

## Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030

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## 1. Introduction and description of the current situation

**The Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030 (hereinafter the “Strategy”) is a national document covering within the territory of the Czech Republic the main areas important for the social inclusion of socially excluded people and those at risk of social exclusion; the document also covers the areas of combating poverty and social exclusion and sets out priority topics for social inclusion and its financing from national sources and sources of the European Union (hereinafter the “EU”).**

The Strategy was created in cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (hereinafter “MoLSA”) and the Department (Agency) for Social Inclusion of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (hereinafter the “Agency”), which is responsible for coordinating the conceptual approach to social exclusion on both the regional and national levels. Following the approval of the proposal for integration with the Agency-coordinated Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion,<sup>1</sup> the Strategy has recently been expanded to include topics previously addressed by the Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion. The Agency will also be involved in the preparation of follow-up documents to this Strategy.

On the basis of Government Resolution No 1315 of 14 December 2020 on the schedule of non-legislative work, it was decided to extend the Strategy to include other strategic objectives and topics in the area of homelessness, which were addressed until 2020 in the Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2020.

The basic starting points for the creation of the Strategy are the following documents:

- Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (Government Resolution No 292 of 19 April 2017), in particular its specific objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 5.2 and 5.4 and, more generally, implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic (Government Resolution No 670 of 17 October 2018), in particular the sustainable development objectives 1, 3, 4 and 10.
- National Concept of Cohesion Policy Implementation in the Czech Republic after 2020 (Government Resolution No 562 of 30 July 2019)

The Strategy takes into account the experience with the implementation of measures contained in the partial thematic strategy documents, in particular:

- Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2019–2020.
- Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for 2019–2023 (Government Resolution No 318 of 6 May 2019).
- Action Plan of the Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion for 2016–2020 (Government Resolution No 1067 of 28 November 2016).
- Action Plan of the Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2017–2018 (Government Resolution No 32 of 16 January 2017).
- Update of the Employment Policy Strategy until 2020 in the context of ongoing changes in the labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> The integration was approved by the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic by letter No 6536/2019-UVCR.

- Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners – In Mutual Respect and Procedure for Implementation of the Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners in 2016 and Procedure for Implementation of the Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners – In Mutual Respect (Government Resolution No 6 of 7 January 2019).
- Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Educational System of the Czech Republic 2015–2020 (Government Resolution No 277 of 15 April 2015).
- Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Educational System of the Czech Republic 2019–2023 (Government Resolution No 489 of 08 July 2019).
- Partnership Agreement with the Czech Republic for the 2014–2020 programming period (Government Resolution No 242 of 2014).
- Strategy for Combating Extremism in the Czech Republic for 2016–2020.
- Housing Policy Concept of the Czech Republic until 2020 (Government Resolution No 673 of 27 July 2016).
- Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2020 (Government Resolution No 366 of 21 May 2014).
- Family Policy Concept (Government Resolution No 654 of 18 September 2017).
- Probation and Mediation Development Concept Until 2025 (Government Resolution No 733 of 11 October 2017).
- Social Housing Concept of the Czech Republic 2015–2025 (Government Resolution No 153 of 12 March 2014).
- Prison Service Concept until 2025 (by Resolution No 79 of 3 February 2016).
- National Action Plan Supporting Positive Ageing 2013–2017 – strategic document on ageing policy.
- National Plan for the Creation of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.
- National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2018 (Approved by Resolution of the Government Committee for the European Union on the level of its members No 14 of 30 April 2018).
- National Strategy for the Prevention and Reduction of Damage Associated with Addictive Behaviour 2019–2027 (Government Resolution No 329 of 13 May 2019).
- National Strategy for Primary Prevention of Risk Behaviour of Children and Youth for the Period 2019–2027 and Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Primary Prevention of Risk Behaviour of Children and Youth for the Period 2019–2021 (Government Resolution No 190 of 18 March 2019).
- National Strategy for the Development of Social Services for 2016–2025 (Government Resolution No 245 of 21 March 2016).
- Plan of measures to enforce the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of D.H. and others v. Czech Republic “EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic, 2012).
- Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion for the period 2016–2020 (Government Resolution No 134 of 17 February 2016).
- Employment Policy Strategy until 2020 (Resolution No 835 of 15 October 2014).
- Crime Prevention Strategy in the Czech Republic for 2016 to 2020 (Government Resolution No 66 of 25 January 2016).
- Strategy for the Work of the Police of the Czech Republic in relation to National and Ethnic Minorities until 2020 (2019), approved by the Minister of the Interior in January 2019.

- Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2014–2020 (Government Resolution No 344 of 15 May 2013).
- Roma Integration Strategy until 2020 (Government Resolution No 127 of 23 February 2015).
- Social Inclusion Strategy 2014–2020 (Government Resolution No 24 of 8 January 2014).
- Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (Government Resolution No 538 of 9 July 2014).
- Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014–2020 (by Government Resolution No 931 of 12 November 2014).

The implementation and control of the implementation of the measures of these conceptual and strategic documents are, due to their thematic connection with the Strategy, important for the implementation of the whole Strategy. In the future, Government measures in the field of social inclusion should reflect and be in line with the Strategy, which is its purpose and goal.

In the field of social inclusion, the MoLSA mainly creates conceptual and strategic materials (social housing and social inclusion agendas) and monitors the implementation of these materials; participates in the implementation of programmes/projects in the field of social inclusion and social housing financed from the State budget or EU funds; cooperates in the creation and implementation of other concepts and strategies related to the field of social inclusion in cooperation with other ministries and the Office of the Government; prepares fundamental comprehensive opinions on these concepts and strategies in terms of social inclusion and social housing, including foreign programmes of national or regional importance for the Ministry; prepares factual intentions or supporting documents for legal regulations in the field of social inclusion and social housing; cooperates with non-governmental non-profit organisations, social partners, libraries and academic and professional departments and ensures the coordination and institutional side of this cooperation in the field of social inclusion and social housing.

The permanent advisory and coordinating body of the MoLSA in the field of social policy, with a focus on combating poverty and social exclusion, is the Social Inclusion Committee, which actively participated in the preparation of the Strategy.

The Agency is a key player in the field of social inclusion;<sup>2</sup> it was established in 2008 as an expert instrument of the Government of the Czech Republic for solving social exclusion (Government Resolution No 85 of 23 January 2008) and it ensures the comprehensive coordination of the public authorities' approach to solving the problem of social exclusion at the level of the central State administration, public administration on the issue of social inclusion of the population of socially excluded localities at the local level and cooperation between public administration bodies and other institutions at the local level in the field of social inclusion of the population of socially excluded localities and integration of socially excluded Roma. The Agency is a key partner for the implementation of the Strategy; among other matters,

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<sup>2</sup> To fulfil this basic purpose in the field of social inclusion (i.e. prevention and mitigation of social exclusion), the Agency conducts research and analytical activities, maps the phenomena and processes of social exclusion and their forms, shares data, evaluates trends and impacts, provides feedback on the effectiveness of public policies and strategies, initiates evidence-based policies and public strategies, ensures the sharing of expert know-how, coordinates the establishment and operation of territorial and expert networks, coordinates the efforts of public administration, non-governmental and expert sectors, supports local self-governments, identifies and promotes good practice, carries out information and awareness campaigns, carries out short- and long-term interventions, contributes to reducing social tension, in cooperation with persons at risk of social exclusion or socially excluded and with relevant actors introduces effective measures, mechanisms, innovations and methodologies, formulates proposals in the field of legislation, subsidy titles and public policies and coordinates national and European funds in the field of social inclusion.

it provides support to local self-governments in addressing social exclusion within the framework of the Coordinated Approach to Socially Excluded Localities and the related set of interventions in the next programming period.

In the international context, the Strategy contributes, among others, to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are, in particular, SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities” (10.2 – “empower and promote social, economic and political inclusion” and 10.3 “ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities”) and SDG 1 “Eradicate poverty in all its forms”. At the same time, the Strategy contributes to the fulfilment of obligations arising from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), to which the Czech Republic acceded in 1993.

The Strategy also takes into account the “15 measures to combat poverty and social exclusion” resulting from the round table discussion held on 10 September 2018 at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the participation of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, representatives of relevant governmental departments (MoLSA, MoRD, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (OG CR)), affected municipalities and the non-profit sector on the topic, “Problems of socially excluded localities including housing benefits”.

At the same time, the Strategy also fulfils the Enabling Condition for drawing financial resources from EU funds in the programming period 2021–2027 – this is similar to the Enabling Condition of the European Commission valid for the period 2014–2020. This thematic Enabling Condition is: 4.4 National or regional strategic policy framework for social inclusion and poverty reduction.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the above, the following closely related enabling conditions are particularly important in the field of social inclusion:

1. Horizontal enabling conditions
  - a. Effective application and implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
  - b. Implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC
2. Thematic enabling conditions
  - a. National Roma inclusion strategic policy framework
  - b. National strategic policy framework for gender equality

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<sup>3</sup>The wording of the thematic enabling conditions is governed by Annex IV to the draft general regulation for EU funds, which was being discussed at the time of preparing the Strategy. This is a working translation of the text from English into Czech.

These enabling conditions are also important for the formulation of State policies for social inclusion, as they are based on European legislation for EU funds and define the content framework of the Strategy in terms of the objectives and basic principles described below. The drawing of resources from EU funds is directly dependent on the progress towards the fulfilment of the enabling conditions, so their fulfilment must be given due attention. At the same time, it must be added that activities supported by EU funds play and will certainly continue to play an important role in the practice of social inclusion in individual regions and areas. As these activities must be in accordance with the above enabling conditions, the same applies to the Social Inclusion Strategy for the period 2021-2030. These conditions are based on the constitutional principles and international obligations of the Czech Republic and define the content framework of the Strategy in terms of its objectives and the basic principles described below (protection of human rights, minority rights, gender equality). The Strategy also sets out basic guidelines for other strategic documents addressing these issues and groups of population. The Strategy will be relevant in terms of vertical coordination, for example for local and regional social inclusion strategies that are developed with the support of the Agency.

It is necessary for the Strategy to respect the State aid rules; in relevant cases, exception(s) to the general incompatibility of State aid with the internal market may be applied.

The Strategy promotes a holistic view and approach to social inclusion and a conceptual approach to the prevention and solution of social exclusion.

The basic instrument for the promotion of social inclusion of persons is social work. In addition to areas focused on the development of social work, the Strategy will focus on the following topics:

- access to and retention of employment;
- social services;
- family support;
- support for national minorities, especially the Roma;
- equal access to education;
- access to housing, prevention of loss of housing and retention of housing;
- access to healthcare;
- equal opportunities for women and men;
- ensuring decent living conditions;
- support for other services provided to enhance social inclusion and prevent social exclusion.

The Strategy's material is divided into two main parts. The first is the analytical part, which is followed by the content. In Chapter 1 of the analytical part, the Strategy deals with the following: "Introduction and description of the current situation" mainly by a general description and statistics of the economic situation and demographic development in the Czech Republic, as well as topics related to the description of poverty, the labour market situation and equal opportunities, based on research, statistics and other data. Next is the content part of the Strategy, which in the following chapters focuses more on social issues and the limits of social inclusion in the Czech Republic; however, even this part sometimes includes a piece of analytical knowledge or a definition of a term, if it is recognised as beneficial for understanding the issue. Chapter 2 deals with the specific form of guarantees of equal opportunities in the Czech Republic, social inclusion at the regional level and the mainstreaming of social inclusion and social cohesion. Chapter 3 emphasises the importance of the role of social work as one of the main instruments for social inclusion. Chapter 4 outlines the following main areas in which social inclusion needs

to be promoted: the issue of debt and over-indebtedness,<sup>4</sup> access to employment, social services, family support, education, housing and health care; finally, there are three chapters describing other specific topics, the promotion of decent living conditions and ensuring public order; finally, there is a chapter on the prevention of substance abuse and addictive behaviour.

Within the Strategy, the individual chapters describe the issues of each of the above topics. Based on an agreement between the main processors of the Strategy, each of the chapters is designed analogously; the first part of each chapter contains a general description of the issue in the Czech Republic. Some of the chapters where it is considered beneficial continue with the “risk” part, where the main limits of the issue are outlined. The final part of the chapter always contains one to four objectives.<sup>5</sup> The objectives for the individual chapters are supplemented by a short text, a summary of the most important areas in which change should be pursued in the future. It should be noted that all chapters are considered equal and their order is given by an analogous order to the Social Inclusion Strategy 2014–2020, i.e. the previous document. Likewise, there are only one to four objectives in each individual chapter because for some of them it was not possible to thematically contain different areas of one issue into one objective. However, this does not mean that the objectives are of differing importance due to their differing numbers: they are simply divided into one to three thematic areas. The objectives will be further developed with the same importance and weight according to the following scheme: Action Plans will be drawn up on the basis of the objectives during the entire implementation period of the Strategy; these plans will cover a period of three years, in which the objectives will be specified to create individual measures. The measures will then be complemented by clear progress indicators, and specific managers will be assigned to them, which will be responsible for their implementation.<sup>6</sup> The Strategy should be updated at mid-term.

The basic instruments for the effective prevention and weakening of social exclusion processes and reduction in the territorial concentration of social exclusion include the application of the informed-based approach (i.e. an approach based on relevant information) and an evidence-based approach (based on data), especially in the creation of legislation and public strategies consisting of, among other things, the systematic study and dissemination of knowledge on the phenomena and processes of social exclusion and the possibilities of influencing them, as well as the evaluation of the impact of public policies. Furthermore, effective coordination and cooperation of individual actors at all levels of public administration and in the civil sector is necessary in order to increase the coherence of public policies and vertical and horizontal synergies of interventions (i.e. the activities of public administration and the State should not contradict each other; one strategy should not seek to achieve the opposite of the other). When creating the Strategy and implementing the measures, all participating entities pay attention to the application of cross-cutting principles; mainly respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, equal opportunities, promotion of social inclusion at the local level (especially for marginalised groups – e.g. Roma), strengthening social cohesion and mainstreaming social inclusion; all principles are concerned with achieving gender equality, as it is one of the fundamental values of a democratic society.

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<sup>4</sup> The term “over-indebtedness” in this text is not identical with the term used by Act No 182/2006, the Insolvency Act, as amended.

<sup>5</sup> In connection with the expansion of the Strategy to include the issues of homelessness, the number of these objectives had to be increased for selected chapters so that these objectives cover all relevant topics.

<sup>6</sup> The managers of the individual tasks in the Action Plans will be the individual government departments responsible. The Action Plans will not assign tasks to self-governments.



## 1.1. Poverty and social exclusion in the Czech Republic

To assess income poverty, we use the internationally comparable “At risk of income poverty rate” indicator, which shows the share of people living in households whose income is below the threshold, typically at 60% of median equivalised disposable income per consumption unit. In 2019, the threshold was CZK 13640 per month. The amount represents the risk of income poverty for an individual’s household. Compared to the previous year, due to the growth of income in society, the threshold for the risk of income poverty increased by CZK 822 per month. When assessing the risk of income poverty of the whole household, the size and structure of the household must be taken into account.

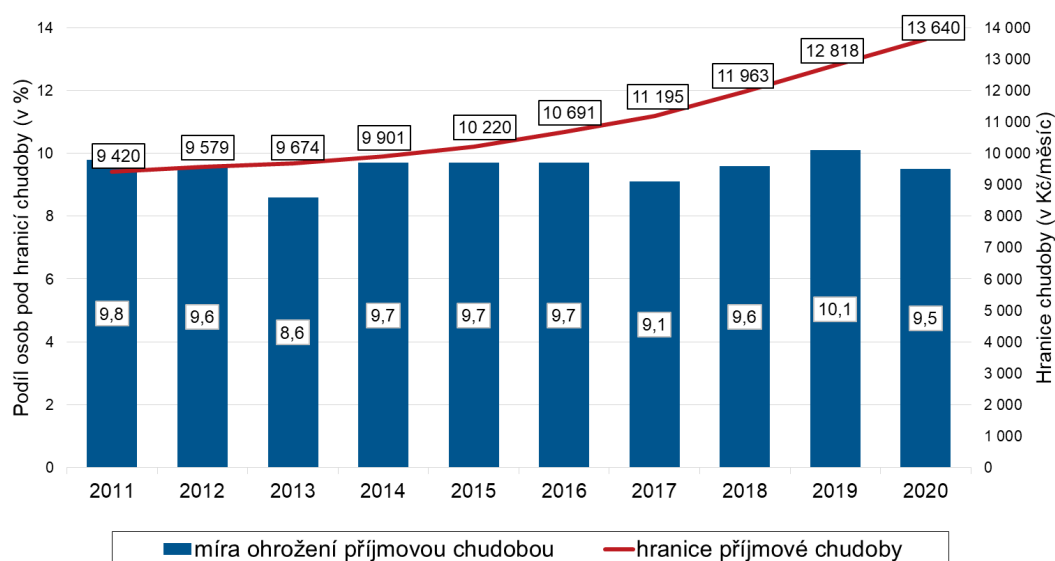
In the long run, the Czech Republic is one of the EU countries with the lowest income poverty rates. In 2020, the at-risk-of-poverty rate showed a slight decrease of 0.6 percentage points compared to 2019, reaching 9.5%, touching the middle of the long-term range. The share of people at risk of income poverty has long been at the level of 9-10%.

The number of persons at risk of income poverty, whose income in the Czech Republic did not reach the income poverty line (CZK 153.8 thousand in 2019 per consumption unit, i.e. CZK 12 818 per month) was 1 057.3 thousand. Of this number, 225 thousand were children under 17 years, 495.2 thousand were persons aged 18-64 and 337.1 thousand were persons over 65 years. The poverty rate (of the total number of people in the relevant age group) stood at 11.2% for children under 17 years, 7.8% for persons aged 18–64 years (9.4% for the age group 18-24 years) and 16.6% for persons aged over 65. 12.1% of women were at risk of income poverty, while 8.1% of men were at risk of income poverty. The above information is sourced from the statistical data of the Living Conditions Survey 2019 (according to the EU-SILC methodology).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The EU-SILC (European Union – Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) sample survey has been carried out by the Czech Statistical Office since 2005 under the title Living Conditions.

**Chart 1: Development of the at-risk-of-poverty rate in the Czech Republic 2011–2020**



Source: CZSO

Míra ohrožení příjmovou chudobou (v %)

At-risk-of-poverty rate (in %)

Hranice příjmové chudoby domácnosti jednotlivce (v Kč/měs.)

Income poverty line of an individual's household (in CZK/month)

Podíl osob pod hranicí chudoby (v %)

Share of people below the poverty line (in %)

Hranice chudoby (v Kč/měsíc)

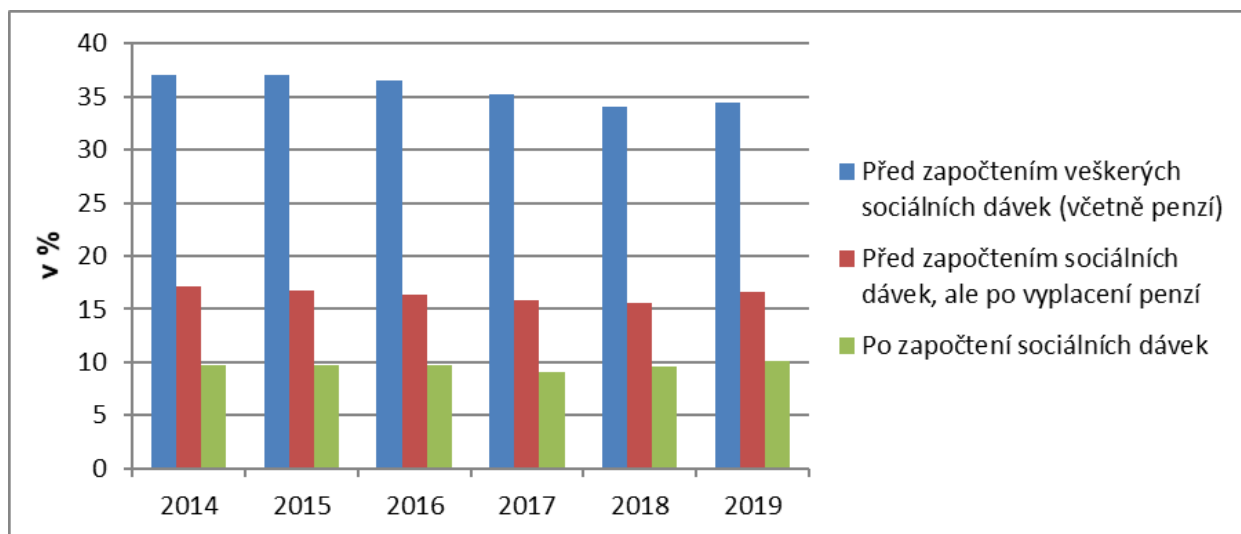
Poverty line (in CZK/month)

### At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers

The poverty rate in the Czech Republic continues to be significantly influenced by social transfers. In 2019, 34.5% of the population was at risk of income poverty prior to the provision of social transfers. After the payment of pensions, the income poverty rate fell to 16.6% and after the inclusion of other social transfers, it fell to a final 10.1%. Although the Czech Republic's share of expenditure on social protection relative to GDP is lower than in other EU countries (in 2018 CR 18.5%<sup>8</sup>; EU 27.6% in 2018 as a preliminary figure), it has the lowest poverty rate of all the EU countries, which continuously indicates the very good efficiency of social transfers.

