which was the yearly attendance several years ago. In 2006 altogether 38 332 clients visited the web, in 2007 the total number of visits was already 159 099, in 2008 it raised to 403 489 as well as in 2009 to 471 763 visits. The year 2010 and 2011 with 559 998 and 573 690 visits were the most successful ones so far. In 2012, so far there were 339 608 visits as of 13 September 2012.
- Regular daily information and advisory services at NYIC office
- Organising debates, conferences and workshops
- Running an Internet club with a free wi-fi connection
- Running a multimedia studio called “Mixer”
- Offering an open space where young people can express their creativity, exhibit their photographs, artworks, writings or videos, share their travel experience, meet with people from other cultures, people having an interesting profession or people with an unconventional life philosophy
- Providing the YICs throughout the Czech Republic with methodological and expert support, assisting all governmental as well as non-governmental bodies in establishing and running YICs, organising training sessions for YIC staff from the whole country, internship programmes for the staff of newly created YICs taking place directly at NYIC office, answering questions of regional YICs and helping them develop their own projects

- Co-operating with other organisations, institutions and other partners in the area of providing information
- Co-ordinating Czech national activities of the international organisation ERYICA www.eryica.org and training, as an exclusive trainer, the beginning MBTC workers
- Creating the Czech section of the international information portal for European youth Infomobil, www.infomobil.org
- Promoting all YICs in the media, at exhibitions and fairs
- Producing and distributing publications – School Leaver’s Guide to the World of Work and Study in the Czech Republic and Abroad; Volunteering; Working Abroad; Studying Abroad; YICs in the EU; YICs in the Czech Republic

Co-ordinating Council of Youth Information Providers

The Co-ordinating Council of Youth Information Providers has been part of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports since 2008. The Council is composed of representatives of the MoEYS, the Association for the Support of Youth Information Centres Development in the Czech Republic, the Czech Council of Children and Youth, and the Association of Youth Centres’ Workers. The Council has a statute of an advisory body of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Its members are appointed and removed from office by the respective deputy minister. The Council co-ordinates the activities of major bodies active in the field of youth information, discusses and approves strategic materials concerning youth information, discusses reports of controls, publishes recommendations regarding the award/withdrawal of certification of individual YICs, and adopts standpoints to EU recommendations and materials concerning youth information.

3.4 Other structures

Advisory bodies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Youth Chamber (Komora mládeže)

Council for Leisure-Based Education (Rada pro zájmové vzdělávání)

Coordinating Council of Providers of Information for Young People (Koordinační rada poskytovatelů informací pro mládež)

Advisory bodies of the Ministry of the Interior

Accreditation Commission for the Sphere of Volunteer Service (Akreditační komise pro oblast dobrovolnické služby)

Governmental bodies

Government Council for Non-State Non-Profit Organizations (Rada vlády pro nestátní neziskové organizace)

Organizations under direct control by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports:

Centre for International Cooperation (Dům zahraničních služeb) – www.dzs.cz

National Institute for Further Education (Národní institut pro další vzdělávání) – www.nidv.cz

Pedagogical Centre for Polish National Minorities (Pedagogické centrum pro polské národnostní menšiny) – www.pctesin.cz

National Institute for Education (Národní ústav pro vzdělávání) – www.nuov.cz

Centre for Higher Education Studies (Centrum pro studium vysokého školství) – www.csvs.cz;

Centre for Evaluation of Educational Achievements (Centrum pro zjišťování výsledků vzdělávání) – www.czvv.cz

Fulbright Commission (Fulbrightova komise) - www.fulbright.cz

4. Legislation

4.1 Constitutional law and international treaties in relation to young people

The *Constitution of the Czech Republic (No. 1/1993 Coll.)* does not define youth as a specific category of citizenry. A number of civic rights are, however, regulated by age, among them, the right to vote, which is granted to any citizen as of 18 years, the right to stand for election as a Member of the National Parliament, as of 21 years, and the right to be elected as a member of the Senate or to stand for election as President, which is limited to persons older than 40 years.

the *Charter on Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms (No. 2/1993)* grants additional rights: Article 29 guarantees adolescents specific rights in protection of their health at work and to special work conditions. Article 32 stipulates special protection for children and adolescents, and also guarantees parents the right to care for and bring up their children, while reciprocally granting children the right to parental upbringing and care. Article 33 universally guarantees the right to education, specifying that primary and secondary school education must always be free.

Many of the international treaties related to the protection of human rights, including those governing the rights of children and young people, have been signed and ratified by the Czech Republic and are therefore part of the Czech legal and constitutional system. Among those are:

the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* including its stipulations in relation to juvenile justice practices

the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* with specific focus in youth field on adolescents in relation to work and employment (No. 120/1976); both were ratified in 1976.

the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* introduced to the Czech law in 1991 (No. 104/1991).

Other relevant conventions include:

Country sheet on youth policy – Czech Republic

- the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (No. 95/1974 Coll.),
- the *Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption* (No. 42/2000 Coll.),
- the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention* (No. 90/2002 Coll.),
- the *European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights* (No. 54/2001 Coll.),
- the *European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children* (No. 66/2000 Coll.),
- the *European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock* (No. 47/2001 Coll.),
- the *European Convention on the Adoption of Children* (No. 132/2000 Coll.),
- the *Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children* (No. 141/2000 Coll.),
- the *Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction* (No. 34/1998 Coll.).

4.2 National legislation in relation to young people

4.2.1 The new *Civic Code* (No. 68/2012 Coll.) has been in force since 1st January 2014 and represents the biggest private law change in the Czech Republic during the last decades. The reform has abolished more than 100 specific laws and unified the legal base, introducing many comprehensive changes. This reform becomes directly relevant for youth policy through the inclusion of family laws into the new civic code, which does, however, not specify youth as a legal notion. At the same time, young people are impacted by many changes aimed at modernising the civic code of the country. The legal age of maturity has remained unchanged and is set to 18 years in the *Civic Code*. Younger people can gain legal competences through individual court decisions, for example, to get married or open a business before turning 18. Courts can decide to grant full legal competences to anyone older than 16 years, if they are able to cover their own costs of living. Employment of young people is given specific protection: young people older than 15 can enter into a work contract, if they have completed compulsory secondary school. Until the age of 16, parents can decide to prohibit or end such employment, if they believe it to be against the educational interests of the young person. Young people older than 16 years can establish their own business and take legal responsibility in case their legal representatives or guardians agree, and a court confirms the agreement. Both the agreement of parents and the court are compulsory. The new *Civic Code* strengthens the role of the family as well as the role of the child within the family. The interests of families and children enjoy greater importance than property rights, for example, changing the practice of divorce settlements by increasing the financial support for children. The will of the child has been given more importance in case of the separation of parents, giving children the right to stay in touch with either parent, regardless the will of parents. The right to participation, as stipulated in e.g. Art. 12 of the *Convention*

on the Rights of the Child, is consistently followed in the new *Civic Code*. One example refers to name change, to which any young person as of 15 years of age must agree with. Art. 867 regulated that, in principle, children must be given sufficient information and be heard and considered in any court decision concerning, involving and impacting them. Generally, it is considered that all children 12 years or older are able to form an independent and informed opinion. Children living in foster families now have the right to know that the persons taking care of them are not their natural parents at the latest before they start attending primary school.¹⁴¹ The new *Civic Code* also regulates associative life. It is not without interest that youth organisations have been very active in the development of the new association provisions. Their suggestions and lobby activities helped significantly to change some of the provisions, especially regarding the newly introduced status of public usefulness or beneficiality (veřejná prospěšnost) of non-governmental (including youth) organisations. Most of the measures that had been under discussion have become voluntary instead of mandatory, and are only enforced in organisations where the own standards are weaker than the provisions of the Code. Two more changes are of relevance for the youth sector. One is the introduction of a public, government-independent association registry. Civic associations used to be registered by the Ministry of Interior, with only very basic information being publicly accessible. The new public registry of associations and organisations is operated by public courts under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice. The other is the introduction of a special status for „organisations bringing benefits to the society“ (Statut veřejné prospěšnosti).

4.2.2 Criminal law in relation to young people

Some years prior to the modernisation of the civic code, the criminal laws were overhauled after more than 40 years. In regard to young people, little changed fundamentally, owing to the earlier introduction of **the Youth Justice Act (No. 218/2003)**. The Act specified that young people between 15 and 18 years old are to be considered (juveniles). Within that age-span, young people objected to limited criminal responsibility, prioritising preventive goals and punishment measures, with the exception of capital crimes. Throughout the development of the Youth Justice Act, the potential lowering of the age of minimum criminal responsibility was discussed alongside lowering the age of consent (both from 15 to 14). However, neither change was introduced. The Youth Justice Act specifies the role and function of Juvenile Courts in relation to 1) the professional and personal profile of juridical personnel, 2) the principle of residential jurisdiction, 3) the obligation to examine and consider the individual and social background and context of juvenile offenders, 4) the need to align court decisions with the mental and psychological maturity of juvenile offenders, 5) the obligation to consider the interests of the victim and to prefer educational measures over punishments, 6) the requirement for the juvenile offender and their legal guardian to be present throughout any trial proceedings, and 7) the option to postpone any