<sup>8</sup> Including public health care costs. Chapter 1.2 also uses the figure of 10.1%, which includes only social benefits and pensions.

**Chart 2: At-risk-of-poverty rate 2014–2019**



Source: CZSO

Před započtením veškerých sociálních dávek (včetně penzí)

Before all social benefits (including pensions)

Před započtením sociálních dávek, ale po vyplacení penzí

Before the inclusion of social benefits, but after the payment of pensions

Po započtení sociálních dávek

After the inclusion of social benefits

## Material deprivation

The material deprivation rate indicator indicates the share of persons whose households cannot for financial reasons afford four or more of the nine items listed below. The rate of material deprivation in the Czech Republic has long ranged from 6% to 7%, but since 2014 it has been declining. In 2017, the total rate of material deprivation decreased to 3.7% (in absolute terms, 386.9 thousand persons).

In 2019, the total rate of material deprivation further decreased to the level of 2.7%, which in comparison with 2018 meant a decrease of 0.1 percentage points; there are still rather large differences in its concentration, especially in the breakdown by individual types of households.

The highest rate of materially and socially deprived persons was reported in 2019 by the regions with the highest unemployment – 12.2% in the Ústí nad Labem Region and 8.3% in the Moravian-Silesian Region. On the other hand, the most favourable situation is in the Zlín Region (1.5%), in the Hradec Králové Region (2.6%) and in the South Bohemian Region (2.6%).

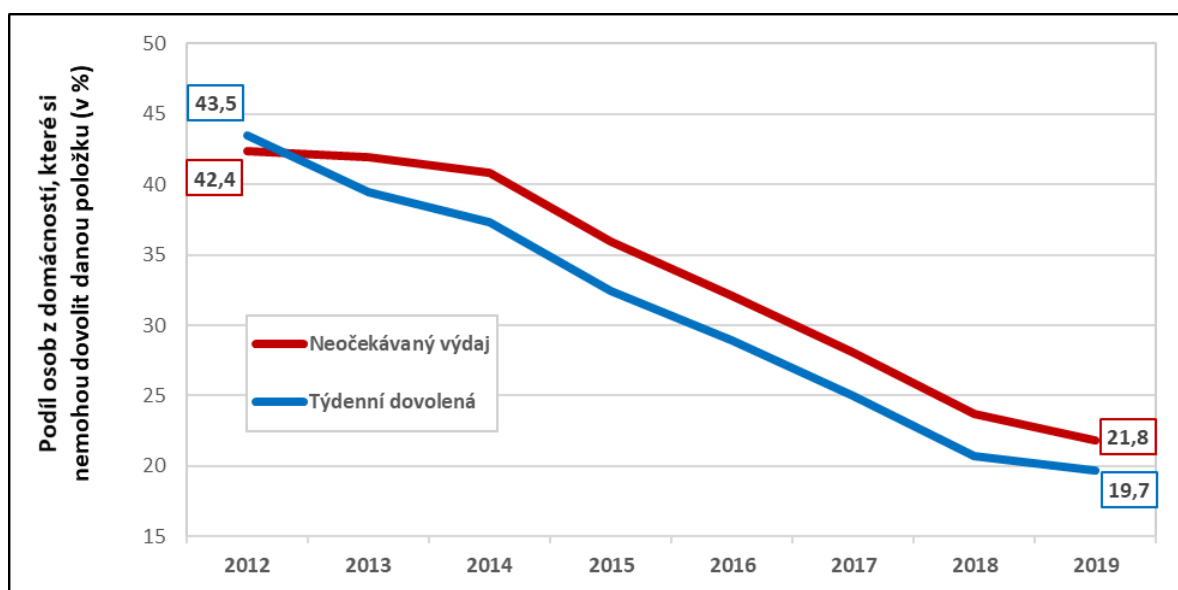
**Table 1: Material deprivation items for 2019**

Share of persons in households who cannot afford the item for financial reasons	
Buy new furniture to replace worn out furniture	30.2%
An unexpected expense in the amount of CZK 11 200	21.8%
A week-long holiday	19.7%
A car	5.5%
Eating meat every other day	4.9%
Regular leisure activity	4.5%
Spend money on yourself every week	4.1%
Ability to meet living costs	3.0%
Sufficiently heated dwelling	2.8%
Get new clothes to replace worn out ones	2.6%
Internet connection	1.6%
Meeting with friends, relatives (once per month)	1.4%
Two pairs of shoes	0.7%

Source: CZSO

More often than in 2018, households could afford to pay for an unexpected expense (in the amount of CZK 11 200 for 2019) and a week's holiday for all members of the household. Only 21.8% of the population could not afford to pay for unexpected expenses and only a fifth of the population (19.7%) could not afford a week's holiday. Further contributor to the reduction in the material deprivation rate was a reduction in the number of people whose households could not afford to buy a car to 5.5% and to eat meat daily to 4.9%.

**Chart 3: Share of persons from households who cannot afford the given item, in 2012–2019**



Source: CZSO

Podíl osob z domácností, které si nemohou dovolit danou položku (v %)

Share of persons from households who cannot afford the given item (in %)

Neočekávaný výdaj

An unexpected expense

Týdenní dovolená

A week-long holiday

In 2019, the average material deprivation rate in the EU-28 was significantly higher than in the Czech Republic and amounted to 5.5%. However, some Member States showed values several times higher, because compared to the rate of risk of income poverty, material deprivation is much more sensitive to overall economic development and the particular economic situation of the country.

Statistical data for 2019 show that those most affected by material and social deprivation<sup>9</sup> are the unemployed (32.2%), single-parent families with at least one dependent child (17.2%), woman living alone (10.5%), persons living in rented accommodation (15.7%).

### Poverty and social exclusion in the Czech Republic

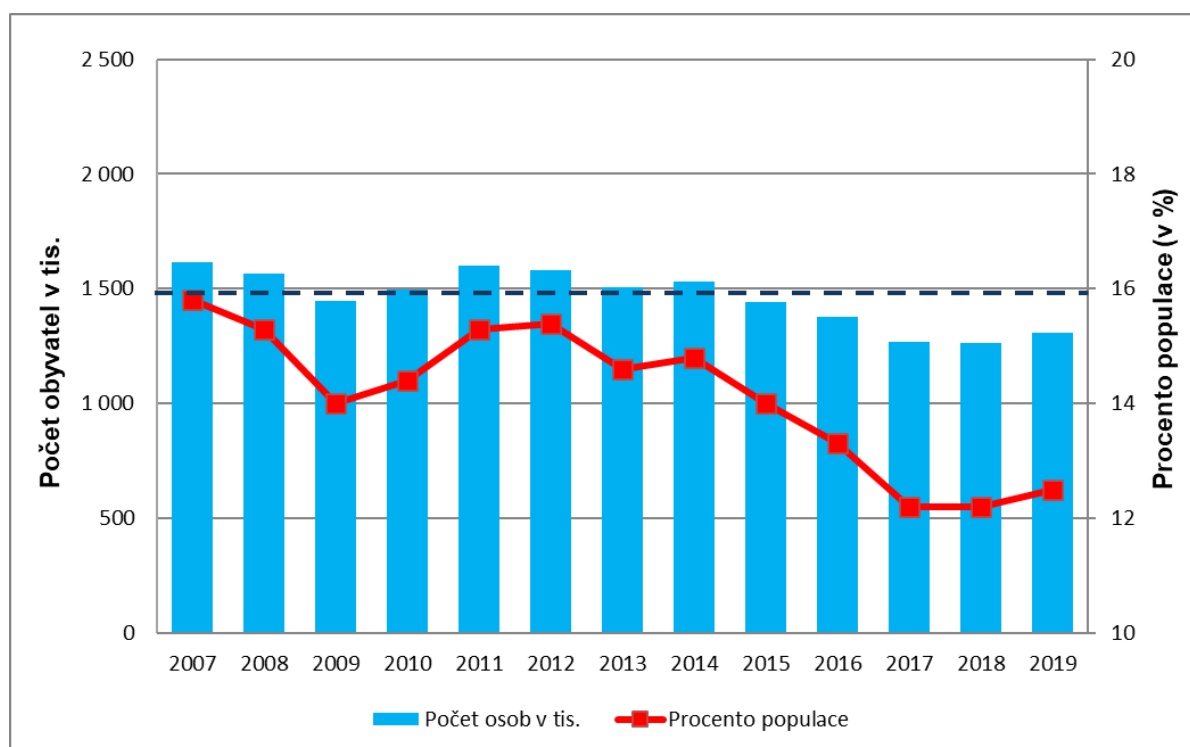
An internationally comparable “At risk of poverty or social exclusion” summary indicator (according to EU-SILC data) expresses the share of the people who are at risk of income poverty (with a disposable income below the poverty line) or material deprivation, or who live in households with very low work intensity, in the total population. Its value in the Czech Republic has long been one of the lowest in the EU-28. For comparison, the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the Czech Republic was 15.3% at the beginning of the financial and economic crisis in 2008. In accordance with the CZSO data published on 10 March 2020, in 2019, compared to 2008, the at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate had

<sup>9</sup> In the Living Conditions Survey 2019, the CZSO published a new indicator, the Material and Social Deprivation Rate, which expanded the original indicator to include items for personal use, contact with friends or relatives, paid leisure activities, spending a certain amount of money for personal use, and internet access. A person is considered materially and socially deprived if he or she could not have afforded 5 or more of the 13 items surveyed for financial reasons.

decreased by 2.8 percentage points to 12.5%, which in absolute terms represented approximately 1 306 thousand persons.

According to the latest internationally comparable Eurostat data, the average value for the EU-28 in 2019 was 21.4%. In absolute terms, this at-risk-of income poverty or social exclusion rate further decreased year-on-year in 2020 in the Czech Republic (by approximately 3.0 thousand persons) and it remained at the level of 11.9%. The long-term development of the indicator of the degree of risk of poverty or social exclusion is evident from the following chart.

**Chart 4: Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion**



Source: Eurostat

Počet obyvatel v tis.

Number of inhabitants in thousands

Počet osob v tis.

Number of persons in thousands

Procento populace

Percentage of the population

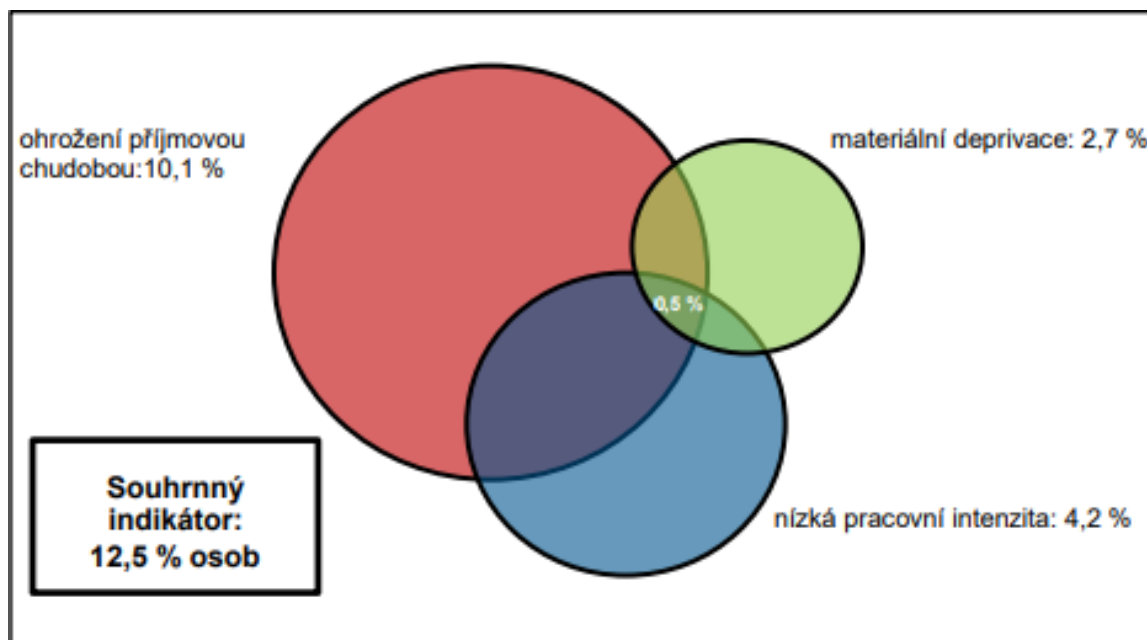
### The most vulnerable groups

According to data from the Living Conditions Survey (EU-SILC) 2019, the most vulnerable group out of the population of about 53.9 thousand persons (0.5% of the population) is made up of people who are simultaneously at risk of income poverty, material deprivation and at the same time live in households with low work intensity. These are mainly the long-term unemployed and people living in single-parent families and in families with three or more children.

It can be stated that in almost all age categories, women (14.6%) are more at risk of income poverty or social exclusion in the long run than men (10.4%), which is, among other areas, a consequence

of the 22% gender pay gap (i.e. the difference in wages between men and women), which is the second highest in the EU in the Czech Republic, followed by children (20 thousand minors grow up in housing deprivation<sup>10</sup>) and seniors (especially single women living alone), for whom the at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate is 23.2%.

**Chart 5: Summary social exclusion indicator (2019)**



Source: CZSO

ohrožení příjmovou chudobou:

materiální deprivace:

nízká pracovní intenzita:

Souhrnný indikátor: 12,5 % osob

at risk of income poverty:

material deprivation:

low work intensity:

Summary indicator: 12.5% of persons

In terms of the survey's methodology, it should be noted that on the basis of the EU-SILC survey, the indicators of poverty and social exclusion only include persons living in apartment households. Homeless people, but also people living in residential social services, school institutions, persons serving a custodial sentence, as well as people living in emergency shelters, hostels, institutes and institutions are not included in these indicators. As part of the 2011 Population and Housing Census,<sup>11</sup> the Czech Statistical Office (hereinafter the "CZSO") tried to map the lives of homeless people who use the services of welfare facilities. A total of about 11.5 thousand homeless people were found in shelters, half-way houses and other welfare facilities. According to the CZSO estimates at that time, this represented about one-third of all homeless people.

<sup>10</sup> SOCIAL HOUSING PLATFORM, LUMOS. *Housing Exclusion Report 2018* [online]. 2019 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <https://socialnibydeni.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Zpr%C3%A1va-o-vylou%C4%8Den%C3%AD-z-bydlen%C3%AD-za-rok-2018.pdf> (hereinafter the "Housing Exclusion Report 2018").

<sup>11</sup> The population and housing census takes place repeatedly about every ten years; because of the date of processing of this material, the relevant data come from the 2011 Census. *Population and Housing Census 2011* [online]. CZSO, 2011 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n\\_2013-030102](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n_2013-030102).

If the summary indicator included all these people, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion would increase by 0.3 percentage points to 12.5%. In addition, these data do not take into account the effects of executions and insolvencies on real disposable household income.<sup>12</sup>

The Country Report Czech Republic 2019<sup>13</sup> (hereinafter the “Country Report Czech Republic”) estimates that, taking into account execution and insolvency deductions, the share of people below the poverty line would increase by about 4 percentage points<sup>14</sup> (300 000 adults). If indebtedness were taken into account, poverty levels would be higher, especially in poorer regions.

The Strategy seeks to summarise problem areas with regard to the risks of social exclusion. Alongside these, it is also necessary to understand this issue in terms of the characteristics of the mentioned groups of the population, who are more vulnerable to social exclusion than the majority population.

Different groups in society are exposed to different levels of poverty. In several cases with a specific research focus, the Strategy also mentions the results of the Median research agency. One such study, which describes the at-risk-of-poverty rate, focuses on the population of the Czech Republic aged 18–30. According to the study, in 2018 more than a fifth of young people in the Czech Republic were at risk of poverty (according to the research, 22%).<sup>15</sup> Differences in definitions and methodology of data collection from the EU-SILC surveys need to be taken into account.<sup>16</sup> According to the study, more than a fifth (22%) of young people in the Czech Republic (18–30 years) are at risk of poverty. There are more at risk persons among young women (27%) than men (18%). Among young people who have completed their education without a school-leaving (matura) exam, an alarming 40% are at risk of poverty; up to a third of young parents are at risk of poverty.

One of the most at-risk groups in terms of poverty and social exclusion are the homeless and those at risk of housing deprivation. This target group has been addressed separately in the Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2020. Some of its priorities have been incorporated into this expanded Strategy.

This complex issue is defined at national level by the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS). According to the ETHOS definition, “having a home” can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his or her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain) and having legal title to occupation (legal domain).

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<sup>12</sup> Note Information on executions and insolvencies is not collected within the CZSO (SILC) survey.

<sup>13</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Czech Republic 2019 Accompanying the document*

*COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK AND THE EUROGROUP* [online]. 2019 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/?uri=SWD:2019:1002:REV1> (hereinafter the “Country Report Czech Republic 2019”).

<sup>14</sup> Country Report Czech Republic 2019, p. 29

<sup>15</sup> MEDIAN for Caritas Czech Republic and the Roman Catholic Church. *Youth poverty in the Czech Republic* [online]. Median, 2018 [qtd. 13 June 2018]. Available at: <https://www.charita.cz/res/archive/024/002731.pdf?seek=1531400009>

<sup>16</sup> Median’s research works with the at-risk-of-poverty rate based on household income, material deprivation and the share of households in which no member has a job.



**This implies four forms of housing exclusion:**

- roofless,
- houseless,
- uncertain,
- Inadequate housing.