punishment for up to one year in favour of finalising the education by the juvenile offender. The repertoire of punishment measures is also different and consists of community services, financial measures (with conditional delay), forfeiture, ineligibility, expulsion, imprisonment (with conditional delay). Protective measures could be granted, e.g. 1) protective bringing up in the home environment, 2) special institutional bringing up, 3) therapy. Also educational measures could be taken as 1) supervision of probation officer, 2) probation program, 3) bringing up limitations, 4) bringing up duties, 5) warning alert.

4.2.3 Employment law in relation to young people

Questions of employment and work are regulated by **the Labour Code (No. 262/2006 Coll.)** Young people below 18 years of age cannot work more than 8 hours a day and more than 40 hours per week. Children and young people can only be employed for work that is adequate to their mental and physical state and with „special support,“ which is, however, not specified. Young people cannot be employed in mining or quarrying, and are ported from night shifts. Employers are obliged, for up to 2 years after a young person finished secondary school, to provide special professional practice to them; again this is not further defined.

4.2.4 Educational law in relation to young people

Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (Education Act) is the most important education law. The Act defines the Czech Schooling and Education system and stipulates principles such as free access to primary and secondary education. The Education Act is accompanied by **the Act on Pedagogical workers (No. 563/2004 Coll.)**, which regulates the role and responsibilities of pedagogical personnel, including teachers. The Education Act enforces compulsory education for 9 years, up until the end of the school year during which the student reaches 17 years of age. Compulsory education starts commonly in the year during which children turn 6, and can be postponed no later than the 8th birthday of a child. Home schooling is possible on specific request and under certain conditions. The rights of students include the right to education and school services, the right to information on educational processes and results, the right to vote for and to be elected to the school board, and the right to establish self-governing school student bodies and vote for and to be elected in them. The obligations of students include the duty to attend school, to accept and behave according to school rules, and to respect instructions given by the pedagogical staff. There is a prohibition of activity or promotion of political parties and movements at schools and school facilities.

The Education Act foresees three additional forms of educational provision: 1) *Basic artistic education*, including musical or theatre education, which is undertaken in the *Basic Artistic School (Základní*

umělecká škola, ZUŠ), 2) *Language education*, which is provided in schools entitled to conduct state language exams, and 3) *Education developing personal interests* (zájmové vzdělávání, in English also „Hobby education“), which is provided in leisure time centres, school play-centres, and school clubs.

4.2.5 The social and legal protection of children and young people

The social and legal protection of children is regulated by **Act No. 359/1999 Coll.**, which was **amended in 2012 (No. 401/2012 Coll.)**. The main focus of the modernisation in 2012 had been to strengthen the interest of children to be brought up in their own family, and to further and better support parents in the upbringing of their children. The main focus of this regulation is the protection of the rights of the child to its personal positive development and upbringing, and the protection of the legitimate interests of the child, including the protection of its assets. The Act guarantees the social and legal protection of children through a number of institutional provisions on different levels, with local authorities being granted extended competences in an extensively decentralised framework for social and legal protection. The Act defines support services for young people in difficult situations as well as measures to be taken to protect children and young people from domestic violence or other serious threats. It defines under which circumstances children should be removed from dysfunctional families and placed under protective guardianship, how the rights of the child must be protected in such situations, and which procedure must be applied for a due process. Through the Act, social workers have gained a wide array of supporting tools and measures that are at their disposal to support children and their families. A dedicated **Act on institutional and protective education in schools and on preventive educational care in school facilities (No. 109/2002 Coll.)** defines the forms of institutional care for children: Diagnostic Institutes, Children's Homes, Children's Homes with Schools and Educational Institutions. These offer services for children placed in institutional care, institutional education and/or protective education. Children are provided with board and lodging, textbooks and educational materials, health insurance, travel costs to schools and some pocket money, and are entitled to support for leaving the institution in question after having reached full legal age. There are also *Facilities for Children requiring immediate assistance* (so called „Klokánky“ as a project of the private *Fund of endangered Children*), in which no more than 28 children stay for no more than 6 months. These facilities have only recently become part of legislation, namely through the new *Civic Code* and the modernisation of the *Social Protection Act* in 2012.