**Table ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in the environment of the Czech Republic**

Conceptual category	Operational category	Form of housing	Generic definition (type)	National sub-category	*
<b>ROOFLESS</b>	1 Persons living outdoors	1.1 Public space or external space (in the street)	Persons living in the streets or publicly accessible spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters	1.1.1 Persons sleeping rough (e.g. in the streets, under a bridge, train stations, airports, public transport means, sewers, caves, abandoned railway cars, tents, garages, laundry rooms, cellars and attics of buildings, car wrecks)	b
	2 People in emergency accommodation	2.1 Night shelter	People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter	2.1.1 Persons in low threshold shelter	b
				2.1.2 Persons seasonally using facilities without beds for overnight shelter	b
<b>HOUSELESS</b>	3 Persons in accommodation facilities for the homeless	3.1 Homeless hostel	Persons in hostels with short-term accommodation	3.1.1 Men in homeless hostel 3.1.2 Women in homeless hostel 3.1.3 Mothers with children in homeless hostel 3.1.4 Fathers with children in homeless hostel 3.1.5 Two-parent families in homeless hostel 3.1.6 Persons in half-way house	b b b b
		3.2 Temporary accommodation	Persons in short-term public accommodation facilities who do not have their own housing	3.2.1 Persons in public commercial-based accommodation (no other housing possibility) 3.2.2 Persons in shelter after eviction from dwelling	b b
		3.3 Transitional supported accommodation	Homeless persons in transitional accommodation with social support	3.3.1 Housing with care intended explicitly for homeless people does not exist	and
	4 People in women's shelter	4.1 Women's shelter accommodation	Women accommodated, for short term, due to experience of domestic violence	4.1.1 Women at risk of domestic violence, residing at a secret location	and
				4.1.2 Women at risk of domestic violence, residing in homeless hostel	and

	5 People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1 Transitional housing (shelters for asylum seekers)	Immigrants in short-term accommodation due to their immigrant status	5.1.1 Asylum applicants in reception centres	and
		5.2 Accommodation facilities for migrant workers	People in accommodation for migrant workers	5.2.1 Migrant workers – foreigners in public commercial-based accommodation (no other housing possibility)	and
	6 Persons due to be released from institutions	6.1 Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release	6.1.1 Persons due to be released from prison	and
		6.2 Medical institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing	6.2.1 Persons due to be released from a medical institution	and
		6.3 Children's institutions	No housing available	6.3.1 Persons due to be released from a children's institution 6.3.2 Persons due to leave foster care	and and
	7 People receiving longer term support	7.1 Residential care for older homeless people	Seniors and disabled persons with long-stay accommodation in homeless hostels	7.1.1 Senior-aged men and women or persons with disabilities with long-stay accommodation in a homeless hostel	b
		7.2 Supported housing for formerly homeless people	Long-stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people	7.2.1 Housing with care intended explicitly for homeless people does not exist	and
	8 People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 Temporary living with family or friends	Temporary living with family or friends	8.1.1 Persons temporarily living with family or friends (no other housing possibility) 8.1.2 Persons in subtenancy (no other housing possibility)	and and
		8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy	Housing without a legal title, illegal seizure of a building	8.2.1 Persons living in a dwelling with no legal right 8.2.2 Persons in an illegally occupied building	and b
		8.3 Illegal occupation of land	Illegal occupation of land	8.3.1 Persons living on illegally occupied land (allotment gardens, underground shelter)	b
<b>INSECURE HOUSING</b>	9 People living under threat of eviction	9.1 Notice to leave the rental dwelling	Notice to leave the rental dwelling	9.1.1 Persons who received a notice to leave the rental dwelling	and
		9.2 Loss of title to the dwelling	Loss of title to the dwelling	9.2.2 Persons at risk of being evicted from own dwelling	and
	10 People living under threat of domestic violence	10.1 Police-recorded domestic violence	Cases where police action was taken to ensure safety of victims of domestic violence	10.1.1 Persons living under threat of domestic violence – police recorded incidents – victims	and

<b>INADEQUATE HOUSING</b>	11 People living in makeshift and unusual buildings	11.1 Mobile homes	Mobile homes not intended as place of usual residence	11.1.1 Persons living in mobile homes, such as trailer, camper, houseboat (no other housing possibility)	and
		11.2 Non-conventional building	Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty	11.2.1 Persons living in a building not intended for residence, e.g. persons living at their workplace, in garden cottages with the owner's consent	and
		11.3 Temporary structure	Temporary structure	11.3.1 Persons living in temporary structures or in buildings without a final completion certificate, for instance	and
	12 People living in unfit housing	12.1 Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation	Living in premises defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation	12.1.1 Persons living in unfit premises – dwelling has become unfit for habitation (could have previously been fit for habitation)	and
	13 Persons living in overcrowded dwellings	13.1 The highest national standard defining overpopulation	Defined as exceeding the highest density standard for floor space or number of rooms	13.1.1 Persons living in overcrowded dwellings	and

\* Abbreviations used in the last column – Degree of threat: a – vulnerable persons, b – homeless persons

The Roma represent another of the high-risk groups. According to a survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, up to 58% of Roma in the Czech Republic in 2016 were at risk of income poverty. Compared to the income poverty rate of the general population in 2016 (9.7%), Roma were exposed to the risk of poverty six times more often.<sup>17</sup> The highest share of Roma at risk of poverty was in the areas where, according to the respondents, “all” or “most” residents were of Roma origin.<sup>18</sup> This finding confirms the situation in socially excluded localities, of which approximately 80% are formed by the Roma.

According to the same research from 2016, it was found that as many as 87% of Roma have some difficulty “making ends meet” and 31% experience serious difficulties.

The poverty and social exclusion of the Roma are associated with possible disadvantages in the areas of education, employment, health or housing; access to these areas is significantly affected by discrimination.

Regarding the education of pupils with mild mental disabilities, it is necessary to recall the fact that from 1 September 2020 no more education will take place according to the Annex to the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education regulating the education of pupils with mild mental disabilities (hereinafter the “FEP PE MMD”).

<sup>17</sup> The research has a different methodology than the EU-SILC data, but is mentioned for basic orientation on the issue.

<sup>18</sup> EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA). *Second survey on minorities and discrimination in the European Union. Roma – selected results* [online]. 2016 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings\\_cs.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_cs.pdf), pp. 14–15.

Although the number of Roma pupils studying in accordance with the adjusted outputs of the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education (hereinafter the “FEP PE AO”) is growing, the representation of Roma pupils in the student population is also growing at a higher rate. In the case of adjustment of outputs, it is a support measure providing differentiated educational support precisely according to the individually differentiated needs of all pupils with special educational needs, regardless of their ethnic or social origin. While the abolished FEP PE MMD set the same reduced level for all pupils with mild mental disabilities in all educational areas without differentiating the needs of individual pupils, the FEP PE AO allows pupils with mild mental disabilities to use adjusted outcomes, based on the recommendation of a school counselling facility, only in those areas where it is necessary for the student. Education according to the FEP PE AO ensures the individualisation of education according to the needs of the pupil so that everyone has a chance to excel and experience success. In the school year 2018/2019, a total of 4 403 Roma pupils were educated in programmes for pupils with MMD (FEP PE MMD and FEP AO), which makes up 29.1% of all pupils educated according to these FEP PE. Compared to previous school years (2016/2017 – 30.90%, 2017/2018 – 29.50%), the share of Roma pupils out of all pupils educated according to programmes for pupils with MMD decreased minimally. The almost 30% share of Roma pupils in programmes for pupils with MMD is thus in stark contrast to the 3.7% representation of Roma pupils in primary education. On the one hand, there is a decrease in the share of Roma children who are educated according to the FEP PE MMD (2016/2017 – 8%, 2017/2018 – 5.6%, 2018/2019 – 2.7%); on the other hand, the share of Roma children educated according to the FEP PE AO is growing (2016/2017 – 5.1%, 2017/2018 – 7.1%, 2018/2019 – 9.9%).<sup>19</sup>

According to a 2017 analysis, around 37% of children in the Czech Republic live in households that suffer from housing deficiencies, such as insufficient heating, humidity and leaks, lack of space, noise, dirt or vandalism in the area<sup>20</sup>. The poverty rate (of the total number of people in the relevant age group) stood at 8.0% for persons aged 18–64, 11.2% for persons aged 18–24, 10.7% for persons aged over 65 and 11.6% for children under 17 years.

In the families of pupils from socially excluded families or from excluded localities, children often lack sufficient support for their studies; model behaviour and motivation to obtain a formal education are also lacking. Ideas about study demands and the benefits of employment are unrealistic, while the school is often perceived as a hostile environment. Concerns about mistrust and racism (anti-Gypsyism) lead to pupils leaving education before completing their primary education.

Compared to other EU Member States, the number of early school leavers is steadily growing in the Czech Republic,<sup>21</sup> which contributes significantly to the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion as well as to negative effects on public budgets. In terms of educational attainment levels, the risk of poverty in 2019 is higher in for people with low educational attainment levels (38.7%) and lower for people with middle (9.5%) and high educational attainment levels (2.8%). The connection to the parents’ education is clear: 38% of young people whose parents do not hold a secondary school certificate (final examination –

<sup>19</sup> Report from the survey of qualified estimates of the number of Roma pupils in primary schools in the school year 2018/19.

<sup>20</sup> *Analysis of the Impacts of Insufficient Housing on School-related and Other Problems of Children in the Czech Republic* [online]. 2017 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Analzy/Dopady\\_nevyhovujiciho\\_bydleni\\_na\\_deti.pdf](http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Analzy/Dopady_nevyhovujiciho_bydleni_na_deti.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> MATOUŠEK, Roman. *Financial Implications of Early School Leaving for the State and individuals* [online]. Social Inclusion Department (Agency) of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2018 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/dokument/financni\\_dopady\\_predcasnych\\_odchodu-pdf/](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/dokument/financni_dopady_predcasnych_odchodu-pdf/)

matura) are at risk of poverty. Due to the positive impact of education on income, the probability of income poverty decreases with the level of education. Thus, households whose head (or their partner) has not completed full secondary education are most vulnerable to income poverty.<sup>22</sup> The Roma have a significantly lower level of educational attainment compared to the rest of the population. As the Country Report Czech Republic states, “the rate of early school leaving is below the EU average, but it has been growing since 2010. In 2017, it reached 6.7%, thus exceeding the national target for 2020 of 5.5%. Large regional differences and a high proportion of early school leavers among Roma pupils (57% of Roma families participating in research in 2016) call for more in-depth analysis and targeted measures.”<sup>23</sup> This trend goes against the steadily declining EU average. The most affected schools have less qualified teachers and high staff turnover rate. In 2018, a study by A. Bičáková and K. Kalíšková showed that young people who drop out of school are attracted by the current easy access to paid employment. However, they often end up in low-paid, low-quality and short-term jobs, increasing the number of low-skilled unemployed persons. There are ongoing discussions about incentives to bring young people back to education, as well as about preventive measures and second chance education.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite the Government’s efforts to prevent the debt business, almost a tenth of all Czechs over the age of 15 face some form of executions. In some peripheries and structurally disadvantaged municipalities and small towns, a high (one-third and higher) share of people subject to executions is a major barrier to the functioning of the local economy, the maintenance and development of services or the business environment. Neither employment nor rising wages solve the situation, as debtors pay mainly for interest, sanctions and recovery costs, often without the prospect of ever being able to repay their debts. This has a negative effect, especially in the areas of housing, legal employment, crime, health and education. The problem of over-indebtedness is also made even more complicated by high recovery costs, especially when debtors have no assets.

Another vulnerable group to which specific attention should be paid within the framework of social inclusion policy is minor children, especially groups of at-risk children within the meaning of Section 6 of Act No 359/1999, on the social and legal protection of children, as amended (hereinafter the “Act on SLPC”). The results of the research studies showed a direct link between the level of social exclusion and the poverty of families and level of risk to children in the Czech Republic. This connection is also manifested geographically, where the level of risk to children is unevenly distributed across the Czech Republic. Areas with a high level of risk to children overlap with areas where there is a higher number of socially excluded localities.<sup>25</sup> The situation of socially excluded families with children is characterised by a number of interconnected social problems (poverty, material deprivation, housing deprivation, over-indebtedness,

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<sup>22</sup> SIROVÁTKA, Tomáš, ŠIMÍKOVÁ, Ivana, JAHODA, Robert, GODAROVÁ, Jana. *Poverty, Material Deprivation and Social Exclusion in the Czech Republic with an Emphasis on Children and Households Raising Children* [online]. RILSA, v.v.i., Prague, 2015 [qtd. 03/12/2019]. Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_390.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_390.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> See Country Report Czech Republic 2019, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016

<sup>24</sup> BIČÁKOVÁ, Alena, KALÍŠKOVÁ, Klára. *Occurrence and Incidence of Unemployment in Women with Pre-school Children: The Case of the Czech Republic [Incidence and emergence of unemployment among women with preschool children: The Case of the Czech Republic]*. 2016. “Occurrence and Incidence of Unemployment in Women with Pre-school Children: the Case of the Czech Republic.” *Politická ekonomie* 64(6): 695-712.

<sup>25</sup> SOCIOFACTOR s.r.o. for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. *Socio-demographic analysis – Maps of the distribution of threats to children and families in the Czech Republic* [online]. 2013 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/15675/SOCDEM\\_ANALYZA\\_OHROZENE\\_DET1.pdf](https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/15675/SOCDEM_ANALYZA_OHROZENE_DET1.pdf) and further *Proposal of optimisation of management of the system of child protection and care for children at risk* [online]. 2015 [qtd. 2 September 2019]. Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/21721/optimalizace\\_rizeni.pdf](https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/21721/optimalizace_rizeni.pdf)

etc.), which generally destabilise the situation in the family. Due to limited access to resources, parents find themselves in a difficult situation, where it is hard for them to fulfil their obligations arising from parental responsibility, which significantly increases the risk of putting the children at risk. The unfavourable social situation, which families cannot cope with on their own due to its complexity, may result in State intervention into the family's autonomy in the form of the public protection of children provided by bodies for the social and legal protection of children (hereinafter the "ASLPC"). The absence of timely assistance to the family in the form of preventive services, a network for which is not evenly developed in the Czech Republic, may result in the removal of the child from the care of their biological parents and their placement in foster care, provided either as institutional care in residential facilities or foster care (hereinafter "FC"). One of the characteristic features of the care system for at-risk children is the high number of removed children who grow up in alternative care, the purpose of which, however, is only to address the consequences of family failure, not to prevent that failure.

The number of single-parent families with dependent children is also growing, among which families with one child make up 70%, i.e. a significantly larger share than in two-parent families.<sup>26</sup> According to statistics, approximately 404 thousand children are growing up single-parent families.<sup>27</sup> In 2013, more than 13% of children under the age of 15 lived in a single-parent household. According to a CZSO study from 2015, every seventh household with children is run by only one of the parents. This is up to 165 thousand households, with 90% of these households being run by a woman – a single mother.<sup>28</sup> In 2018, a total of 30.1% of single-parent families were at risk of poverty, compared to 8.5% of families with two adults and one child and 5.8% of families with two adults and two children. The most important sources of income for single-parent families are earned income (63.8%), followed by social income (15.4%) and maintenance (14.6%), which is received by approximately 70% of single parents.<sup>29</sup> This is also related to the frequent non-payment of child maintenance. According to police statistics, neglect of compulsory maintenance is one of the most common criminal offences in the Czech Republic.<sup>30</sup>

The MoLSA has prepared a draft Act on advance maintenance for a dependent child, amending some related acts (the Advance Maintenance Act), which is being submitted on the basis of the Government's Programme Statement and aims to address the situation of those families with children who end up in an unfavourable social and financial situation due to the non-payment of compulsory maintenance. The advance maintenance will be provided within the framework of social non-insurance benefits and will be directly connected to the institution of maintenance as such and to the right of the entitled person to receive this maintenance from the obligated person. The draft Act was submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic for discussion in September 2019.

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<sup>26</sup> MoLSA, Updated National Family Policy Concept, May 2019, Available at: <https://socialnipolitika.eu/2019/09/aktualizovana-koncepce-rodinne-politiky-29-kvetna-2019/>.

<sup>27</sup> CZSO. *Population and Housing Census 2011* [online]. 2011 [qtd. 14 March 2017]. Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n\\_2013-030102](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n_2013-030102)

<sup>28</sup> CZSO. *Single mothers: How do they live and what do they spend their money for in our country and in Europe?* 2015 [online]. CZSO, 2015 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/26828110/csav022715.pdf/05b02590-6371-4a9b-a49b-eab44bea757f?version=1.0>

<sup>29</sup> DUDOVÁ, Radka. *The position of single parents in the Czech Republic*. Prague, 2016 [online]. Alternativa 50+, Prague, 2016 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. ISBN 978-80-88155-00-3. Available at:

[http://alternativaplus.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Postaveni\\_solo\\_rodicul\\_vCR\\_eVerze.pdf](http://alternativaplus.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Postaveni_solo_rodicul_vCR_eVerze.pdf); KUCHAŘOVÁ et al. *Family Report*, RILSA, v. v. i., Prague, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> *Crime statistical summaries for 2020*. [online] Police of the Czech Republic, 2021 [qtd. 25 October 2021]. Available at: <https://www.policie.cz/clanek/statisticke-prehledy-kriminality-za-rok-2020.aspx>

From the point of view of poverty and social exclusion, young adults who leave alternative care after reaching the legal age or full legal capacity are also in a very vulnerable situation. This is mainly due to their insufficient material security and low chances of a more significant improvement in their income situation, especially in the situation of young dependent adult students who are preparing for their future employment. A serious obstacle for young adults leaving alternative care when entering independent life is the unavailability of affordable housing and at the same time the unavailability of suitable services offering them support in the form of social work, counselling or mentoring. When young adults leave alternative care, it almost always means a significant social decline for them.

When defining the part of the population which is at higher than average risk, the following groups must be taken into account: people with disabilities and mental health problems, single parents, the elderly, people with a criminal record, people suffering from any form of addiction and, for example, the LGBTIQ+ minority. Foreigners in the Czech Republic may also be at greater risk of social exclusion, and this affects both third-country nationals as well as EU citizens with different statuses (temporary stay, permanent residence, asylum seekers). In some regions, the number of citizens from Slovakia is increasing, including the Roma, who live in unsatisfactory conditions and are a source of income for the poverty industry. Other minority groups of the population are also at risk, both in terms of belonging to a certain religious, national or, for example, ethnic minority, as well as residents for whom a certain affiliation to one of the minorities is presumed even without self-declaration or self-affiliation. These groups are at increased risk of discrimination or stereotyping by society, and therefore the risk of problematic access to areas such as housing, education, health care and others, which will be further defined in this Strategy. Another risk factor is often present if these people belong to other socially excluded or disadvantaged groups, such as the elderly, the homeless or people in institutional care or leaving care, people who are HIV-positive and people who are addicted to drugs. The discriminatory attributes of these people increases their vulnerability even within these groups, where they can also be victims of multiple or intersecting discrimination, violence or persecution.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the measures applied to assist these groups must take account of the specific situation of persons with discriminatory attributes.<sup>32</sup> In its chapters, the Strategy focuses on individual thematic areas, in which it seeks to define the basic shortcomings on the basis of which the risks and the objectives necessary to achieve change for the better are defined.

The chapters often impact several of the mentioned groups of the population: the most severely affected groups of the population are always mentioned in the individual chapters, but the threat concerns, although sometimes marginally, most of them.

One of the areas that significantly enhances the development of the number of socially excluded persons is access to housing and the availability of housing. In the Strategy, the issue of housing for the Czech Republic is described in detail in Chapter 4.6 Access to housing; however, it should be mentioned that insufficient or too complicated access to housing is one of the basic causes of social exclusion. In contrast,

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<sup>31</sup> See e.g. *Analysis of the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender minorities in the Czech Republic* [online]. Office of the Government, 2007 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rfp/vybory/sexualnimensiny/CZ\\_analyza\\_web.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rfp/vybory/sexualnimensiny/CZ_analyza_web.pdf), p. 51

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. *Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2020* [online]. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Prague, 2014 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225517/bezdomovectvi.pdf/c7a1e576-778f-a221-78ed-436f101ba42c>, p. 18

according to the Strategy, as well as according to other conceptual materials, prevention is one of the main principles of solving social exclusion, and it is an absolute necessity in the area of exclusion from housing.

For certain groups of the population of the Czech Republic, the availability of standard housing is a fundamental and unresolved problem. The overall situation in the housing market also contributes to the seriousness of housing problems and the difficulty of solving them. The Country Report Czech Republic 2019 mentions in particular the rapid growth rate of housing prices and their overvaluation, declining affordability of housing and the risks associated with an increase in the number and volume of mortgage loans. The unavailability of housing has become a society-wide problem, which has an impact not only on public resources and labour and the social affairs sector (e.g. social benefits, social services and social work), but also on other sectors, and primarily on Czech citizens and families. One of the key objectives of the Strategy is to increase the availability of housing for people at risk of exclusion from housing or after loss of housing.

For certain groups of the population of the Czech Republic, the availability of standard housing represents a fundamental and unresolved problem that has been clearly identified as significant, for example, specifically for the Roma minority. In socially excluded localities, where a significant number of Roma live,<sup>33</sup> the quality of housing in the Czech Republic is significantly low, while disproportionately high rents for this housing are often subsidised by the State budget through housing benefits, as the current housing market is closed to this group of inhabitants or is significantly limited for them.<sup>34</sup> The estimate of the total number of homeless persons (outdoors and in night shelters) and persons from selected categories without housing<sup>35</sup> according to the ETHOS international typology on the territory of the Czech Republic is 23 830. Of these, 2 600 are under the age of 18.<sup>36</sup> The total qualified estimate of homeless people in the Czech Republic in 2015 was almost 68.5 thousand.<sup>37</sup> The overall situation on the housing market also contributes to the seriousness of housing problems and the difficulty of solving them. The Country Report Czech Republic mentions in particular the rapid growth rate of housing prices and their overvaluation, the declining affordability of housing and the risks associated with an increase in the number and volume of mortgage loans.

The Housing Exclusion Report 2021 (hereinafter the “Report”) states that between 35 000 and 62 000 households are in housing deprivation and that between 20 000 and 51 000 children under the age of 18 are growing up in such households. Another 130 000 to 190 000 households with approximately 100 000 children are at risk of losing their housing. A further approximately 300 000 to 350 000 households, of

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<sup>33</sup> Although there are still areas where Roma make up the majority of the population, there is an increasing number (around 25%) where the non-Roma population also lives in a socially excluded environment.

<sup>34</sup> See ČADA, Karel. *Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic* [online]. GAC, 2015. [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at [https://www.esfcr.cz/mapa-svl-2015/www/analiza\\_socialne\\_vyloucenych\\_lokalit\\_gac.pdf](https://www.esfcr.cz/mapa-svl-2015/www/analiza_socialne_vyloucenych_lokalit_gac.pdf) Hereinafter the „Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic”.

<sup>35</sup> In the category of persons without housing, only persons in homeless hostels, halfway houses, accommodation facilities for women, municipal accommodation facilities, prisons and health care facilities were counted.

<sup>36</sup> Census of Homeless People in the Czech Republic 2019: The roofless category and selected categories of persons without housing according to the ETHOS typology. Olga NEŠPOROVÁ, Petr HOLPUCH, Kristýna JANUROVÁ, Věra KUCHAROVÁ - Praha: RILSA, 2019. The numbers are as of the second week of April 2019 and they are based on an area census and extrapolation of the results. Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_478.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_478.pdf), p. 7

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225517/Vyhodnoceni\\_pruzkumu\\_reseni\\_bezdomovectvi\\_v\\_obcich\\_s\\_rozsireno\\_u\\_pusobnosti.pdf/4ce1887e-1ae4-3878-de5c-8b86db69687f](https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225517/Vyhodnoceni_pruzkumu_reseni_bezdomovectvi_v_obcich_s_rozsireno_u_pusobnosti.pdf/4ce1887e-1ae4-3878-de5c-8b86db69687f)



which one third are households of senior-age persons, suffer from excessive housing costs (spending more than 40% of their income on housing). According to the Report, approximately half a million Czech households with just under one million people face one of the three housing problems mentioned above. Households in housing deprivation are mostly located in the largest cities of the Czech Republic, i.e. Prague, Brno and Ostrava. It was also confirmed that North Bohemia and North Moravia are more affected by housing deprivation as regions with a higher proportion of inhabitants in difficult social circumstances.<sup>38</sup> The Report described the housing situation of senior-age citizens as particularly alarming. As of 2021, at least 5 500 seniors aged 65 and over who lived in 4 700 households were facing housing deprivation. For example, households of senior-age persons represent up to one fifth of all households staying in long-term accommodation facilities.<sup>39</sup> Up to 20 000 elderly households are at risk of losing their housing.<sup>40</sup>

The highest number of homeless persons lives in the Moravian-Silesian Region (3 540 persons), followed by Prague (3 250 persons) and the South Moravian Region (2 450 persons). The lowest numbers were recorded in the South Bohemia Region (774 persons), the Liberec Region (803 persons) and the Hradec Králové Region (888 persons).<sup>41</sup>

Between 13 000 and 18 000 people live in accommodation facilities in 8 000 to 11 000 households; approximately 5 700 people live in homeless hostels in approximately 3 200 households; approximately 5 000 to 7 600 people live in selected institutions<sup>42</sup> and are in housing deprivation; and between 11 000 and 17 000 people are homeless.<sup>43</sup>

Municipalities in Prague (9.8 thousand households),<sup>44</sup> Ostrava (4.2 thousand), Brno (2 thousand), Olomouc (1 thousand) and Ústí nad Labem (1.1 thousand)<sup>45</sup> were identified as particularly at risk (with a high number of homeless people). In terms of breakdown by form of housing, it is clear that the risk of poverty is higher for persons in rented apartments (20.9%) with the highest cost of living, compared to home owners (6.7%).

The level of social exclusion, consisting mainly of spatial, social and economic isolation, despite partial interventions by the government and self-governments, has been growing for a long time; its form and manifestations change over time. The policies and measures used so far in the Czech Republic are not able to ensure equal opportunities for all children, including those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Social exclusion and poverty show a high rate of intergenerational transmission – children from poor families are likely to be poor as well.

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<sup>38</sup> Housing as a Problem – Housing Exclusion Report 2021, [online]. 2021 [qtd. 19 October 2021]. Available at <http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Ostatni/Bydleni-jako-problem-2021.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> NEŠPOROVÁ, O., HOLPUCH, P. Population of homeless persons in the Czech Republic – persons sleeping outside, in night shelters, in homeless hostels and in municipal accommodation facilities, Prague: RILSA, 2019. Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_478.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_478.pdf), p. 30

<sup>40</sup> Housing Exclusion Report 2021, p. 21

<sup>41</sup> NEŠPOROVÁ, O., HOLPUCH, P. Population of homeless persons in the Czech Republic – persons sleeping outside, in night shelters, in homeless hostels and in municipal accommodation facilities, Prague: RILSA, 2019. Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_478.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_478.pdf), pp. 40 -47

<sup>42</sup> Prisons, health care facilities and homes for persons with disabilities.

<sup>43</sup> Housing Exclusion Report 2021, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Rounded to one decimal place – see also below.

<sup>45</sup> Housing Exclusion Report 2021.

## Territorial dimensions of social exclusion

The number of socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion, as well as the severity of their situation in terms of the accumulation of various forms of disadvantage, is significantly differentiated at different orders of magnitude.<sup>46</sup> Although, according to a number of indicators, the level of threat of social exclusion has decreased, for example, after 2015, the spatial differentiation of social exclusion persists or is becoming even more prominent.

According to EU-SILC, the regions with the highest unemployment show the highest level of risk of income poverty or social exclusion –20.5% in the Ústí nad Labem Region and 16.3% in the Moravian-Silesian Region; the most favourable situation is in the South Bohemian Region (8.5%) and the capital City of Prague (8.5%).

In 2019, the differences are even more pronounced in the share of persons facing execution, where the highest values are reported by the Ústí nad Labem Region (16.79%) and the Karlovy Vary Region (16.53%), followed by the Liberec Region (10.56%). On the other hand, the Zlín (5.33%) and Vysočina (5.09%) regions report about three times smaller share of persons facing execution.

**Table 2: Share of persons facing execution – by region**

Region	Percentage of persons facing execution	
	2018	2019
South Bohemian Region	8.53	7.82
South Moravian Region	7.41	6.67
Karlovy Vary Region	16.85	16.53
Hradec Králové Region	7.59	7.43
Liberec Region	11.05	10.56
Moravian-Silesian Region	10.31	10.16
Olomouc Region	7.79	7.65
Pardubice Region	6.87	6.53
Pilsen Region	9.55	9.02
Prague	8.07	7.40
Central Bohemia Region	8.30	7.56
Ústí nad Labem Region	17.56	16.79
Vysočina	5.9	5.09
Zlín Region	5.86	5.33

Source: Map of Executions

There has been a significant increase in differentiation in early school leaving, which is an indicator of the intergenerational reproduction of poverty and social exclusion and at the same time indicates a possible future state of the problem. In 2013, all NUTS2 regions in the Czech Republic met the objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy to reduce the rate of early school leaving (this rate indicates the share of people aged 18-24 who did not complete at least lower secondary education, i.e. an apprenticeship). The highest rate of early school leaving was recorded in the Northwest region (9.4%) and the lowest in Prague (3.2%).

<sup>46</sup> Orders of magnitude indicate a significant difference, i.e. a difference in orders of magnitude, not in units.

By 2017, the rate of early school leaving at the national level had increased from 5.4% to 6.7%, the most significant was the increase in the Northwest region, to 15.6% (i.e. almost every sixth inhabitant of the Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary regions successfully completed only primary education). Other regions, including the Moravian-Silesian Region, show values close to the national average. There are also large differences in the share of pupils who complete compulsory schooling in primary school classes without completing primary education (i.e. they leave in the 7th or 8th grade). In 17 districts of the municipality with extended powers (hereinafter the “MEP”) this share is higher than 10% of pupils; in contrast, in 18 districts of MEP this share is lower than 1% of pupils (the national average in the school year 2017/2018 was 4.45%).

Indicators available at the level of districts of municipalities with extended powers and individual municipalities (i.e. the share of persons facing execution and receiving benefits of assistance in material need) show differentiation within individual regions and significant differences between spatially close territorial units. In 2019, the lowest share of persons facing execution in the Czech Republic<sup>47</sup> was in the Luhačovice MEP in the Zlín Region; the districts with the highest share of persons facing execution included the Kraslice MEP in the Karlovy Vary Region. In the Liberec Region, the situation is different, for example, in its northern and southern parts – the areas around Frýdlant and Tanvald in the north are among those with the highest share of people facing execution, while the southern part of the Liberec Region is among the lowest. Within the Olomouc Region, the population around Jesenice is proving to be rather socially vulnerable.

At the lowest order of magnitude, the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion (at least 20 people) is monitored at the level of socially excluded localities, in which more than 100 000 inhabitants lived in 2015. Compared to 2006, the number of such localities increased in all regions, but more than tripled in the Karlovy Vary and Moravian-Silesian regions.<sup>48</sup> Mapping in 2015 identified a total of 606 excluded localities in 297 municipalities. In 2018–2019, the current relevance of the map was verified in municipalities with less than 10 000 inhabitants in cooperation with the Ministry for Regional Development (hereinafter the “MoRD”), the Association of Local Self-Government and the Agency. The verification showed that the vast majority of excluded localities still exist in the same places as before, or in their vicinity.

At the level of socially excluded localities, multiple disadvantages of individuals and households (low education, long-term unemployment, execution) are often intertwined with ethnic discrimination, usually low housing standards, symbolic exclusion from the local context (“bad address”) and sometimes spatial segregation and impaired access to public services. The number of localities that are ethnically and age-heterogeneous is increasing. Although research suggests that Roma still make up about 80% of the population of excluded localities, the proportion of poor people with low education and a minimal chance to find a legal job, regardless of their ethnicity, is constantly growing.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The latest data as of the date of elaboration of the Strategy were published by: *Map of Execution after delivery of information from the Chamber of Bailiffs of the Czech Republic* [online]. [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <http://mapaexekuci.cz/index.php/mapa-2/>

<sup>48</sup> *Map of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic* [online]. GAC. Prague: 2015 [qtd. 3 December 2019]. Available at: <https://www.esfcr.cz/mapa-svl-2015/www/index.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic.

Nevertheless, poverty affects the Roma to a much greater extent than would be proportional to their representation in the general population.<sup>50</sup> Discrimination (especially) of the Roma and the aversion of a large part of the population towards them lead to the spatial segregation of people into less attractive neighbourhoods and areas, which further strengthens the stigma and mutual alienation and reduces social cohesion. At the same time, the willingness or reluctance of local self-governments to seek and implement long-term solutions to social exclusion in the municipality play a major role here.<sup>51</sup>

A large proportion of households facing housing deprivation live in a small number of territorial districts of municipalities with extended powers. According to a survey conducted by the Platform for Social Housing and the Lumos organisation, half of all households facing housing deprivation in the Czech Republic live in only 14 MEPs. On the other hand, the territory of 110 MEPs (more than half of the Czech Republic) is little affected by housing deprivation, as only 10% of all households in housing deprivation in the Czech Republic live here together; therefore, severe housing deprivation tends to be concentrated in a limited area and does not affect the entire Czech Republic evenly.<sup>52</sup> In Prague and other large cities, the affordability of housing is becoming a problem for wider population groups,<sup>53</sup> which poses a long-term risk of worsening housing deprivation, poverty and social exclusion.

Structurally disadvantaged regions are characterised by a low rate of economic growth and lagging behind other regions of the Czech Republic. However, the manifestations of economic lag differ in each of these regions, with the strongest macroeconomic effects in the Karlovy Vary Region.

Part of the economic problem is the low attractiveness of some regions in terms of the life situation of the population, a smaller offer of promising job and career prospects not only for young and qualified professionals (having a negative effect on the region's residents and outside the region) and worse conditions and low attractiveness for business. At the same time, their influence and manifestations are even stronger in the peripheral areas of the regions.<sup>54</sup>

Due to weak economic performance and the predominance of economic activities with lower added value, the wage level in structurally affected regions is below average. According to official statistics, this is most evident in the Karlovy Vary Region, where the cause is a large share of the services sector in employment and most likely the resulting higher share of the grey economy.

In addition to low wages, these regions are characterised by high unemployment, a rapidly ageing population and an increase in the number of people of retirement age, but also by selective migration, where groups of socially weak households move to the Ústí nad Labem Region due to lower real estate prices.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> According to estimates, the share of Roma in the general population of the Czech Republic is 2.2% (OG CR – Report on the Situation of the Roma Minority 2017).

<sup>51</sup> In 2019, Roma people invoked a feeling of antipathy in 72% of respondents. Source: Public Opinion Research Centre Institute of Sociology Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v.v.i., 2019. Our Society. The Relationship of the Czech Public to Ethnic Groups Living in the Czech Republic – March 2019. [qtd. 23 June 2019]. Available at: [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c2/a4905/f9/ov190415.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a4905/f9/ov190415.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Housing Exclusion Report 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Country Report Czech Republic 2019.

<sup>54</sup> *Initial analysis of the Strategic Framework for Economic Restructuring of the Ústí nad Labem, Moravian-Silesian and Karlovy Vary Regions*, 2016. Available at: [https://restartregionu.cz/content/uploads/2016/10/39509\\_ma\\_ST-RES\\_priloha1.pdf](https://restartregionu.cz/content/uploads/2016/10/39509_ma_ST-RES_priloha1.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

The situation in the structurally disadvantaged regions allows the poverty industry to thrive, which is reflected in high rents for extremely low-quality housing. The long-term absence of proper maintenance of houses and flats, the current setting of housing allowance benefits, the long-term irresponsible approach of a significant proportion of landlords and highly non-transparent and/or dysfunctional housing management lead to some associations of unit owners, cooperatives and owners falling into the debt trap. In this context, it is necessary to mention the phenomenon of buying cheap dilapidated real estate in smaller municipalities with insufficient infrastructure which are leased by real estate agencies and individuals to large families with children, especially Roma.

There is a negative trend of slight decrease in educational attainment of the population of socially excluded localities, where the share of persons with secondary and higher education in the generation over 60 reached a higher value (41.7%) than in the generation of 20-29 years (33.3%).<sup>56</sup> In the context of the ongoing massification of higher education in society, this is a significant increase in social and spatial inequalities with the risk of their long-term reproduction and serious financial impact.<sup>57</sup>

### **Evaluation of the impacts of social transfers in the Czech Republic**

Compared to other Member States, the effectiveness of social transfers is assessed as above average.<sup>58</sup> The causes of declines in the payment of social transfers may also be caused by other factors, such as the sanction exclusion from the register of job seekers by the regional branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (hereinafter the “LO CR”). It is possible to observe sanction exclusions from the LO taking place, especially of the long-term unemployed. In these cases, the LO acts in accordance with the law and the client is responsible for non-compliance with legal obligations. However, it is clear that on a practical level, sanction exclusions will result in a more complex social and housing situation for the excluded persons. The reason for the decrease in benefits paid is that unemployed persons are no longer eligible to receive them. Sanction exclusion from the LO’s records can be observed more in certain periods, especially autumn and summer.

Nationwide, between 2016 and 2020, the number of paid housing allowances decreased by 29.6%, living allowances by 51.1% and housing supplements by 48.9%. The informative value of these numbers has its limits, because the rising wages, pensions and some other benefits make it is much easier to exceed the subsistence threshold, which did not change from 2012 to 1 April 2020, i.e. it is about 13% lower in real terms due to inflation, which could partly explain the much slower rate of decline in housing allowances, where the decisive limit – the normative housing costs – is valorised every year.

Act No 98/2017<sup>59</sup>, inter alia, inserted into Act No 111/2006, on assistance in material need, as amended (hereinafter also the “Act on Assistance in Material Need”), the provisions of Section 33d with effect from 1 June 2017. Under this provision, a municipality in whose territory there are places where socially

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<sup>56</sup> TOUŠEK, Laco et al. *Socially excluded localities from the point of view of socio-demographic indicators*. 2018, Demography [online]. 60(1), pp. 21–35. [qtd. 4 December 2019]. Available at:

<https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/61449042/tousek.pdf/33fe0341-4e3c-4bd1-911e-731f04d7be08?version=1.0>

<sup>57</sup> MATOUŠEK, Roman. *Financial Implications of Early School Leaving for the State and individuals* [online]. 2018 [qtd. 4 December 2019]. Available at: [https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/dokument/financni\\_dopady\\_predcasnych\\_odchodu-pdf/](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/dokument/financni_dopady_predcasnych_odchodu-pdf/)

<sup>58</sup> Country Report Czech Republic 2019

<sup>59</sup> Act No 98/2017, amending Act No 111/2006, on assistance in material need, as amended, and Act No 117/1995, on state social support, as amended.

undesirable phenomena occur to an increased extent may request the municipal authority with delegated powers in whose territorial district these places are located to issue measures of a general nature (hereinafter the “MGN”), which declares an area with an increased incidence of socially undesirable phenomena for which no housing supplement benefit is paid. In June 2019, there were 67 effective MGNs, while a total of 283 social housing supplement benefits were withdrawn (rejected) from the effective date of the amendment until June 2019; at the same time, some applicants did not even apply for MGN.

### **Work intensity**

The “work intensity rate” is an internationally comparable indicator expressed as a share of persons aged under 60 years in households with people of working age (18–59) who worked less than 20% of the working time over the past year.

In connection with the economic crisis in the Czech Republic, the work intensity rate increased by 1.6 percentage points compared to 2009 to its maximum value of 7.6% in 2014, while the increase in the share of men living in this category of households was more pronounced than the increase in the share of women. In connection with the improving situation in the labour market, there was a constant decline of 3 percentage points to 4.2% in 2019. According to Eurostat, the share of persons in the EU living in low-work intensity households was 8.3% in 2019.

In 2019, the share of men living in this category of households was 3.8% and the share of women was 4.7%. Compared to 2014, when the share of men living in this category of households was 6.8% and the share of women 8.4%, there was a more significant decrease in the share of women.

There was a significant decrease in the share of single-parent families by 11.7 percentage points from 2014 to 18.8% in 2019.

Approximately 60.7% of persons living in households with low work intensity are also at risk of income poverty. For this reason, their situation is very similar to that in which people at risk of poverty live. As a result, the share of people in households who cannot afford to pay for an unexpected expense was 21.8% of the population, and 19.7% of the population could not afford a week-long holiday.

The highest share of persons with a work intensity lower than 0.20 is reported by the regions with the highest unemployment – 9.7% in the Ústí nad Labem Region and 5.9% in the Moravian-Silesian Region. On the other hand, the most favourable situation is in the Zlín Region (1.8%), Hradec Králové Region (1.9%), Olomouc Region (2.2%) and Karlovy Vary Region (0.9%). More than half of all unemployed people (52.7%) are at risk of poverty.

The creation of new high-quality jobs is a prerequisite for solving the adverse situation, as well as the interaction between job creation policies and policies aimed at reducing income poverty. This is also consistent with the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is aimed at increasing employment, while reducing the number of people living in poverty and social exclusion.

## Unequal income distribution

The uneven distribution of income in the population can be described, for example, by the S80/20 indicator. This is defined as the ratio of the total income of 20% of the population (of a given country) with the highest income (upper quintile) relative to the total income of 20% of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Income means equivalised disposable income.

The value of this indicator in the Czech Republic has long been one of the lowest in the EU since 2005. In 2016, it was 3.5%, the lowest in the EU (for comparison, the EU-28 average was 5.0%). In 2017, according to the latest comparable Eurostat data, it reached one of the lowest values of 3.4%, i.e. the same value as in 2008, in the last quarter of which the economic and financial crisis began.

In 2018, the S80/20 indicator decreased very slightly year-on-year by 0.1 percentage point to 3.3% (for comparison, the EU-28 average reached 5.1%); the same value was reported in 2019.

**Table 3: Uneven distribution of income in the Czech Republic (S80/S20 indicator)**

Indicator / Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of the population	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.3

Source: Eurostat

In general, a degree of inequality can open space for economic incentives, motivating individuals to achieve better results or stimulating innovation. However, as the European Commission mentions in its own publication on eliminating inequalities, if income inequality or inequality of opportunity is too great, it can jeopardise growth, especially if it is caused by growing poverty at the bottom of the income distribution. The results of this phenomenon are further explained by the European Commission: “Where individuals at the bottom of the income (or wealth) distribution lack the resources to invest in their skills and education, they may be unable to reach their full potential, which is harmful for overall growth. Moreover, income redistribution can also help stimulate demand in the economy, as low-income households tend to spend more. Inequality also undermines social fairness. If the resources of the economy are too unevenly distributed, it may threaten social cohesion and a common sense of belonging.”<sup>60</sup> According to the European Commission, people living in poverty may then face a greater risk of deprivation, homelessness or social exclusion. Given the above, it can be deduced from the long-term economic and social development of economically strong and stable countries that lower income inequality results in higher social inclusion and a better social climate in society as a whole, and often also higher identification of a satisfied workforce with their jobs or companies. This will usually be reflected in higher work performance, higher labour productivity and, ultimately, higher economic growth and stability of the whole economy in the context of employment growth, increasing the knowledge capital of the workforce and greater equality of labour market opportunities for all groups of the population.