4.2.6 Health law in relation to young people

There are a number of health laws in relation to young people, among them the **Act on measures to protect against the damage caused by tobacco, alcohol and other addictive substances and amending related laws (No. 379/2005 Coll. amended)**, which prohibits selling or giving tobacco

products, including electronic cigarettes and alcohol to persons younger than 18 years of age, and the **Act on lotteries and other similar games (No. 202/1990 Coll. amended)**, which prohibits the participation of young people below 18 years of age in lotteries and similar games.

4.2.7 Volunteering law in relation to young people

Volunteering is an area of law and policy-making of high importance for youth associations as well as organisations working with children and young people. While the Czech Council of Children and Youth as well as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports have been working for several years on the preparation of a dedicated volunteering law, it has not yet been finalised. The most relevant **Act No. 198/2002 Coll. on voluntary service** provided the basic legal framework for voluntary services. The Act has been repeatedly criticised for being insufficient, and at the occasion of the European Year of volunteering in 2011, a wider consultation process was meant to prepare a substantive revision and extension of the law, which remains to be passed and formalised.

4.2.8 Road safety in relation to young people

The Act on Road Traffic (No. 361/2000 Coll. amended) defines specific protective measures as well as duties for young people and children. Cyclists under 18 years of age are, for example, obliged to wear a helmet while cycling on roads and streets. Gaining a driving licence for different motorised vehicles is stratified according to age and obtaining the corresponding qualification and license, in principle much aligned with other European countries (age limits are, for smaller motorbikes 15 years, for larger motorbikes 16 years, for standard cars 18 years).

4.2.9 Human Rights in relation to children and young people

In accordance with the international treaties that the Czech Republic has ratified, regular monitoring of the current state of human rights and the rights of the child are undertaken. **The Council for Human Rights by the Government and the Subcommittee for the Rights of Child of the Council** are responsible for the reporting process. The Council publishes an annual report on the current state of human rights in the Czech Republic. While youth is not considered a specific group, the cases related to young people are often described in specific sections of the report. The first two reports on the basis of the **Convention of Rights of the Child** had been issued for the periods 1993 – 1994 and 1995 – 1999. The third and fourth reports were considered jointly by the UN in 2008 as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) procedure. In addition to the two key conventions with relevance for children and youth, the Czech Republic has adopted two of the three main additional protocols, namely on *the participation of children and the armed conflicts* (adopted in 2002) and on *selling children, child prostitution and child pornography* (adopted in 2013). The Third Optional Protocol introduces a

communications procedure that would allow children, groups of children or their representatives to submit a complaint about the violations of their rights by their state to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This protocol has not been adopted so far, but its implementation is foreseen.

Additional international treaties with relevance for your issues include:

- ***the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Race Discrimination,***
- ***the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.***

The national reports on the current state of human rights for the last three available years (2010 – 2012) contain some issues related to children and young people. The 2010 report referred, among others, to issues related to the social and legal protection of children, to the state system of engaging with children and young people at risk, the absence of qualified sexual education at schools which has led to wider public debates with very diverse opinions.

Following a decision of the European Court of Human Rights, the issue of inclusion of children with a minority background has surfaced in the 2011 Human Rights Report. In particular, young Roma children were frequently excluded from the regular education system on the grounds of expert-identified social or soft mental disadvantage, which resulted in them being educated in so-called “special schools”. In 2007, the European Court for Human Rights decided that the Czech Republic had violated the human rights of the 18 Roma children and their families and had infringed on their rights to education and non-discrimination. Further details specifically as regards the inclusion and exclusion of Roma students in the education system follow in the subsequent chapters. The 2012 report summarised the Government’s adopted special strategy aiming at abolishing structural disadvantages of children and young people with a Roma background. The report also highlighted the cases that the Ombudsman for Children’s Rights had been dealing with and the introduction of juvenile courts across the country. Across the three years, the main human rights issues in relation to young people had been the structural exclusion of Roma children and youth from the education system; the rights of juvenile offenders, and the situation of children and young people at risk.