<sup>60</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *European Semester Thematic Factsheet. Addressing Inequalities*. [online]. 22 November 2017, p. 2 [qtd. 10 October 2019]. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file\\_import/european-semester\\_thematic-factsheet\\_addressing-inequalities\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_addressing-inequalities_en.pdf)

## **Addressing poverty and social inclusion in the EU**

In line with the need to address poverty and social inclusion at EU level, the European Commission, through the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, has set up the Social Protection Committee (SPC), which has in turn set up the Indicators Subgroup (ISG).

### **Social Protection Committee**

The Social Protection Committee is an EU advisory body with a mandate to:

- Monitor social conditions in the European Union and the development of social protection policies in the Member States;
- Promote policy discussions and coordination between EU governments and the European Commission.

### **Indicators Subgroup of the Social Protection Committee**

The Indicators Subgroup was set up by the Social Protection Committee in 2001 and has the mandate to:

- Develop and define social indicators at EU level to monitor the progress of EU Member States;
- Perform analytical work based on agreed indicators;
- Help improve social statistics at EU level.

The Indicators Subgroup:

- Consists of national experts in the field of social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care from each Member State and from the European Commission;
- Its work is supported by analysts from the European Commission and Eurostat;
- It draws on the expert activities of the academic sector.



## 1.2. Economic development

Economic development in the previous programming period of this Strategy, starting in 2014, was defined by the recovery of the Czech economy. While in 2013 the Czech Republic's gross domestic product at constant prices was still below the level of 2008 (unlike all neighbouring countries), since 2014, the Czech Republic has been one of the eight fastest growing economies in the EU. The foreign trade balance, household consumption and investments contributed to the growth. However, in the case of investments, this was not a stable contribution, as they were significantly affected in 2015 by the high collection of funds from the EU. On the contrary, in 2016, due to, among other things, the higher base effect, there was even a year-on-year decline in fixed capital production. The pace of economic growth in the Czech Republic slowed down after 2017, but it still exceeded the EU average. A key growth factor was strong domestic household demand in 2018 and early 2019.

Another significant feature of the Czech economy since 2014 was the declining unemployment, where the Czech Republic even reached the lowest unemployment rate in the EU. In April 2018, the number of vacancies registered at the LO CR exceeded the number of job seekers. This fact affected wage growth in the Czech Republic, which has increased its positive dynamic since 2014. The fact that wages also increased for low-income employees was also positive.

The income of social households – the second most important component of total household income – was 12.3% higher in 2018 than in 2014. During this period, pension insurance benefits, sickness insurance benefits and care allowances increased in particular. On the other hand, unemployment benefits and benefits in material need fell sharply. While in 2014 social income (including pension insurance benefits) corresponded to 11.0% of GDP, in 2018 it was only 10.1% of GDP. Therefore, the intensity of the social system in the Czech Republic has decreased.

In connection with economic growth, the willingness of Czech households to borrow money has increased. These were mainly housing loans, which increased their share in the total volume of bank loans from around 72% to around 75%. This was due to a shortfall in demand for real estate in 2009–2013 (investment deferral effect) and also to efforts to acquire real estate at a time when the central bank was applying a stimulus monetary policy and mortgage rates were low (frontloading effect). However, the situation on the bank loan market is stable, with non-bank loans in particular being a risk. Since 2014, thanks to growing incomes, the growth rate of the total volume of household savings has also increased significantly.

### 1.3. Demographic situation

The current demographic situation in the Czech Republic is similar to the situation in most European countries – the overall ageing of the population is gradually taking place, i.e. the share of older age groups in the total age structure is growing. The main reasons are the shift of the population's strong post-war years to retirement age, the increase in life expectancy and the decline in the birth rate. The structure of Czech households reflects the above demographics. In the long term, household size has decreased. A typical household is now smaller with a lower number of children or without children, while multigenerational housing is not so common. 2011 was the peak year of the wave of population and housing censuses in the world, this year the census took place in 73 countries.<sup>61</sup>, <sup>62</sup> The results of the Population and Housing Census in the Czech Republic showed that the most common households in the Czech Republic are households of individuals (32.5% of all households) and completed families without dependent children (28.3%). Since the population and housing census is held every ten years, both in the Czech Republic and abroad, the next census in the Czech Republic will take place on 27 March 2021 and its results will be known at the turn of 2021/2022. According to the Czech Statistical Office's demographic statistics, the population of the Czech Republic as of 30 June 2019 was 10 669 324 inhabitants and it rose to 10 702 942 by the same date in 2021<sup>63</sup>. In 2020, the number of foreigners with long-term residence permits was 324 000, while the number of foreigners with permanent residence was 308 000.<sup>64</sup> The demographic projection of the Czech Statistical Office (hereinafter the "CZSO") estimates the total population of the Czech Republic in 2030 at almost 10.8 million inhabitants. The CZSO estimates 2.4 million persons will be over 65 in 2030, which represents approximately 22.5% of the total population.<sup>65</sup>

The development of total fertility over the last fifteen years has fluctuated slightly: between 2000 and 2008 the average number of children per woman increased from 1.14 to 1.50, then stagnated for two years, only to decrease to 1.43 in 2011. Since then, it has risen to 1.71 in 2018. However, in 2018, the number of live births stagnated at the level of 2017 (114 thousand).<sup>66</sup> Only 112 200 people were born in 2019, 1 800 fewer than in 2018.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Under the 2010 World Census Programme, 98% of the world's population will be counted between 2005 and 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/sldb/scitani\\_v\\_zahranici](https://www.czso.cz/csu/sldb/scitani_v_zahranici)

<sup>63</sup> Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/obyvatelstvo\\_lide](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/obyvatelstvo_lide)

<sup>64</sup> Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/cizinci-pocet-cizincu> (as of 31 December 2018)

<sup>65</sup> Projection of the Population of the Czech Republic – 2018–2100 (medium projection), available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/projekce-obyvatelstva-ceske-republiky-2018-2100>

<sup>66</sup> CZSO, Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/ci/pohyb-obyvatelstva-rok-2018>

<sup>67</sup> CZSO, Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/ci/pohyb-obyvatelstva-rok-2019>

Roughly half of children in the Czech Republic are born out of wedlock (49% in 2016–2018), with the highest share of these being first-born children. In 2018, it was 58% of all first-born children. As the mother's level of education increases, the share of children born out of wedlock decreases (while for women with basic education this share was 80% in 2018, it was 31% for women with university education). With the increasing number of children, the unavailability of leisure activities increases, while larger families (from three children in two-parent and from two children in single-parent families) tend to have more difficulty in meeting these specific needs. At the same time, the number of children in the family reduces the spatial comfort of living more than other factors.<sup>68</sup> In 2019, 54,093 children were born out of wedlock, with an average order of 1.64 (for example, this value was 2.20 in 1957).<sup>69</sup>

Life expectancy has long been higher in women than in men and it is still increasing. In 2018, life expectancy at birth in the Czech Republic was 76.1 years for men and 81.9 years for women. In 2017–2018, men in the capital City of Prague (78.3 years) and women residing in Prague and the Vysočina Region (83.0 years) had the longest life expectancy.

In contrast, the lowest life expectancy was evident in the inhabitants of the Ústí nad Labem Region (men 74.2 years, women 80.0 years), the Karlovy Vary and Moravian-Silesian regions, which also have the highest risk of income poverty or social exclusion. Since 2006, the elderly component of the population has been stronger in numbers than the children's component; in 2018, there were 123 elderly persons of the 65+ age group per 100 children aged 0–14. The declining representation of the 15–64 age category and, conversely, the growth of the representation of the elderly result in an unfavourable development of the economic burden index (as of 31 December 2018, there were 55 people aged 0–14 and 65+ per 100 people aged 15–64).<sup>70</sup>

There was a slight improvement in 2019, with life expectancy at birth for men rising to 76.3 years and for women to 82.1 years. However, the 2020 values fell below the 2018 values, i.e. 75.3 and 81.4 years respectively.<sup>71</sup> In terms of individual regions, the highest life expectancy at birth in 2019 was in Prague (78.4 years for men and 83 years for women). At the other end of the spectrum were men from the Moravian-Silesian Region (74.5 years) and women from the Karlovy Vary and Ústí Regions (80.2 years).<sup>72</sup>

Life expectancy at age 50 was 28.4 years for men and 33.3 years for women in the Czech Republic. At age 60 it was only 20.0 and 24.2 years, respectively, and at 80 it was 7.4 and 8.8 years. Compared to 2018, life expectancy increased in all age groups, with the highest increase for women.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> KUCHAROVÁ, Věra et al. *Family Report* 2017. [online]. Available at: <https://www.mpsv.cz/web/cz/strategicke-dokumenty-v-oblasti-podpory-rodiny> (hereinafter the "Family Report 2017") [qtd. 4 December 2019].

<sup>69</sup> CZSO, Available at: Demographic Handbook – 2019 | CZSO (czso.cz)

<sup>70</sup> The data were provided to the CZSO.

<sup>71</sup> CZSO, Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/142755448/13006921u.pdf/5da40763-162e-4343-a621-e46ec9047c6f?version=1.1>

<sup>72</sup> CZSO, Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2019>.

<sup>73</sup> CZSO, Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2019>.

## 1.4. Situation on the labour market

According to the Labour Force Survey conducted by the CZSO, the number of economically active persons over the age of 15, both employed and unemployed, increased by 38.3 thousand year-on-year in 2018 to 5 415.4 thousand, of which 5 293.8 thousand persons were employed. In 2018, the employment rate of persons aged 20–64 (the share of employed persons in the population in this age group) reached 79.9%, which was an increase of 1.2 percentage points compared to 2017. The employment rate of men was 81.8%, the employment rate of women 67.6%. The employment rate of persons aged 15–24 was 28.4%, and the employment rate of persons aged 55–64 was 65.1%.

In the 2nd quarter of 2019, total employment increased by 6.7 thousand persons year-on-year and reached 5 295.9 thousand. The general unemployment rate of persons aged 15–64 fell by 0 percentage point year-on-year to 1.9%. Representation of men among the employed increased by 5.9 thousand and women increased by 0.8 thousand. However, the growth rate of total employment has been declining significantly since the second half of 2018. The absolute increase in employment was also accompanied by a rising employment rate. The situation on the labour market in recent years has been characterised by a significant demand for labour force. In the long run, the number of unemployed people is declining, both according to the definition of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and by registered unemployment, i.e. job seekers. As of 30 June 2019, the LO CR registered 195 723 job applicants, which was 28 063 fewer than in the previous year, and the share of unemployed persons was 2.6%. A positive phenomenon is the faster decline in the number of job seekers registered for more than 12 months. This group of the unemployed decreased year-on-year as of 30 June 2019 by 25 605 persons to 49 887; the share of the long-term unemployed in total unemployment thus fell by 8.2 percentage points year-on-year to 25.5%. The share of long-term unemployment, which can be identified as structural unemployment and unemployment closely linked to the problems of social exclusion, thus accounts for about a quarter of total unemployment in the Czech Republic. This corresponds to the CZSO data, according to which long-term unemployment in the Czech Republic reached 0.6% in the first quarter of 2019, while the general unemployment rate according to the CZSO was 2.0% in the same period.

Long-term or repeated unemployment has a number of very serious effects on the individual and their surroundings. In addition to material deprivation, these are both social consequences (exclusion from participation in the social and economic life of the majority, indebtedness and the risk phenomena associated with it, including illegal work) and psychological consequences (giving up on job search, loss of work habits associated with legal employment, addiction, etc.). The whole complex of these causes and consequences is then negatively reflected in the reduced chances of socially excluded persons to integrate into society and the labour market.

At present, the share of the long-term unemployed has decreased, but given the development of the economic cycle, it cannot be assumed that this favourable trend will continue in the long run. Although the effectiveness of targeting AEP instruments has increased in recent years, existing instruments have been targeted at these groups of job seekers to a lesser extent than would be desirable, while not fully exploiting all the synergistic effects of their combination. Although the LO CR has established processes based on the profiling of job seekers, it is necessary to continue investing in a comprehensive individualised approach that will take into account the health-related and other disadvantages (older age, low qualifications, family responsibilities) in specially tailored professional training, so as to overcome the skill

gap barriers; investments must also be made into effective counselling combined with social work to address indebtedness.

Indeed, training programmes, as well as subsidised jobs in the private sector, usually target people who face fewer barriers on the labour market. Instead, groups that are more distant from the labour market and have combined disadvantages are usually included in community service (hereinafter “CS”) programmes, although they do not contribute to their permanent employment. In addition, the availability of CS is limited. It is necessary to ensure that the negative impacts of recurring fixed-term employment contracts on CS are minimised.

Although long-term unemployment is falling, not everyone can enter the labour market. The supply of jobs does not correspond with the demand and qualifications of the inhabitants of the excluded localities;<sup>74</sup> moreover, it does not reflect the specific needs of the long-term unemployed, who need a specific approach in order to return to or enter the labour market. The Country Report Czech Republic draws particular attention to the lower work intensity of women after the birth of a child and the low and long-term stagnant rate of economic activity of low-skilled people at around 30% compared to the 80% employment rate of people aged 20–64.

A key obstacle to removing existing barriers is the absence of relevant and up-to-date data: the necessary data, especially on the distribution of poverty in the territory and related social phenomena, are currently collected in the form of partial and separate data within various statistical systems of individual governmental departments and institutions. In addition, the available data are only used in policy evaluations or in public debate to a limited extent.

The Country Report Czech Republic on the one hand states a positive increase in the number of social enterprises (which can be an effective tool for integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market); on the other hand there is a lack of regulatory framework and sufficient financial support to reduce the costs social enterprises incur while leading the target group through the process of job adaptation and targeted transfer to the free labour market.

There are still blind spots in the employment services system. For example, there is a need to make greater use of instruments to support disadvantaged people.<sup>75</sup> For persons with difficulty accessing the labour market, these instruments are an essential prerequisite for remaining in employment (a person who enters employment, even if subsidised, ceases to be registered with the LO CR and therefore no longer receives systematic support). Another missing piece of the puzzle is the model of permeable employment (a person who enters employment, even if subsidised, ceases to be registered with the LO CR and therefore no longer receives systematic support). The major current challenge is the lack of a permeable employment model, connected if necessary to the system of affordable housing, which according to domestic and foreign experience proves to be an effective instrument to support target groups (especially target groups with accumulation of social disadvantages, including the long-term unemployed and low-skilled) in the labour market.

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<sup>74</sup> Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic, p. 74

<sup>75</sup> There are some instruments to support adaptation (initial training), for example, the allowance for initial training pursuant to Section 116 of Act No 435/2004, on employment.

Employment agencies can also be a problem: they offer work to a great extent to socially disadvantaged groups of citizens, which often include the Roma or long-term unemployed persons in unskilled or manual occupations, as well as the over-indebted. Although the law obliges such agencies to observe the same pay and working conditions for agency employees as for regular employees, in the real-world situation, the work is offered under unfavourable contractual and financial conditions or there are differences between the contractual conditions of regular company employees and agency employees. It is necessary to set rules that will improve the working conditions of agency workers so that these conditions are comparable to those of regular employees. The Czech Republic should focus on more rigorous control of compliance with the labour law in agency employment, as well as on business support and the creation of quality job opportunities in economically less developed areas. The provision of personalised support to vulnerable groups and the removal of barriers lacks a systemic framework for cooperation between public employment services, non-profit organisations and partners in the labour market.

In the Country Report Czech Republic 2019, the European Commission reflects on indebtedness as a significant obstacle to employment. It states that it is high in the regions with the largest proportion of low-skilled people.<sup>76</sup> According to the available map of executions for the Czech Republic, in 2017 the number of persons facing executions was as large as 863 thousand (9.7% of persons older than 15 years), of which 493 thousand persons face three or more executions tied to each other and the total number of executions is 4.7 million. The trend of all these data was increasing compared to 2016: in contrast, since 2018, the number of persons facing execution has been decreasing (775 thousand persons in 2019, roughly 46 thousand fewer than in 2018).<sup>77</sup> In some regions, such as the Ústí nad Labem Region, the Country Report Czech Republic 2019 states a debt ratio of 20%. One of the direct effects of the significantly high indebtedness of the population may be the increased incidence of undeclared work in the given regions.

Illegal employment is sometimes preferred by both employers (to reduce labour costs) and workers (to eliminate the threat of execution-related seizure on wages, to receive more frequent pay-outs or pay-outs in cash). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on finding and using tools to favour legal employment at the expense of illegal employment (e.g. socially and environmentally responsible public procurement). Attention should also be paid to situations where work does not “pay off”, often – in addition to the aforementioned execution-related seizures of wages from employment – due to low (minimum) wages and low non-seizable amounts.

Accepting short-term employment also carries an increased risk of a future deterioration of the economic situation of an individual or family. The “When the work pays off” study<sup>78</sup> describes that for jobs that are so limited in time that they do not constitute entitlement to unemployment benefits after their termination, there may be a temporary significant reduction in benefits after their loss, which become lower not only than the benefits before obtaining the short-term employment, but even lower than the basic subsistence income.

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<sup>76</sup> Country Report Czech Republic 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Available at: <http://mapaexekuci.cz/index.php/mapa-2/>

<sup>78</sup> *When the work pays off? Analysis of economic motivations for employment* [online]. MKC, 2014 [cit. 09/09/2019]. Available at: <https://docplayer.cz/547462-Kdy-se-prace-vyplati-analyza-ekonomickych-motivaci-k-zamestnani.html>

An important component of the Czech labour market, especially in times of boom, is foreigners.<sup>79</sup> One of the key factors influencing the level of legal but also illegal foreign employment in the Czech Republic is the conditions for the entry and residence of foreigners in the Czech Republic. At present, labour-related migration is mainly managed by the Government's Economic Migration Programmes.

This system of labour migration makes it possible to adapt the access of foreign workers more flexibly to the overall economic development and the related demand on the labour market. The current economic situation has provoked an increased demand by employers for labour, especially with medium and lower qualifications, for a long time. This also puts pressure on the local infrastructure and coexistence between foreigners and the majority society. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the measures of integration policy, which with the increase in the number of foreigners require more resources and systemic measures. The analyses show that due to limited knowledge of the Czech language and legal environment, foreign workers may be insufficiently informed about their rights and obligations in labour-related legal relationships, and their low awareness often negatively affects their ability to defend themselves against possible violations. The high concentration of foreigners in inadequately infrastructured industrial areas, spatial concentration and segregation, lead to more difficult opportunities for integration into mainstream society and create a risk of social exclusion.

It is necessary to mention that in the field of labour migration, the opportunities for the employment of persons from abroad are widely used in the Czech Republic, especially for the mentioned positions with medium and lower qualifications (ISCO-CZ 8, 9), which are difficult to cover with Czech citizens given the current general shortage of domestic labour. One form of prevention of illegal employment of foreigners in the Czech Republic is the intensive support of legal forms of labour migration. Despite the existence of Government Economic Migration Programmes, migrants often find themselves in a weaker position and are at risk of abuse. Employment of foreign workers can also be connected with the grey economy or labour exploitation; for example, foreign workers do not receive an employment contract, do not have health insurance or are recruited without a proper work permit. It is important to prevent these illegal practices, among other matters, by sufficiently informing foreign workers about their rights and obligations, and also strictly checking that foreign workers are provided with the same conditions for performing work as Czech citizens.

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<sup>79</sup> As of 31 December 2018, there were 659 thousand foreigners working in the Czech Republic, of which 90 thousand had a valid trade licence and 569 thousand were registered at labour offices – source CZSO, available at: <https://vdb.czso.cz/vdbvo2/faces/index.jsf?page=vystup-objekt&pvo=CIZ06&z=T&f=TABULKA&katalog=31032&str=v57423>

## 1.5. Equalisation of opportunities

The Social Inclusion Strategy builds on the basic principles of human rights protection, which define the obligations arising from the constitutional order (especially the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms) and from international treaties by which the Czech Republic is bound. Human rights, as the basis of a democratic rule of law, are one of the primary sources and barriers to the exercise of public power and all activities that the State and other actors (local self-governments, private entities) carry out in the exercise of their powers.<sup>80</sup> Within the framework of social inclusion, respect for the human rights of persons plays a key role as an inspiring and executive source and at the same time as a content corrective for the individual measures taken. Social inclusion based on human rights, respect and their application thus contributes to the development of every human individual and a society as a whole of equal and free human beings with equal rights and obligations, and thus to the development of a modern democratic rule of law as such.<sup>81</sup>

Social inclusion's task is to contribute to the protection and exercise of human rights. In accordance with its subject of activity, it is primarily a matter of helping socially excluded persons or members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups so that they can exercise their rights equally to others. The starting point for social inclusion is thus the human dignity of a person which is given to the person from birth for their whole life and is the same for every person.<sup>82</sup> This equality in dignity and rights means equal respect for every human individual, regardless of external circumstances and their personal characteristics and behaviour. Social inclusion should thus aim to enable everyone to fully enjoy their rights and freedoms as full members of society, and to provide assistance and support to people who are socially excluded or disadvantaged on the basis of their ethnicity, age, origin, disability and other reasons, and to provide assistance and support in removing restrictions and developing their personal potential. This also promotes the human freedom of each individual to do everything that the law does not prohibit and to not be forced to do anything that the law does not impose, while the restrictions must pursue a legitimate aim and be proportionate.<sup>83</sup>

Social inclusion is primarily concerned with economic, social and cultural rights such as the right to work, decent working conditions, social security, emergency social assistance, health and social services and education. These rights are a certain basis for an individual's social life and their successful integration into society. However, the social inclusion of the individual must respect and must not neglect their other civil and political rights such as the right to life, the protection of liberty and bodily integrity from ill-treatment, privacy and family life, property, freedom of religion, movement and residence, expression, assembly or association and the right to participate in public life. The modern democratic rule of law is based on the indivisibility and interconnectedness of human rights. Civil and political rights have their strong and significant social context and therefore, in addition to one of the objectives of social inclusion, they also form a measure and value corrective of individual inclusive measures.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See the Preamble to the Constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.