4.3 Regional and local legislation on youth

Decrees by regional and municipal authorities

within the scope of their independent jurisdiction (self-governing) are focused on particular problems

Orders by regional and municipal authorities

within the scope of their delegated jurisdiction (state administration) they are focused on particular problems

5. National Programmes on youth

5.1 Action plans i.e. official strategies

Education Strategy 2020 (Strategie vzdělávání 2020) Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Main Trends in Educational Policy Strategy 2020 (Hlavní směry Strategie vzdělávací politiky do roku 2020), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Prevention of the Risk Behavior in Children and Youth 2013-2018 (Národní strategie primární prevence rizikového chování dětí a mládeže na období 2013-2018), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Plan for Reading and Mathematical Literacy Development in Basic Education 2013-2018 (Záměr rozvoje čtenářské a matematické gramotnosti v základním vzdělávání 2013-2018), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of Education System in the Czech Republic. 2011-2015 (Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky. 2011-2015), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Strategy of Education for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic 2008-2015 (Strategii vzdělávání pro udržitelný rozvoj České republiky 2008-2015), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

Strategic Plan for the Scholarly, Scientific, Research, Development, Innovation, Artistic, and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2011-2015 (Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávací a vědecké, výzkumné, vývojové a inovační, umělecké a další tvůrčí činnosti pro oblast vysokých škol na období 2011-2015), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

National Policy of Research, Development, and Innovations in the Czech Republic 2009-2015 (Národní politika výzkumu, vývoje a inovací 2009-2015); Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

State Culture Policy of the Czech Republic 2015 - 2020 (Státní kulturní politika ČR 2015 – 2020), Ministry of Culture.

Action Plan of Implementation of the National Strategy of Drug Abuse Policy 2013-2015 (Akční plan realizace Národní strategie protidrogové politiky na období 2013-2015), Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion for the period 2011-2015 (Strategie boje proti sociálnímu vyloučení na období 2011-2015), Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

National Strategy of Drug Abuse Policy 2010-2018 (Národní strategie protidrogové politiky na období 2010-2018), Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

National Strategy for Prevention of Violence Towards Children in the Czech Republic 2008-2018 (Národní strategie prevence násilí na dětech v ČR 2008-2018), Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Concept of the prevention and solving of homelessness in the Czech Republic till 2020 (Koncepce prevence a řešení problematiky bezdomovectví v České republice do roku 2020), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

5.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)

Entities providing social and legal protection of children

The authorities providing social and legal protection to children are:

- a. municipal authorities of municipalities with extended competences (city authorities, in chartered towns metropolitan and town district authorities, in Prague authorities of charged metropolitan districts),
- b. municipal authorities,
- c. regional authorities,
- d. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and
- e. Office for International Legal Protection of Children.

Because namely municipal authorities of municipalities with extended competences and municipal authorities are able to monitor the children's rights protection and adopt timely measures with a knowledge of the relevant issues and local circumstances, they are charged with most obligations in the sphere of child protection and assistance to parents and other persons responsible for upbringing of children. Powers of regional authorities include, in addition to control and methodological tasks, almost the entire process of mediation of substitute family care, deciding on authorization for exercise of social and legal protection of children by natural and legal persons and deciding on state subsidy to promoters of facilities for children requiring immediate help. In relation to municipal authorities and municipal authorities of municipalities with extended competences, regional authorities act as a superior control body and an appellate body authorized to review decisions of municipal authorities and municipal authorities of municipalities with extended competences in administrative procedure.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' scope of powers includes care for family and children at risk in general. The Ministry provides due legislative regulation in this sphere and within the statutory framework manages execution of state administration in the sphere of social and legal protection of children by issuing legal regulations and guidelines (s. 92, Act No. 129/2000 Coll., on regions). The Ministry also acts as a control and appellate body in relation to regional authorities, executes the

second instance agenda of substitute family care and keeps a national register of natural and legal entities charged with exercise of social and legal protection of children.

The Office for International Legal Protection of Children (hereinafter referred to as “Office”) is an administrative agency with state-wide powers authorized to address issues of children protection in international affairs. The Office is subordinated to the Ministry.

Act on institutional and protective education in schools and on preventive educational care in school facilities (No. 109/2002 Coll.) defines the forms of institutional care for children:

- **Diagnostic Institutes,**
- **Children’s Homes,**
- **Children’s Homes with Schools and Educational Institutions.**

These offer services for children placed in institutional care, institutional education and/or protective education. Children are provided with board and lodging, textbooks and educational materials, health insurance, travel costs to schools and some pocket money, and are entitled to support for leaving the institution in question after having reached full legal age. There are also *Facilities for Children requiring immediate assistance* (so called „Klokánky“ as a project of the private *Fund of endangered Children*), in which no more than 28 children stay for no more than 6 months. These facilities have only recently become part of legislation, namely through the new *Civic Code* and the modernisation of the *Social Protection Act* in 2012.