<sup>81</sup> See The Human Rights Agenda in the Everyday Practice of a Social Worker, Social Service Workbook 1/2015, p. 8

<sup>82</sup> See Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.

<sup>83</sup> See Articles 2(3) and (4) of the Constitution and Articles 2(2) and (3) of the Charter.

<sup>84</sup> See The Human Rights Agenda in the Everyday Practice of a Social Worker, Social Service Workbook 1/2015, p. 7



All measures must respect the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, race, skin colour, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, membership of a national or ethnic minority, property, gender or other status, such as age or disability. On the contrary, certain specific groups, such as children, the elderly, members of ethnic and sexual minorities, foreigners or persons with disabilities, persons with a criminal record, etc., require certain specific supportive procedures in order to be able to exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. Social inclusion's task is then to help them achieve the same quality of life as other people through these procedures.

Protection against discrimination and the right to equal treatment are governed primarily by Act No 198/2009, on equal treatment and legal means of protection against discrimination and amending certain acts (the Anti-Discrimination Act), as amended, which defines areas of non-discrimination and prohibited discriminatory grounds, forms of discrimination (direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, incitement, persecution, etc.), as well as legal means of protection against discrimination for its victims. The Public Defender of Rights has an important role to play in protecting against discrimination, providing methodological assistance to victims of discrimination in initiating proceedings for discrimination, issuing recommendations and publishing reports, and conducting research on discrimination.

Persons who believe that their rights to equal treatment have been violated can enforce their rights before courts and may also refer the matter to the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman), who is obliged to provide methodological assistance to victims of discrimination when filing petitions to initiate proceedings for discrimination. The Ombudsman's task is to protect persons from the actions of the authorities and other institutions when they are unlawful, inconsistent with the principles of democratic rule of law and good governance, as well as from their inaction; in addition to other specific areas, the Ombudsman also has powers in the area of equal treatment and protection against discrimination.<sup>85</sup>

However, as the 2015 analysis of the Ombudsman's Office shows,<sup>86</sup> non-reporting of discrimination appears to be a widespread problem, which is largely related to the citizens' low confidence in the functioning of State institutions (and the relatively low number of court decisions in discrimination-related cases). It is estimated that only about 10% of cases of discrimination are reported, and as the study shows, the lower the socio-economic status and education of potential complainants, the more likely it is that discrimination will not be reported.<sup>87</sup> The analysis thus reveals the "disparity between the frequent incidence of subjectively perceived discrimination" (for various reasons), as pointed out by representative research at national and international level, and the low number of complaints of discrimination addressed to the Ombudsman and legal authorities and the low number of court proceedings.<sup>88</sup>

In 2019, the Ombudsman's Office dealt with 403 complaints concerning discrimination. Of these complaints, discrimination was found in sixteen cases. Eleven complaints were classified as direct discrimination, four as indirect discrimination and one as another form of discrimination such as persecution, harassment, instruction or incitement to discrimination. Most often, people felt

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<sup>85</sup> See Act No 349/1999, on the public defender of rights, as amended.

<sup>86</sup> Office of the Ombudsman. 2015. *Discrimination in the Czech Republic: Victim of Discrimination and its Obstacles in Access to Justice*. [qtd. 4 December 2019] Available at: [https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ESO/CZ\\_Diskriminace\\_v\\_CR\\_vyzkum\\_01.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/ESO/CZ_Diskriminace_v_CR_vyzkum_01.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> For example, according to the results of the 2012 Eurobarometer, up to 19% of respondents from the Czech Republic felt discriminated against in the past twelve months (mainly due to age and gender), while up to 43% of respondents witnessed discrimination during the same period.

<sup>88</sup> See *Discrimination in the Czech Republic: Victims of Discrimination and its Obstacles in Access to Justice*, p. 4.

discriminated against in the area of work and employment, access to goods and services, housing, education or in areas other than those defined by the Anti-Discrimination Act. Of the reasons defined by the Act, the most common reason was disability, followed by gender, age, and attributed or declared race and ethnicity. There were also 44 cases in which discrimination was alleged on multiple grounds at once.<sup>89</sup>

The legal prohibition of discrimination and the enforcement of this prohibition is only one of the tools to prevent discrimination and build equal opportunities for citizens and persons located in the Czech Republic. Along with the enforcement and application of the legal norm, it is necessary to promote changes in the setting and functioning of society, economy and politics, which will lead not only to the elimination of direct discriminatory behaviour, but also to the elimination of indirect forms of discrimination, especially in their structural form. Structural discrimination, which, rather than acting in relation to a particular individual, mobilises a subordinate position or a lower status of a particular group to which the individual is situated, can be both obvious and covert. It is characterised by the application of a wide range of practices and policies based on seemingly neutral norms and values widespread and shared by the dominant culture, but which do not take into account the previously established inequalities and thus reproduce systematic discrimination or limitation of opportunities of certain persons or groups of persons. The European Parliament uses the term “structural anti-Gypsyism” in relation to the Roma, which manifests itself as “individual and institutional neglect, discrimination, inequality, disempowerment, belittling, othering and scapegoating, stigmatisation, hate speech, and making them into victims of violence, extreme poverty and profound social exclusion”.<sup>90</sup>

Another, no less serious form of structural discrimination in the Czech Republic is the introduction of “zero tolerance policies”, which are sets of measures punishing minor offences aimed at reducing crime.<sup>91</sup> In the Czech Republic, these policies were implemented, for example, in Litvínov, Bohumín and Duchcov, and their common link was targeting the “inadaptable population”, which in practice mainly affected the Roma population.<sup>92</sup> The adopted policy measures show a high degree of segregation, discrimination and social stigmatisation of a certain social group, which are often, as in this case, the Roma.

Structural discrimination can take the form of a seemingly neutral setting of certain institutions, as shown, for example, by research by Glumbíková et al.,<sup>93</sup> when the inhabitants of shelters and more generally people facing housing deprivation in the Czech Republic are confronted with an “unpleasant demeanour”, “distant approach”, making light of their health situation and rejection by doctors and health professionals (precisely because they are people stigmatised by their “life on the edge” and homeless). Another form of structural discrimination is pointed out by research within the BRIZOLIT project,<sup>94</sup> supported by the Ministry of the Interior, which unmasks widespread stereotypes about crime in excluded localities.

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<sup>89</sup> Government of the Czech Republic *Report on the State of Human Rights in The Czech Republic in 2019*. 2020, p 45. Available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rlp/dokumenty/zpravy-lidska-prava-cr/zprava-o-stavu-lidskych-prav-v-ceske-republice-v-roce-2019-183655/> hereinafter the “Report on the Status of Human Rights in the Czech Republic 2019”.

<sup>90</sup> European Parliament, 2017. European Parliament Resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism (2017/2038(INI)), (2018/C 346/23)

<sup>91</sup> In the context of the Czech Republic, these measures often apply to the inhabitants of SELs.

<sup>92</sup> For more information, see e.g. the publication: Analysis of zero tolerance policies in Litvínov and Duchcov, Lucie Trlifajová, Filip Pospíšil, Petr Kučera, Bára Matysová, Blanka Kissová, SPOT – Centre for Social Issues, z.s., 2015

<sup>93</sup> Glumbíková, K. et al. 2017. Final report of the research Health of shelter inhabitants. Sdružení azylových domů z.s. Available at: [https://sad-cr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SAD\\_Zdrav%C3%AD-obyvatel-AD.pdf](https://sad-cr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SAD_Zdrav%C3%AD-obyvatel-AD.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> Project Security risks of socially excluded localities. [online]. [qtd. 9 March 2019]. Available at: <http://brizolit.org/>

Research shows that excluded localities are currently the last “development” stage of ethnic segregation<sup>95</sup> in Czech society, and thus that structural discrimination against the Roma has taken place through political and economic changes and processes (e.g. commodification of housing) in recent decades. As far as structural discrimination is concerned, the field of education also plays a major role. Even ten years after the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights, which condemned the Czech Republic for indirect discrimination against Roma children in the Ostrava region in access to education, spatial segregation in education based on attributed ethnicity still represents a significant problem, as evidenced by the Ombudsman’s findings,<sup>96</sup> Government documents,<sup>97</sup> research,<sup>98</sup> and analyses by non-governmental entities.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, education continues to be one of the areas in which people are discriminated against, which results in the reproduction or deepening of social exclusion and poverty.

Discrimination in the Czech Republic is also present in the form of unfriendly treatment of citizens of other nationalities. As stated by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the final report of the 2019 survey on the Czech Republic, there are more forms of discriminatory tendencies with regard to migrants, to which increased attention must be paid. “In the area of treatment of migrants, the Committee is primarily critical of hate speech<sup>100</sup> against refugees, including hate speech from top politicians, cases of intimidation of journalists, detention of families with children, including families waiting for the “Dublin transfer” – the Committee urges the Czech Republic to find more suitable alternatives to detention, also discriminatory access to health care related to inability to obtain public health insurance. The Committee also criticises the absence of a procedure for stateless persons and their difficulties in obtaining personal documents, as has long been pointed out by the Organization for Aid to Refugees.”<sup>101</sup>

One of the specific forms of discrimination appearing in the Czech Republic is anti-Gypsyism. In the majority society, anti-Gypsyism affects the number of citizens declared as being of Roma nationality. At the last Population and Housing Census in 2011<sup>102</sup> only 13 150 citizens declared as Roma, while qualified estimates of the number of Roma living permanently in the Czech Republic range from 250 000 to 300 000. The reasons for the low number of persons registered as Roma can be seen mainly in the fact that, given their historical experience, Roma are concerned about declaring their affiliation. At the same time,

<sup>95</sup> Segregation means the separation of different social groups into spatial areas, in the context of education also the placement of children in schools or classes on the basis of ethnic origin or social status. If segregation disadvantages people on the basis of a protected discriminatory ground, it is discrimination. (see ŠABATOVÁ, Anna, KVASNICOVÁ, Jana, NEHUDEKOVÁ, Eva, POLÁK Petr) Compendium of the Ombudsman’s opinions, 20 – *Discrimination* [online] 2019 [qtd. 12/04/2019]. Available at: <https://www.ochrance.cz/dalsi-aktivita/publikace/sborniky-stanoviska/>.

<sup>96</sup> The Ombudsman. *Annual Report on Protection against Discrimination 2017*. [online] 2018 [qtd. 12 April 2019]. Available at: [https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user\\_upload/DISKRIMINACE/Vyrocní\\_zpráva/Vyrocní\\_zpráva\\_o\\_ochrane\\_pred\\_diskriminaci\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/DISKRIMINACE/Vyrocní_zpráva/Vyrocní_zpráva_o_ochrane_pred_diskriminaci_2017.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Report on the State of Human Rights in the Czech Republic 2017.

<sup>98</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). *Second survey on minorities and discrimination in the European Union Roma – selected results*. [online] 2016 [qtd. 12 April 2019]. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>.

<sup>99</sup> Amnesty International. *Must Try Harder – Ethnic Discrimination of Romani Children in Czech Schools*. [online] 2015 [qtd. 12 April 2019]. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.cz/data/file/497-report-czech-version-merged.pdf?version=1428086177>.

<sup>100</sup> Hate speech means hateful rhetoric or hateful speech towards other people or target groups, it can be said that it is any form of speech that incites hatred, xenophobia, etc. (note: author).

<sup>101</sup> *The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticises the Czech Republic* [online]. 2019 [qtd. 3 September 2019]. Available at: <https://www.opu.cz/cs/2019/09/vybor-osn-pro-odstraneni-rasove-diskriminace-kritizuje-ceskou-republiku> and further: [https://www.opu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CERD\\_C\\_CZE\\_CO\\_12-13\\_36934\\_E.pdf](https://www.opu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CERD_C_CZE_CO_12-13_36934_E.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> *Population and Housing Census 2011* [online]. 2011 [qtd. 5 September 2019]. Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n\\_2013-030102](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/24000-13-n_2013-030102)

there are currently fears of growing hate violence and prejudiced hatred, which Roma face more than other national minorities in the Czech Republic. The number of citizens registered as Roma is further influenced by their experience with ethnic discrimination or concerns about discrimination in access to housing, employment, education and health care. It should be noted that Roma affiliation in the Czech Republic is a stigma for the citizen and places a number of obstacles in their everyday life.<sup>103</sup>

The high degree of anti-Gypsyism can be illustrated by attitudes and assessments of the quality of coexistence between the majority society and the Roma. For a long time, according to research, the Roma have been the least likeable national minority. In the Czech Republic, coexistence with the Roma is assessed as bad by the majority society.<sup>104</sup> The growing antipathy towards the Roma is partly caused by the fact that the society accuses the Roma of being economic and social parasites. The prevailing opinion in society is that the Roma abuse the State social system and the system of EU financial subsidies. The opinion or stereotype of the economic and social parasitism of the Roma causes an increase in the number of victims of hate violence.<sup>105</sup>

Last but not least, it is necessary to emphasise the cumulative and overlapping nature of discrimination, i.e. what is called multiple discrimination. In the Czech context, this issue is pointed out, for example, by a study of ageing migrant women who face discrimination with regard to their (ethnic) origin, gender, social status and age.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Strategy of Roma Integration in the Czech Republic until 2020*, [online]. [qtd. 4 December 2019]. p. 11, available at: <https://www.databaze-strategie.cz/cz/urad-vlady/strategie/strategie-romske-integrace-do-roku-2020>.

<sup>104</sup> Public Opinion Research Centre Institute of Sociology Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2019. *Our Society. Roma and Coexistence with Them Through the Eyes of the Czech Public – April 2019*

<sup>105</sup> Source: Report on the Activities of the Public Prosecutor's Office in 2018, [online]. [qtd. 4 December 2019]. Available at: [http://www.nsz.cz/images/stories/PDF/Zpravy\\_o\\_cinnosti/2018/zprava\\_o\\_cinnosti\\_sz\\_za\\_rok\\_2018-textova\\_cast.pdf](http://www.nsz.cz/images/stories/PDF/Zpravy_o_cinnosti/2018/zprava_o_cinnosti_sz_za_rok_2018-textova_cast.pdf)

<sup>106</sup> HRADEČNÁ, Pavla, JELÍNKOVÁ, Marie, EZZEDINE Petra, HAVELKOVÁ, Hana. Women play second fiddle (?) – Gender, migration and ageing. Prague: 2016. Association for Integration and Migration. Available at: [http://www.migrate.com/docs/161018\\_publikace-zvk\\_web\\_final.pdf](http://www.migrate.com/docs/161018_publikace-zvk_web_final.pdf).

## 2. Application of basic principles

Social exclusion affects the whole of society; one of its negative consequences is the erosion of social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to the status of shared identity, loyalty and solidarity in society. It expresses society's ability to provide suitable living conditions for all its members. Cohesion is not a simple product of civic, spatial or territorial belonging, but rather that of participation in the socio-economic dynamics and governance. Social cohesion is also linked to territorial cohesion, as the widespread disruption of social cohesion negatively affects the functional integration of a given territory in a globalised economy and society and the possibilities for its cooperation with other entities at regional, national or European level.

To reduce the risks that social exclusion poses to social cohesion, it is necessary to increase the effectiveness of interventions implemented to weaken the processes of social exclusion and reduce the territorial concentration of social exclusion via a conceptual approach. Furthermore, their coherence is essential and they must be created on the basis of evaluating their impacts and their effectiveness in relation to the prevention and solution of social exclusion (evidence-based policy, informed-based policy).

The understanding of social inclusion as processes and policies aimed at ensuring social and territorial cohesion implies the basic principles for setting public policy objectives and instruments:

- It is a matter of guaranteeing equal opportunities for individuals, regardless of individual characteristics or local contexts;
- Ensuring the concentration and coordination of activities promoting social inclusion is essential for areas with a large number of social exclusion issues;
- In the context of society as a whole, a simultaneous emphasis on the objective and subjective dimensions of social cohesion is essential;
- Mainstreaming social inclusion and cross-cutting this perspective in all relevant policies is essential for the effectiveness and economy of public policies;
- In the implementation of social inclusion policy, it is essential to apply a perspective of gender equality and take into account the specific needs of women and men.

## 2.1. Guarantee of equal opportunities

Promoting and supporting social inclusion, or preventing or reducing social exclusion of various vulnerable groups of people plays an irreplaceable role in the modern approach to solving the problems of these groups.

The general objectives of social inclusion also include ensuring equal access to all resources, rights, goods and services. The principle of equal treatment, or equalisation of opportunities and non-discrimination must be integral to social inclusion, which leads to improved conditions for active participation by the persons concerned and their integration into society.

**Objective: Ensure equal access to social resources for people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion and for people with various types of disadvantage.**

Increase civic awareness about socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion in terms of basic competencies and legal awareness – support active volunteering in this area. Increase public awareness about the issue of social exclusion. Support the reduction of inequalities affecting people with various types of disadvantage in society, such as people with disabilities, migrants, minorities (including marginalised groups such as the Roma). Reduce the number of barriers in the public space – in terms of physical, orientation and communication barriers, as well as in terms of stereotyping of certain groups or persons (e.g. elderly, Roma, people with disabilities, families with children). Promote gender equality, especially in the areas of the labour market, equal pay, domestic and gender-based violence between women and men in family and social policy. Increase the awareness of public administration employees at all levels and local government about the negative consequences of not ensuring equal access for socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion and about the impact of direct or indirect discrimination.

## 2.2. Promoting social inclusion at local and regional level

Significant territorial disparities in the concentration of social exclusion, which exist at both regional and local level (see Chapter 1.5), require territory-differentiated policies to address them. Territorially focused policies in places with the greatest concentration of issues require a sufficient concentration of financial, organisational and other resources, a supra-sectoral approach and the multidisciplinary interconnection of relevant entities and long-term strategic management.

Measures will be based on supporting the application of an evidence-based approach to the regional and local level and on the creation of local partnerships and social inclusion platforms. Their objective will be the development of socially inclusive local public policies and approaches at the level of local self-governments, including the removal of barriers to the implementation of pro-inclusive public policies.

**Objective: Create functional systems of social inclusion at local and regional levels in areas with the highest concentration of socially excluded localities and social exclusion of at-risk persons.**

Actively link the tighter cooperation between self-governing bodies of regions and municipalities and State administration bodies at all levels. Emphasise the regional perspective with a focus on areas with a higher concentration of socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion. Follow up on the existing system of methodological guidance, education and coordination of municipalities and regions in the field of social inclusion and further develop it. Support the development of community life and strengthen the bottom-up approach, which is mainly based on civil society, focusing on volunteering and the possibility of involving volunteers in social integration. Increase the civic and advocacy competencies of socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion. Utilise the potential of a dense network of public libraries as important parts of local community life and non-formal, informal and community learning centres (financial, civic and information literacy).