General welfare services for youth:

“Low-threshold” institutions for children and youth: These facilities provide out-patient services to children and youth at risk of social exclusion. This service is designated for children and young people who do not participate in any group activities and who are at risk of socially pathologic phenomena or who have very special ways of life, not accepted by the majority society. The basic instrument for establishing contacts with the target group is a suitable offer of free-time activities. The services are provided free of charge.

Pedagogic and psychological consultation centres: They provide consultancy services to children and youth (and their parents) regarding their future career and important life decisions, or in case of problems in their upbringing.

Crisis centres for children and youth: These are organizations whose mission is to help children, youth, their parents, relatives or close friends, especially in case of acute crises, such as home violence, drug abuse, psychical insults, etc..

Endowment funds, such as “Fond ohrožených dětí” (= Endangered Children Fund) are unincorporated citizens’ associations providing assistance and help to socially endangered children (maltreated, neglected, abused, forlorn, etc.). Fond ohrožených dětí operates within the territory of the whole of the Czech Republic.

6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth

1 EURO = 27 Czech crowns (CZK)

National level:

Annually 155 – 170 mil. CZK through Grant Programmes launched by Youth Department aimed at supporting youth work

NGOs can use these programmes to submit projects concerning the support and development of their own activities as well as other activities destined for the general public. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) assesses these projects and provides financial support to them according to their quality. An open call for an honorary title “Organisation recognised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the field of children and youth work” is announced as part of the programmes. Organisations whose quality the MoEYS rates as high are awarded a statute of an **organisation recognised by the state**.

Annually 25 mil. CZK through Grant Programme of Technical and Material Support for After-school Activities

Annually 6,2 mil. CZK through Grant Programme for Supporting Youth Information Centres

Annually 7 mil. CZK through Grant Programme for Supporting Youth Policy at Regional Level

Annually: 3 381 500 CZK through Programme of Czech – German cooperation in the field of children and youth:

Annually funds of 36 mil. CZK for supporting festivals for children and young people, knowledge based and skill-based competitions for children and young people

Annually 20 – 25 mil. CZK through Grant Programme for Supporting Talented Students in Secondary Schools (Excellence in Secondary Schools)

Annually 7 mil. CZK through Grant Programme for Supporting Talented Students in Primary Schools (Excellence in Primary Schools)

Annual fund of 5 mil. CZK for systematic support to talented children and youth

ESF funds:

ESF national project “Keys for Life - Developing Key Competences in Leisure-Time and Non-Formal Education“: **15 298 202 CZK from EU budget** (national co-financing: **2 699 682 CZK**) conducted from 1. 4. 2009 to 28. 2. 2013. Annually for follow-up activities **additional 4 mil. CZK**

ESF national project „K2 - Quality and Competitiveness in Non-formal Education“ conducted from 1. 10. 2012 – 30. 6. 2015. **57 mil. CZK**

The Government, as stated in the approved National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020 will continue to include funding of grant programmes to support the activities of non-profit organisations working with children and youth, leisure activities for children and young people, primary prevention of socially pathological phenomena, support for minorities and others in the state budget. According to the possibilities of the state budget, it will ensure that the volume of these funds will at least keep pace with inflation each year.

Different ministries cover the performance of the tasks arising from the approved National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020 from their budgets. The Government does not allocate special funds for this area. Within the framework of their cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, individual ministries will use their grant programmes to meet the objectives of Strategy 2020 and projects being currently implemented that are financed by the European Structural Funds that are under their responsibility, including activities resulting from the mandatory sustainability of such projects. The basic overview of financial instruments for the implementation of the Strategic goals will be regularly updated by inter-ministerial thematic working groups and made available to the professional public.

Regional level

Since 2000, the Czech Republic has consisted of thirteen regions and one capital city with regional status. The regions enjoy a considerable degree of self-autonomy which covers among others the area of youth policies. All regions have produced regional development strategies and other conceptual documents in which youth issues are included, nevertheless only in a general or marginal way. Only a minority of regions have developed a specific conceptual document in which youth issues covered together with leisure time activities and sport. The structure of **grant schemes** supporting youth activities is very heterogeneous. Some regions have only two or three programmes defined

broadly, others run thoroughly designed grant schemes with specific priorities, including the focus on youth activities.