## 2.3. Strengthening social cohesion

Indicators based on “objective” parameters of income distribution or material deprivation (despite a number of limitations) show that in the EU context, the Czech Republic is a country with below-average or at most average levels of poverty and social exclusion. Nevertheless, in a number of aspects, especially those related to the “subjective” perception of social inequalities and one’s own position in society, disparities between social groups are deepening. For those who have experience with executions, general (generalised) trust in society and its institutions is reduced and participation in political processes (expressed, for example, by turnout) is minimised. A high proportion of members of minorities face discrimination, which indicates attitudes of a significant proportion of society that are not compatible with social cohesion in the long run. There is also high latency in cases of hate violence against members of minorities (e.g. Roma and Muslims) or disadvantaged groups (e.g. the homeless). The social reproduction of these attitudes is largely independent of the reduction or increase in the “objective” level of material security, although the uncertainty of maintaining one’s current standard of living may contribute to it. Public policies have traditionally focused mainly on “objective” dimensions of poverty and social exclusion (e.g. insurance and non-insurance benefit systems). However, in recent years, attention has also expanded to include “subjective” dimensions. At the UN level, this is the World Happiness Index initiative, which focuses on subjectively declared satisfaction with one’s life.

The concept of social cohesion includes:

- the aspect of social harmony (low level of social conflict in society, low level of social exclusion);
- the aspect of reciprocity and solidarity (collaboration, participation in resources);
- the principle of balance in society (a dignified life for all, equality of opportunities to access resources);
- the aspect of trust (the social climate).

Society is cohesive through functional families and participating communities, decent work, affordable quality health and social care, equal access to culture and an effective education system that enables everyone to achieve their individual maximum education and supports the development of transferable competences. Policies must be based not only on the results of quality scientific knowledge, but also on participation, i.e. the involvement of the public, which has enough quality and comprehensible information. At the same time, the principle of subsidiarity, i.e. decision-making at the lowest possible level, must respect the positions of various social groups. Decisions enforced by force are unsustainable in the long run. If all entities are involved in decision-making, the governance stabilises at all levels, even the lowest ones. The connection between the degree of democratic participation and representation on the one hand and social inequalities, or structural social inequalities, on the other hand, is becoming more obvious every day. The socially weaker participate less and the importance of this factor is growing. All entities need to be involved in strategic planning and management and they must use all of their instruments. Public administrations at all levels must learn to stimulate and moderate ongoing public debate.



A space where different entities can participate together in strategic planning and management, discuss land use, seek agreement and reach compromise should be prepared and created. This debate must also lead to practical results, and ultimately to a decision in the public interest, since it is the public administration that bears the greatest share of responsibility for carrying out the agreed intentions. In parallel with the effective participation and involvement of all entities, the State will support the development of local communities at various levels (municipalities, city districts or the entire region). A prerequisite for the functioning of a resilient community is the equal status of its members, a sense of belonging, general awareness and the ability to manage failure. Participation is a soft skill that can be learned, and as such it should be included in the education system, including adult education; active volunteering can also contribute positively. The skill of participation may be trained in public libraries, which are a natural part of community life in the regions and offer a number of educational and community projects.

**Objective: Reduce social tensions with emphasis on the subjective dimension – especially in regions with impaired internal integrity of the territory with long-term serious socio-economic problems.**

Support preventive social services and field social services in socially excluded localities, but also in localities where the number of persons at risk of social exclusion is increasing due to the poverty industry. Provide support to local self-governments to set an example of reducing social tension. In relevant social inclusion policies, take into account aspects of subjective satisfaction with the quality of life, also with regard to the context of the territorial dimensions of social inequalities. Take into account in relevant policies the processes of the social reproduction of discursive inequalities or prejudices.

**Objective: Effectively reduce the risks to social cohesion posed by social exclusion, at national, local and regional levels, using a conceptual approach to social exclusion. Cover the prevention and response to social exclusion through vertical and horizontal coordination.**

Create a functional system that will effectively prevent and weaken social exclusion processes and reduce the territorial concentration of social exclusion. The conceptual approach is based on the application of the results of a systematic study of the phenomena and processes of social exclusion and their form in the context of spatial, social and economic isolation and cultural differences. It is also necessary to follow up by evaluating the impact and effectiveness of policies and partial interventions in the fight against social exclusion, including identifying good and bad practices when making decisions at all levels and in all relevant areas. The measures will build on the Agency's existing activities and will aim to strengthen cooperation between the public administration, the non-public sector, civil society, community and local groups and individuals. The aim is also to interconnect social inclusion policies, in particular minority integration policies (especially Roma integration) and the fight against discrimination. Furthermore, measures will be aimed at ensuring the flexibility of the system so that it can respond to short-term trends and changes in developments in the field of social exclusion and social inclusion and their impact, both at the level of society as a whole and at a local level.

Within the conceptual approach, interconnected instruments will be synergistically applied to effectively prevent and weaken social exclusion processes and reduce the territorial concentration of social exclusion; the instruments will be in particular normative, financial, strategic, planning and project focused, organisational / institutional, process, research, technological, educational, awareness-raising and voluntary-based.

**Objective: Strengthen the participation of people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion in decisions to address social exclusion.**

Ensure standardisation of procedures in the area of target group participation, enabling socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion to obtain quality and comprehensible information, to develop their competencies for understanding the phenomena of social exclusion and to lower the threshold of institutional procedures that prevent higher participation. Implement information campaigns, awareness-raising and educational activities in order to reduce barriers to participation. Local communities will be supported so that they strengthen each other on the basis of trust and understanding. Participatory methods focused on the own initiative of the target group (e.g. socially disadvantaged pupils or their parents) will be activated.

## 2.4. Mainstreaming social inclusion

Mainstreaming social inclusion means including the agenda not only in social policy, but also in policies affecting other aspects of human life and society (social policy, employment, education, health, regional development, culture, justice, security, crime prevention, finance). It is characterised by a change in approach to one that seeks a broader understanding of the problem. The aim is to find the tools to change attitudes and use them to influence existing approaches in various policies.

Evidence-based policy,<sup>107</sup> and more generally policy analysis, emphasis on managerial aspects and professional supervision over the implementation of measures and the use of the principles of mainstreaming social inclusion are growing in importance. The application of evidence-based practice can contribute to the positive consequences of proposed policies. Its clear link to research allows an evidence-based policy instrument to significantly support effective and workable policies. In this way, it is possible to increase the credibility of policies and broaden their knowledge base.

### Social innovation

Social innovations, i.e. innovations which are social in terms of their purpose and means of achieving them, represent in their current concept “new solutions and, compared to available alternatives, better solutions” (i.e. more effective, more efficient, more sustainable, fairer) that meet pressing social needs, while also creating new social relations or cooperation. Social innovations can include new products, processes, services, organisational arrangements, technologies, ideas, regulations, institutional forms, functions and roles, social movements and other forms of addressing social needs.”<sup>108</sup> An example may be the introduction of “housing with support” of social work or engaging people with the experience of homelessness or other form of social disadvantage (e.g. peers, Roma mentors) in addressing the adverse situation of a person or family associated with housing and other social disabilities. In addition to adopting new solutions, there is a need to support the sustainability and further dissemination of already adopted projects/programmes and to assess their social and economic impact. It is important to develop and support new forms of social innovations, and at the same time to support their evaluations in order to determine their impact, or possibly their introduction into common practice.

### Risks and barriers

Media strengthening the stereotypical perception of the inhabitants of socially excluded localities.

### **Objective: The use of evidence-based approaches to policy-making and to strengthening awareness of the issue of social exclusion**

Support research for evidence-based policy, regular collection and sharing of data on the status of people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion. Raise State and local self-government awareness about the obstacles that prevent people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion from fully and meaningfully self-realising, through data collection and research, including screening to detect “invisibly” socially excluded persons or persons who are at “invisible” risk of social exclusion. Adopt and test new/alternative instruments in the field of social inclusion (socio-health boundaries of social services,

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<sup>107</sup> Policy analysis - i.e. an analysis of anything that is “policy”, i.e. individual policies such as employment policy or environmental protection policy.

<sup>108</sup> KADERÁBKOVÁ, Saman: *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Innovative Projects*. Prague: MoLSA, 2012 p. 4

ASLPC, social housing, social entrepreneurship, new methods of social work, primary prevention, etc.). Support impact monitoring including the elaboration of analyses to verify the economic savings of individual interventions, supporting the sustainability and dissemination of these programmes at the local and national level, as well as the sustainability of already proven programmes and services. Focus on collecting anonymised data.

**Objective: Increase the quality and coherence of public policies and thus increase their impact on weakening the processes of social exclusion and reducing the territorial concentration of social exclusion.**

The measures will be aimed at preparing the conditions for the content coherence and interconnectedness of public policies, in particular by ensuring the availability of the necessary data, expertise and professional and methodological support for public policy-making and evaluating their impact in preventing and addressing social exclusion. Measures will include the development of new tools, instruments, procedures and methodologies, including the use of technologies. Development will take place in the field of data collection, research and impact evaluation, including the development of qualitative approaches, as well as project and process management in the creation and implementation of local and regional social inclusion strategies (e.g. development of a dynamic participatory model of strategic planning effectively linking the benefits of an integrated approach and gradual, incremental, bottom-up and top-down approaches<sup>109</sup>), as well as in the area of collective impact and procedures for increasing the value of networks. Measures will also be aimed at creating suitable conditions (especially legislative, non-legislative, financial, knowledge-related) for the active cooperation of public administration units with territorial self-governing units, their unions or associations, local action groups, public library networks, the non-governmental non-profit sector and business, and the academic and research sector in combating social exclusion. Measures will be aimed at ensuring the cooperation and common approach of governmental departments in the field of social inclusion. Measures will also be aimed at the establishment, operation and interconnection of horizontal and vertical networks of entities in the field of social inclusion as a key prerequisite for quality decision-making in the field of social inclusion and disseminating the positive impact of interventions and measures to minimise and prevent social exclusion.

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<sup>109</sup> A top-down approach is an approach that comes from the top, i.e. from politicians or the official apparatus.

### **3. Social work as a fundamental tool for social inclusion**

Social work is a professional activity focused on assisting individuals, groups or communities, in order to improve or restore their capacity for social functioning in their natural environment. Social work is aimed at creating favourable social conditions to achieve the defined goal. It promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and strengthening and liberating people in order to allow them to fulfil their personal well-being. It acts where people come into conflict with their social environment. The principles of human rights and social equity and solidarity are of key importance for social work.

Social work promotes social change and problem-solving in interpersonal relationships and in its various forms it focuses on diverse, complex relationships between people and their environment. It responds to crises and acute situations as well as to everyday personal and social problems. The social worker performs social work activities in practice, e.g. social investigation, assistance in dealing with social benefits, social legal counselling, analytical, methodological and conceptual activities in the social field, professional activities in facilities providing social prevention services, screening activities, crisis management assistance, social counselling and social rehabilitation. Act No 108/2006, on social services, imposes the obligation of lifelong training on social workers. In these areas, a high level of support is needed not only for social workers themselves, but also for employers and other stakeholders in the field of education. In the next period, it is necessary to further strengthen the activities of municipalities in the planning of social services so that there is no social exclusion as a result of systemic failure in the field of social care. Social work is an activity performed in both independent and delegated competence, it is also performed within the framework of social services (especially preventive), but also as a part of other activities. In accordance with the law, social work can also be supported in the form of a special-purpose subsidy.

#### **Community work**

A key problem in municipalities with concentrated social exclusion is the large social imbalance in the area of power / influence and access to resources, as well as low social cohesion. One of the factors of social exclusion in the exercise of civil rights is the non-participation of the population in basic democratic processes, such as elections and decision-making processes that affect them. The processes of social inclusion are then not only a social issue, but also a civic one.

Community work and participation which result in active citizenship, i.e. the ability to participate in public life or to defend one's own civil rights in everyday administrative matters and activities, are important methods that enable citizens' participation in decision-making processes and in more general terms in the administration of public affairs. Both approaches are equally important, suitable for different situations and can be applied to different levels of distribution of power between citizens and public administration: they can intersect and complement each other. Community work is a method of social work the aim of which is to achieve social change by activating community members (focusing on the inhabitants of areas with a concentration of social exclusion), strengthening the sense of belonging and balancing the imbalance between people's needs and resources. Community work is a process of activating and empowering groups of citizens to solve both common and specific problems; the activation and empowerment of citizens to solve problems is the primary goal of community work, the actual solution of problems its process and consequence.

Community work through the activation and empowerment of community members (with a focus on the inhabitants of the territory with a concentration of social exclusion) can thus significantly strengthen the sense of belonging and joint problem-solving.

Civic participation in social inclusion as a general principle and objective of empowering the population at risk of social exclusion is applied across individual levels of public involvement and various thematically defined areas. Achieving a change in the civic literacy of the population at risk of social exclusion, in their social perception by the general public or the development of the local community in municipalities with a concentration of social exclusion, involves a systematic and long-term approach to solving it. This case is not about the effect of one activity or measure, but about a coordinated approach across individual areas and their interconnection over time. In order to achieve civic and political empowerment of the population with an accumulation of social problems, it is necessary to have the instruments to achieve a situation where (not only) these people will be not only objects of public policy assistance, but above all active entities participating in their creation and implementation. In terms of benefits for the target group, all actions developed in the activities and measures should pursue one main and common objective: to activate the target group and motivate them to solve the perceived problems, preferably on their own.

At the strategic level of social work (e.g. community planning), participatory approaches in social work can be used in research empowering social entities to express their views and needs, which can serve as background analysis for the conception of social policies, not only at the local level.

The active use of both methods can make a significant contribution to social cohesion in municipalities, towns and cities, to the participation of all groups of the population in socio-economic dynamism and governance, and to the functioning of the neighbourhood as a community.

Within its activities, the Agency provides professional and methodological support to municipalities and local social inclusion stakeholders. To execute this cooperation, local partnerships are being established in municipalities which associate entities relevant for the solution of social exclusion. The aim of local partnerships is to identify local problems and their causes, carry out participatory planning, propose solutions and monitor the effectiveness of interventions that should lead to positive change. Most often, members of these local partnerships are representatives of non-profit organisations, the public administration (municipalities, associations of municipalities and public authorities), local business entities, the police, school facilities and expert entities. Local partnerships may help facilitate a change in attitudes towards a pro-inclusive view of local reality. Local libraries, which organise various community events and deal with topics such as intergenerational coexistence, involvement of citizens in local activities and other extracurricular education of citizens, may also play a key role in supporting the development of communities.

One of the social inclusion stakeholders at the local level are the Local Action Groups (hereinafter “LAGs”), which are partnerships of citizens, non-profit organisations, volunteers, the private business community and the public administration (municipalities, associations of municipalities and public authorities) that are independent of political decision-making. LAGs most often cooperate in rural development, agriculture and obtaining financial support from the EU and national programmes for their region, using the LEADER method.

The basic goal of LAGs is to improve the quality of life and the environment in rural areas. One of the necessary tools for the area of social inclusion in the rural environment is, for example, the active acquisition and distribution of subsidy funds for the area of community work or active involvement – the participation of residents of municipalities with a higher concentration of social exclusion. In this area, LAGs cooperate and coordinate their activities with the Agency.

It will be important to ensure in the next period that social work in the area responds flexibly, effectively and in a coordinated manner to the identified needs of the population, and that local, natural sources of support are appropriately involved and developed when carrying out social work and that conditions for its use by vulnerable groups are created and strengthened. When implementing the measures, experience of regions or academic entities with the implementation of activities in the field of community work can also be used.

#### **Risks and barriers to social work:**

1. Inadequate personnel capacity;
2. Ambiguity and inconsistency of social work's objectives;
3. Insufficient offer of social services;
4. Lack of cooperation and coordination of key stakeholders;
5. Low social prestige of social work as a profession, low salaries of social workers;
6. The reluctance of some municipalities to use social and community work instruments to include socially excluded persons, especially Roma and persons released from prison, in the context of the majority population's attitudes towards these groups (potential voters evaluate these measures negatively);
7. Lack of funds from the State budget for the field of social work; the problem concerns in particular the area of social services and social work which does not fall within the definition for the registration of social services; e.g. activities on the border of the social field and crime prevention, peer mentoring activities (i.e. mutual mentoring in the form of mutual learning from people with similar experience), non-commercial employment mediation, social entrepreneurship activities – i.e. financing the integrative role of social enterprises, consisting in supporting employees in training, ensuring their development and subsequent transfer to the regular labour market;
8. Absence of legislation adequately regulating the performance of social work, e.g. activities on the border of social work and social prevention, activities not by their nature covered by the Social Services Act (e.g. non-commercial employment mediation and subsequent support in job adaptation), social entrepreneurship, and further limited opportunities for participation of representatives of the target group of the socially disadvantaged in the provision of peer programmes (i.e. programmes mostly of a preventive nature in the presence of people with similar experience) and mentoring programmes due to non-compliance with qualification requirements set by the Social Services Act;
9. Insufficient databases to measure the effectiveness of services and their impact, and the resulting insufficient development of evidence-based practice.

**Objective: Develop and professionalise social work.**

The fulfilment of the objective will consist of, among other matters, the preparation and submission of legislative regulations for the performance of social work, profession and lifelong learning of social workers, identification of instruments to ensure adequate financial remuneration for social workers, i.e. adequate remuneration for the performance of social work in public administration. Strengthen the civic empowerment of socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion by social work methods. Analyse blind spots in the social work system with the socially disadvantaged and design and enforce measures to be taken to eliminate them. Take systematic steps to measure the impact of existing interventions, mapping practices with a demonstrable social and economic impact, developing arguments for key stakeholders and supporting the dissemination of this practice.

**Objective: Create preconditions for coordination of support in the territory.**

Measures will focus on the possibilities of increasing the capacity to perform social work, strengthening mutual cooperation between public administration stakeholders and other entities in the performance of social work. Significant support for social work in municipalities, harmonisation of social work methods and cooperation with the LO CR, non-governmental non-profit organisations and social services will be important, as will the emphasis on financial security of social service providers.

**Objective: Strengthen the instruments for providing support in people's natural environment.**

The fulfilment of this objective consists in the promotion of care provided as much as possible in the natural environment of the persons for whom the care is intended, including the development of the necessary instruments (especially community care).

**Risks and barriers of community work:**

1. Passive approach of the population living in social exclusion to solving their own needs and problems;
2. Incoherence of activities and measures intended for social inclusion of the population with the local policy of the affected municipalities;
3. Low level of involvement of the population at risk of social exclusion in the process of formulating and solving problems and non-participation of representatives of institutions;
4. Insufficient experience of municipalities with active use of community work and participation methods;
5. Insufficient anchoring of community work in the social work system – especially in the area of support for meeting activities of socially disadvantaged people and the public (e.g. community centres with an integrative role, the development of which received a considerable amount of ESF funds within the current programming period);
6. The reluctance of some municipalities to use social and community work instruments to include socially excluded persons, especially Roma, in the context of the majority population's attitudes towards this group (potential voters evaluate these measures negatively)



**Objective: Enable social change and balance the disproportions between the needs of people and resources through community work and the participation of the inhabitants of the territory with a concentration of social exclusion.**

The measures will be aimed at systemic anchoring and support for the implementation of community work as a tool for creating local communities – civic communities in municipalities, towns and cities and a satisfied neighbourhood of all residents of the municipality. The measures will strengthen the capacity of people at risk of social exclusion in solving their problems and the participation of socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion in local policy-making and implementation of activities, and they will increase their participation in community life in the natural conditions of the local community.

## 4. Areas supporting social inclusion

### 4.1. Prevention of indebtedness and help with the over-indebtedness issue

The increasing indebtedness of the population has long been perceived as a serious problem in most EU Member States. The uncontrolled increase in indebtedness leading to over-indebtedness can easily jeopardise the stability of the social system and the economy as a whole. Over-indebtedness is in many cases the cause of social exclusion of individuals and families, it leads to social and health problems, endangers the basic needs of children, leads to financial drainage of the most affected regions and has very negative effects on the State budget. Indebtedness is cited, among other matters, as one of the main causes housing loss, work outside the legal labour market and high recidivism. A significant problem is posed by the deepening indebtedness of socially excluded persons.

Significant over-indebtedness of part of the population is one of the key problems of social exclusion in the Czech Republic as well. At the end of 2019, execution proceedings were ongoing in the Czech Republic with 775 thousand persons (almost 9% of the adult population). This represents a year-on-year decrease of about 46 000 persons;<sup>110</sup> nevertheless, the number of people facing execution remains a serious problem. The Chamber of Bailiffs of the Czech Republic draws particular attention to the problem of the growth of multiple executions, i.e. cases where several execution proceedings are conducted against one debtor at once the total number of active execution proceedings has reached 4.5 million, 474 thousand people with at least 3 executions,<sup>111</sup> and 157 thousand people even face 10 or more execution proceedings at once. The total principal enforced<sup>112</sup> via executions exceeds CZK 297 billion.

The ever-decreasing age of over-indebted people is also a very dangerous phenomenon. All of this has far-reaching economic consequences in the form of distortions in the labour market, declining Government revenues from taxes and social security, and increasing spending on social support, health care, crime prevention and response, and more. Similarly, the social consequences, led by material deprivation, pathological behaviour, loss of housing and, in extreme cases, social exclusion, have a significant society-wide dimension.

At the same time, the cause of this situation does not necessarily have to be only irresponsible indebtedness and the consequent laziness in solving the repayment problem. In many cases, the causes of indebtedness are objective, such as loss of employment, long-term illness or injury, family breakdown, indebtedness of one of the partners or, for example, an unsuccessful business.

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<sup>110</sup> Otevřená společnost, o.p.s., 2019; Available at: <http://mapaexekuci.cz/index.php/mapa-2/>.

<sup>111</sup> One of the basic indicators of over-indebtedness and current or potential risk of social exclusion.

<sup>112</sup> This is an amount excluding legal and enforcement costs for recovery, late payment interest on contractual penalties, etc.

Experience also often shows that the over-indebtedness of individuals and households has been largely caused or exacerbated by the legislative environment. In particular, there was an abuse of the institution of arbitration,<sup>113</sup> costs of the “Reimbursement Decree”<sup>114</sup> for trivial debts, almost zero regulation of the non-banking consumer lending sector<sup>115</sup> and the creation of a competitive environment between bailiffs. Deficiencies in the setting of the system have the strongest impact on the most socially vulnerable groups of the population: they contribute to the growth of the number of socially excluded persons and their accumulation in socially excluded localities.

One of the basic shortcomings of the current system is the lack of a comprehensive database of detailed (and often aggregated) qualitative and quantitative data on the indebtedness of individuals and households, not only in socially excluded localities, but also in the whole of the Czech Republic. The absence (or unavailability) of such key statistics, which could be extensively analysed and monitored over time from different demographic, social or economic perspectives, causes discussions on potential adjustments to existing legislation to take place at a very general level without precise quantification of the extent of the problem under discussion.

Due to the development of over-indebtedness of the Czech population, there is another current, which is the insufficient capacity of the debt counselling system, which leads to poor availability of these free services, involvement of the private sector in areas that are insufficiently covered by non-profit organisations or State institutions,<sup>116</sup> and a higher concentration of “usurious” companies and various unfair practices. In addition, the population groups concerned are not sufficiently informed about the possibility of using the free debt counselling. This is also one of the reasons why they often come to counselling too late. Entities from the non-profit organisation sector often focus on a more active, comprehensive and individual approach to working with the client in the area of over-indebtedness than the public sector, thus complementing the overall work with the client and helping to fulfil the strategy of measures. However, the public sector, which invests too much in debt counselling in this respect, should not rely on entities outside it to cover the issue independently.

Among the most fundamental problems in the field of debt collection in execution proceedings is the absence of the territorial principle and the system of free choice of the bailiff. Today, multiple executions of a single debtor are enforced by more executors simultaneously, thus duplicating the same activities and thus burdening a number of entities and, in essence, the entire economy. Paradoxically, those most affected by this system are employers, who spend hundreds of thousands to millions CZK a year to employ people in execution and therefore often do not prefer to employ people in execution.

The method of calculating execution and insolvency deductions from income, together with the currently very low non-seizable amount, leads to a preference for undeclared work and thus considerable economic losses. The problem seems to be the long-term non-valorised amount of the subsistence minimum, which, in addition to the normative housing costs, form the basis for the calculation of the non-seizable amount in execution and insolvency.

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<sup>113</sup>From 1 December 2016, arbitration procedure is prohibited in all consumer contracts.

<sup>114</sup> Effective from 2001 to 2013, when it was annulled by the Constitutional Court.

<sup>115</sup>The new Act No 257/2016, on consumer credit, already significantly regulates the non-banking sector with effect from 1 December 2016.

<sup>116</sup> For example, in the area of debt relief under the Insolvency Act, there are a large number of commercial debt relief agencies that often offer very poor quality services for often absurdly high fees (moreover, in most cases illegally).

Furthermore, it is a combination of the low income of the debtor/obligor from whom the monies are deducted and the social benefit settings. Precisely because of the calculation bases of social benefits that do not take into account income after deductions, debtors often show only minimal income and work illegally, because otherwise they would lose their entitlement to social benefits and their income would drop dramatically – a paradox that supports widening the debt trap.

In addition, a low non-seizable amount, in combination with other factors, can accelerate the debt trap by often leaving people who face execution unable to afford basic necessities and thus becoming late with other payments that they would have been able to pay otherwise.

One of the reasons for the current situation is the insufficient financial literacy and education of the population. This area has long been neglected in primary and secondary education. At present, financial literacy is a mandatory part of education in primary and secondary schools, but without the definition of a mandatory time allowance, which would take into account the individual regional needs of schools in connection with the distribution of over-indebted persons within the Czech Republic. As a result, many schools address the field of financial literacy by only assigning a few hours on this topic within one school year, which is completely insufficient in terms of its effectiveness and impact. The financial literacy of adults can also be ensured via public libraries.

#### **Risks and barriers:**

1. Excessive indebtedness of part of the population, combined with a low non-seizable amount and the setting of the income deductions system weakens the interest of part of the unemployed/inactive in seeking formal employment;
2. Insufficient capacity and availability of debt counselling services (especially within the social care department);
3. Lack of alternative options for resolving over-indebtedness for persons who do not meet the current conditions necessary to enter the debt relief process under the Insolvency Act;<sup>117</sup>
4. Establishment of a system of executions which does not respect the territorial competence towards the debtor and enables executions against one debtor by several executors;
5. Absence of legislation that would make it impossible for children to incur debts;
6. Absence of a separate study programme of debt counselling or integration of debt counselling courses into already existing programmes (e.g. social work);
7. Insufficient financial and debt literacy education in the system of regional education and the related insufficient non-formal education of citizens in the field of financial literacy of the population that has already undergone formal school education;
8. Inconsistent system of data collection and evaluation in the field of executions and their unavailability;
9. Impossibility of obtaining free access to information on own debts.

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<sup>117</sup> Act No 31/2019, amending Act No 182/2006, on bankruptcy and settlement (the Insolvency Act), as amended, and some other acts, made debt relief available to almost all honest debtors;

**Objective: Reduce the risk of social exclusion due to over-indebtedness of individuals and households as well as persons at significant risk of social exclusion, including the elimination of the possibility of children's indebtedness.**

Special attention will be paid to the promotion of preventive measures and the promotion of relevant services, especially in the area of debt counselling. The area of education will be a separate chapter altogether, including the education of (future) workers providing support to indebted people. To meet this objective, it will be necessary to collect and analyse more detailed data in the field of executions and insolvencies and the necessary legislative changes.

**Objective: Reduce the cost and efficiency of the execution process and significantly combat illegal practices.**

The measures will focus on the revision of the execution process, alternative options for resolving insolvency, the system for calculating income deductions, the amount of non-seizable amounts, and better and free access to information on own debts and executions. Attention will also be paid to the creation of a single location with information available on tax and administrative executions.

## 4.2. Employment and its retention

Poverty and social exclusion are very closely related to unemployment, in particular long-term unemployment. Almost half of all unemployed people (48.7%) are at risk of poverty. Ensuring equal access to employment for all groups of the Czech population is a prerequisite for combating social exclusion, especially in the productive part of the population. Promoting employment of disadvantaged groups is important both in order to ensure adequate income and prevent the risk of poverty for socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion, and also to facilitate the social integration of this group of the Czech population, as having a job is not only an essential source of income, but also an important social value.

However, at the same time, entering employment does not automatically lift you out of poverty. Especially for people facing executions, entering employment is very often financially disadvantageous. The situation when work does not pay off is very demotivating for potential employees and employers alike. At present, the systemic solution of the issue of executions is a very significant challenge in terms of solving barriers in the field of employment. One of the possible positive changes could be brought about by the amendment of the Government regulation on non-seizable amounts,<sup>118</sup> which raised the threshold above which the rest of the net wage is seized without restriction. This change should help people with higher income to keep a higher amount of their income and to motivate all debtors/obligors in execution/insolvency to achieve a higher income.

Long-term or repeated unemployment contributes to an increase in material and social deprivation and an increased risk of social exclusion, trapping socially excluded individuals in welfare benefit dependency.

The expected problems of the Czech labour market follow in particular from:

- Lack of funds and capacity to care for pre-school children or other dependents;
- The growing discrepancy between supply and demand in the labour market (both quantitative and qualitative), between the qualification needs of the labour market, the qualification of the labour force and the insufficient professional (but also regional) mobility of the labour force;
- The effects of the 4th Industrial Revolution and workers' adaptation to change, especially in the case of low-skilled persons and persons with poorer access to education (both initial and lifelong), for whom it is difficult to find employment in future labour markets, even in situations where there is a high demand for labour; It is also important to focus on the predicted effects of digitisation in relation to gender equality;<sup>119</sup>
- Insufficient funding to support suitable permeable jobs and supported jobs in the secondary labour market for disadvantaged people, such as the socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion, or persons with disabilities or people with an increased need to reconcile personal and professional life (because of caring for children or other dependents);

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<sup>118</sup> Government Decree No 91/2019, amending Government Decree No 595/2006, on the method of calculating the basic amount that may not be deducted from the monthly wage in the execution of a decision, and on determining the amount above which the wage may be deducted without restriction (Regulation on Non-Seizable Amounts).

<sup>119</sup> Digitisation impacts on the labour market in the Czech Republic and the EU. [online]. [qtd. 9 March 2019]. Available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/evropske-zalezitosti/analyzy-EU/Dopady-digitalizace-na-trh-prace-CR-a-EU.pdf>

- Despite the current economic boom, there are still groups of people who are disproportionately represented in the labour market, such as the Roma.<sup>120</sup>

#### **Risks and barriers:**

1. Lack of interconnection of initial education with labour market needs.
2. Insufficient cooperation of relevant stakeholders across governmental departments and employment phases.
3. In the area of reconciling family and working life, there is still an insufficient offer of locally and financially available education and care services for children up to three years of age, pre-school children, children of younger school age and care services for other dependent persons. The use of flexible forms of employment relationships and the low supply and use thereof and the organisation of work (quality part-time work, flexible working hours, etc.) is among the lowest in the EU and prevents reaching a higher employment rate, which primarily applies to certain demographic groups (women with children, single-parent families, older people, disabled and otherwise disadvantaged persons, persons caring for a dependent).
4. There are growing regional disparities in the labour market, territorial remoteness and poor transport access to employment, which constitute other elements disadvantaging certain groups of job seekers.
5. There is space for improvement in the system of further education of the workforce in general, including the use of tools for the certification of competences acquired outside the formal education system.
6. The growing risk of “unemployment” of certain groups in changing labour market conditions with the potential for long-term unemployment.
7. Over-indebtedness (execution deductions) fundamentally limits the possibilities of entering the labour market. This leads (with regard to the setting up of the system of executions) to illegal work or the preference for dependence on social income over income from economic activity. These are not exclusively barriers on the part of debtors, but also on the part of potential employers, who must then take upon themselves the administrative burden of the execution deductions.
8. Targeting active employment policy instruments more towards those who face milder barriers to entering the labour market than those most in need of support to enter the primary labour market.
9. Absence of an interdisciplinary system of a comprehensive individualised approach to people with multiple disabilities (barriers in the labour market).
10. Lack of data does not allow the implementation of evidence-based policies (e.g. there is a lack of information on how many unemployed people face executions).
11. Discrimination in access to the labour market.

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<sup>120</sup> Based on general unemployment rates (2% in 2018), it can be concluded that the employment situation of the Roma should also improve in the long run, despite the fact that according to FRA research based on data from 2011 and 2015, it turned out that the situation in the employment of Roma it is improving only very slowly. The EU MIDIS I and II survey showed that in 2015, 32% of economically active Roma in the Czech Republic were unemployed, and compared to 2011 (35%), there was only a slight improvement. The same survey also shows that there is a large difference in the employment of Roma men and women.

**Objective: Create the conditions for socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion to enter and remain in the labour market.**

This objective will be mainly a matter of creating a more favourable environment for people who have other barriers than insufficient or inadequate work experience. The aim will be to gradually remove all barriers to the long-term employment of these people in the primary labour market by providing the level and form of support they need in a given situation. It will be important to support the improvement of qualifications outside the education system as one of the options for getting a job and staying in the labour market. In addition, permeable employment will need to be promoted with a view to the person's subsequent employment in the regular labour market. In the field of consulting, professional and capacity standards of consulting work will be set. The impacts of the measures taken on the target groups will be regularly evaluated so that it is possible to implement evidence-based policy.

**Objective: Create a favourable environment for employers who employ people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion.**

This objective will mainly consist of promoting the employment of people further away from the primary labour market, promoting the provision of psychosocial support to disadvantaged employees, closer cooperation between employers and educational institutions, including lifelong learning, retraining and similar courses. Long-term, stable employment will be supported. Flexible forms of work will also be supported. The prevention of the creation and development of precarious forms of employment on the labour market will also be supported. The aim is also to improve the territorial and financial accessibility of childcare services and facilities for children and other dependents, with special regard to the social inclusion of children from disadvantaged families and areas with insufficient capacity of these facilities, especially up to 4 years of age. It is necessary to create conditions for the activity and development of social enterprises, which will help to integrate disadvantaged people into the secondary labour market and which play a significant integration role in the transfer of the target group to the free labour market.

**Objective: Ensuring the implementation and development of socially responsible and strategic public procurement in relation to social inclusion objectives**

Activities will focus on comprehensive and systemic support for the development of socially and environmentally responsible, i.e. strategic public procurement in the Czech Republic in relation to the social inclusion objectives. First and foremost, it will be to help contracting authorities to make effective use of the potential (or funding) of their public contracts to meet the priorities and objectives of social inclusion – in particular in terms of promoting the employment of people disadvantaged in the labour market (and including system support, training, consultations, dissemination of good practice or model texts for tender documentation). A similar form of support will also be targeted at social enterprises to improve their access to public procurement. It will also be important to cooperate with companies so that they are ready to reflect the requirements of contracting entities in terms of socially responsible objectives.



**Objective: Introduction of an individual and comprehensive approach of public employment services to people with more disadvantages in the labour market. Develop social entrepreneurship opportunities.**

The objective will be achieved by targeting active employment policy instruments and other support services towards people with more disadvantages in the labour market (e.g. low qualifications, older age and indebtedness). The systemic cooperation of public employment services with other entities which eliminate or alleviate disadvantages and barriers to enter and remain in the primary labour market will be supported, including guidance services and mentoring, both before starting work and during the trial period. Activities leading to the cooperation of key stakeholders in the field of employment at the local level will also be supported. The focus will be on young people in the transition from school to work in motivation to work through career counselling. Therefore, the cooperation of schools, employers and the LO CR will also be supported. Especially for people with incomplete primary or secondary education, the possibility of reconciling employment and further education will be supported. Active employment policy also aims to ensure and implement a smooth connection and concurrence of individual instruments of active employment policy in the sense of permeable employment. The development of social entrepreneurship will be supported.

### 4.3. Social services

Through social services defined by Act No 108/2006, on social services, as amended, assistance and support is provided to individuals in difficult social situations in order to achieve social integration or prevent social exclusion. Social services respond to the needs of socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion, as well as to negative social phenomena that occur in the localities where these services are provided. The lack of social services and, as a consequence, the insufficient network thereof, make it impossible to prevent the deepening social exclusion of these people. The basic framework document for the given area is the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services for the period 2016–2025, the purpose of which is to set up a system of social services to meet the needs of disadvantaged people and social service users and to enable them, if possible, to live in their natural environment.

The aspects of the quality, availability, permeability and complexity of the social services system play a fundamental role. Under the current conditions of the financing method, municipalities and towns cannot plan activities in the area of social services in the long term, as the State does not sufficiently cover the area of social services with financial resources and decides on their possible additional financing only during the year. Thus, social service providers live in uncertainty about whether they will be able to afford to provide social services in a given year.

In practice, the current definition of the conditions for the provision of individual types of social services allows only partially for the provision of social services to specific groups of vulnerable people, such as people in the highest degree of social exclusion, potential clients of night shelters, low-threshold day centres and homeless hostels, who need services with the lowest possible level of conditions and maximum accessibility, at least at a certain stage. This includes, for example, homeless people who have other specific difficulties and limits in their ability to adapt to the requirements (e.g. the requirement to prove that they are free of infection when entering the service for clients with barriers to health care access). Especially in residential prevention-oriented services, clients are in a hopeless situation when there are no follow-up services or available housing, temporary social services do not and cannot replace regular housing, and yet they become a long-term or permanent solution. Residential care services are practically unavailable to them, because if they meet the conditions of the target group (due to their long-term adverse health condition, they need the help of another person to cope with basic life needs), they will not fulfil the obligations associated with the use of the service (payment for accommodation, food and for care provided to the agreed extent).

#### **Risks and barriers:**

1. The capacity and availability of social services, as well as the solution to the issue of the socio-health boundary, is still insufficient;
2. Significant differences in the quality of social services in the area of social inclusion or the prevention of social exclusion;
3. System of financing social services;
4. Insufficient communication between theory and practice;
5. Subjective and objective barriers in communication between individual providers of social services and between providers and social workers of MEPs and MADPs (municipal authorities with delegated powers) (there are many cases where a socially excluded person is a client of several social service providers and social workers of municipal authorities – social work can be counterproductive and moreover, more economically demanding).

6. Act No 108/2006, on social services, does not define social services for some very specific groups of people, so there are no social services for certain socially excluded people.

**Objective: Create a sustainable and predictable system of multiannual financing of social services.**

The measure will focus on the creation of the principles of multiannual financing from the State budget.

**Objective: Ensure the availability of quality and effective social services corresponding to the identified needs.**

The measures will focus on revising the system of assessing the quality of services so that it provides instruments for continuous monitoring of the quality of services that will be provided on a *lege artis* basis to create conditions for service availability to the person with regard to their specific needs, i.e. eliminating situations when, despite the availability of the given service in the locality, some target groups are denied the provision of support. Furthermore, the measures will focus on strengthening the principle of a person's participation and the effective provision of the service, i.e. the elimination of the person's dependence on the service.

**Objective: Ensure a sufficiently developed system of social services for the needs of socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion which would be capable of responding to their individual needs within the context of the social contract.**

The measure focuses on prevention services and improving the availability of social services and social work for the inhabitants of socially excluded localities as well as people at risk of poverty.

**Objective: Create conditions for increasing the flexibility of providing support through social services. Further support the transformation of residential social services.**

The measures will focus on the creation of legislative conditions enabling the provision of more comprehensive support within the registered type of service, the reduction of the administrative burden on social service providers and the issue of the socio-health boundary.

**Objective: To create conditions for lowering the thresholds for residential and outpatient services for people facing extreme social exclusion in cases where the conditions defining the scope of social services, participation of clients and the approach (rules) of providers limit or prevent the solution of the adverse social situation or the access of the target group to services.**

The measure will include addressing the access of people facing extreme exclusion to social care services in cases where they meet the conditions of reduced self-sufficiency, need regular assistance from another person, but their income, after exhausting all entitlement options, is insufficient to cover the fees charged for such services. The measure will also focus on services for homeless people, especially those with substance dependencies, by supporting the capacity (in terms of both expert personnel and material) of providers to provide care for persons with substance dependencies who need to use services and are unable to abstain. This objective should be fulfilled both on the investment level, i.e. building the physical space for services to provide such a service in conditions of collective co-existence, on the expert level, i.e. supporting education and linking experts on homelessness and addiction, and on the verification level, i.e. supporting pilot projects of "wet" services.

#### 4.4. Family support

The most significant changes in family life include increasing variability in cohabitation, increasing life expectancy, low fertility, increasing age of mothers at the birth of the first child, increasing the number of childless women, low employment of women (especially women with minor children) and increasing levels of women's qualifications, declining household sizes and increasing length of children's education. All family functions must be supported in all phases. Due to changes in the structure of population and households, because of the expected increase in single-member and single-parent households, we can expect a sharp increase in the risk of poverty for the EU population. As part of family support, it is necessary to focus on resolving crisis situations, improving the position of at-risk children and at-risk families, and focusing on primary prevention – measures and services that will contribute to improving the position of families in the Czech Republic and reducing the number of at-risk families. One of the key instruments for the inclusion of poor (low-income) families with children is, together with motivation for children to learn, the development of school services for hobby education in relation to children for whom meaningfully organised hobby activities remain largely inaccessible, and improving children's diet through school lunches in primary and nursery schools.

On 18 September 2017, the Government of the Czech Republic approved by Resolution No 654 the Family Policy Concept, which was prepared by the MoLSA in cooperation with the Expert Commission for Family Policy. The Family Policy Concept contains a total of 39 measures aimed at comprehensive support