7. European dimension of youth policy

7.1. European Union

The Czech Republic has been a full member of the European Union since 2004, and the majority of existing European Union legislation and jurisdiction has been introduced to and is being applied. The most notable exception might be the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*: The Czech Republic, Poland and the United Kingdom negotiated exceptions from implementing the Charter in full. The Czech Government takes EU-wide cooperation and coordination in the youth sector very seriously. The *Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018)* plays a pivotal role in informing and supporting youth policy and the youth sector in the country. All the strategic goals of the national youth strategy are linked to the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and follow the recommendations of the adopted EU presidential documents in the youth field.

Programme Erasmus+

- Erasmus+ National Agency: Centre for International cooperation (Dům zahraniční spolupráce)
www.dzs.cz
Head of the NA in the field of youth: Petra Krnanska (petra.votockova@dzs.cz)
- Erasmus+ National Authority: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
Contact person: Petra Kundeliusova (petra.kundeliusova@msmt.cz)

7.2 Council of Europe

National delegate of the CDEJ:

Zdenka Maskova, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Youth Department, head of Youth policy Unit (zdenka.maskova@msmt.cz)

Member of the Advisory Council:

Jan Husak, Czech Council of Children and Youth (jan.husak@crdm.cz)

EKCYP correspondent:

Zdenka Maskova, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Youth Department (zdenka.maskova@msmt.cz)

7.3 European cooperation in the field of youth policy

The main consulting partners for the preparation and development of National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020 at the international level, within the framework of Czech – Slovak bilateral cooperation, were IUVENTA and the Department of Youth and Community Programmes of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. National Youth Strategy for 2014 -2020 also takes into account the results of the analysis of national policies of the Visegrad group countries and the outcomes from the involvement of the Czech Republic in an international programme in the field of youth policies based on the principle of national youth policy makers' peer-learning between 2012 – 2013 coordinated by Germany with the participation of the Czech Republic, France, Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden.

7.3.1 European peer-learning on youth policy:

Czech Republic was one of the participants in following European peer-learning projects:

1. Focus on positive youth policies and practices (2012 and 2013)

Germany launched a cross-border learning process in the spirit of evidence-based governance to find out how youth policy in the EU Member States and in Europe is made. This started in 2012 with a two-year peer learning process between seven Member States of the European Union (Germany, Czech Republic, France, Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden). The three topics and issues were agreed between the three partners, Germany, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic:

- Acknowledgment and greater appreciation of the target group 'youth' (seminar in Berlin 2012)
- Youth policy as departmental or cross-sectorial policy (seminar in Rotterdam 2012)
- The role of regions and municipalities in youth policy (seminar in Prague 2013)

Orientations about positive or independent youth policies started to be debated in Berlin in June 2012. The subject was how to work on this policy between governments, regions and local municipalities. Further peer learning on the view on young people, well being and participation took place in the Netherlands in October 2012. The debates continued in Prague, in April 2013 with the focus on how to arrive to an inter-sectorial approach in youth policies.

Summary of the main findings of the two-year joint learning process and establishment of six theses regarding youth policy which have been formulated and agreed by all involved partners can be found here: <https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ueber-ife/publikationen/a-new-youth-policy.3495/>

2. Focus on cross-sectorial youth policies (2015)

It was initiated by Luxemburg and Latvia during the respective Presidential Trio in 2015. Two seminars were organised in Luxembourg and Riga in June and November 2015 aimed at allowing for more mutual learning among Member States youth policy representatives on the topic of cross-sectorial youth policies. The peer-learning exercise brought together apart from Luxembourg and Latvia also Lithuania, Germany, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Estonia, Belgium – German and Flemish speaking communities, Sweden; European Commission and Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. Peer-learning exercise focused on answering the following questions :

- What are models for cross-sectorial youth policymaking on national level?
- What are success factors? What are failure factors?
- What can youth policy bring to other policy fields that facilitate cross-sectorial policymaking?
- What is the role of youth policy related to other policy fields?
- Cross-sectorial cooperation with which fields preferably and particularly?
- How to formalize cross-sectorial cooperation? Top down and bottom up approaches?
- Aims of cross-sectorial youth policymaking? (Short term projects, long term effects)
- Can youth research / evaluation contribute to improving cross-sectorial policymaking?
- What has to be taken into account when transferring good practice from one context to another?

Peer-learning resulted into intermediate and final report on good practice as well as recommendations for policymakers.

7.3.2 Cooperation of the Visegrad and Eastern Partnership countries in the field of youth:

Visegrad Group V4: Czech and Slovak Republics, Poland, Hungary

Eastern Partnership EaP: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, the Ukraine, Belarus

Cooperation between V4 and EaP countries in the field of youth has been implemented within the official programmes of the respective V4 country taking the presidency of the Visegrad Group (it is a one year rotating presidency which starts on the 1st July and finishes on the 30th June of the subsequent year) since 2011.

The cooperation was initiated by the Slovak Presidency (SK V4 PRES; 1. 7. 2010 – 30. 6. 2011) when a CDEJ (= European Steering Committee for Youth of the Council of Europe) member from Georgia – based on personal relations – was invited as an observer to an annual V4 meeting in Bratislava in May 2011. Afterwards, the Georgian minister of youth and sport invited the directors of V4 ministerial youth Country sheet on youth policy – Czech Republic

departments to Tbilisi in July 2011 to discuss the cooperation between V4 and EaP countries in the field of youth.

As a result, under the Czech V4 PRES (1. 7. 2011 – 30. 6. 2012) the representatives of EaP countries were invited to join the annual V4 meeting in Prague in May 2012. During this meeting the participants agreed on developing cooperation between V4 and EaP countries in the field of youth on three levels: among 1. ministries responsible for youth, 2. Youth in Action national agencies, and 3. national youth councils. One of the final products of such cooperation was a training seminar in Georgia organised by the Czech Youth in Action National Agency in 2013 aimed at creating partnerships between V4 and EaP countries which resulted into four successful projects granted through Eastern Partnership Window of the Youth in Action Programme.

Under the succeeding Polish V4 PRES (1. 7. 2012 – 30. 6. 2013) in Sulejowek, Poland, in April 2013 *the Comparative Study of the Situation of Youth in the Countries of the Visegrad Group* which covered participation and decision making, voluntary activities, non-formal education as well as employment and entrepreneurship was introduced (Ewa Krzaklewska; Council of Europe 2013: http://www.academia.edu/6863582/Visegrad_Youth_Comparative_review_of_the_situation_of_young_people_in_the_V4_countries). The V4 and EaP participants evaluated the results of the cooperation in a youth policy development.

In the annual V4 and EaP annual meeting under the Hungarian V4 PRES (1. 7. 2013 – 30. 6. 2014) in Visegrad in March 2014 the V4 and Georgian participants evaluated the results of the cooperation. It was for the first time when an idea of signing *the Memorandum of Cooperation between V4 and EaP Countries in the Field of Youth* was heard. Slovakia and Georgia took their responsibility for drafting the text of the Memorandum.

Under the Slovak V4 PRES (1. 7. 2014 – 30. 6. 2015) *Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministries of Countries of Visegrad Group Responsible for Youth and the Ministries of Countries of Eastern Partnership to European Union Responsible for Youth in Youth Field* was signed in Bratislava in June 22, 2015 (<http://www.msmt.cz/file/36655/>). The Czech Republic supported the Slovak V4 PRES by organising a thematic working seminar for V4 and EaP countries on volunteerism of young people in Prague in September 2014 in a close cooperation with SALTO EECA and the Czech Erasmus+ National Agency (Centre for International Cooperation in Education).

The following Czech V4 PRES (1. 7. 2015 – 30. 6. 2016) organised “*Youth Policy and Youth Work: Working Seminar on Cooperation between Visegrad Group, Romania and Eastern Partnership Countries*” on October 6 – 7, 2015 which resulted in „*2015 – 2017 Framework Action Plan of Cooperation between Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership Countries in the Youth Field*“ (<http://www.msmt.cz/file/36656/>). Common strategy of the Framework Action Plan in order to maintain and enhance current achievements, addressing the common interests of cooperating countries is:

- Strive to enhance mutual support, coordination and cooperation on multilateral issues within the framework of the European Union and the Council of Europe, particularly to harmonise the national positions in the CDEJ meetings, Youth Working Party meetings and meeting of the Erasmus+ Programming Committee,
- Continue to facilitate the excellent cooperation on 3 levels: governmental sector, NGO sector and Erasmus+ National Agencies,
- Encourage continued dialogue and best-practice sharing on youth policy issues,
- Continue to maintain and enhance an equal partnership with national youth councils from cooperating countries,
- Create support structures for common tasks and mutual information (EKCYP Country Sheets).

The priority of the Czech V4 PRES in the youth field was to enable Romania to join the cooperation between V4 and EaP countries in the field of youth as an equal partner in so-called V4+ format on request of the Romanian Deputy Minister responsible for youth.

All the annual and thematic V4 and EaP events were supported by Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, and SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre.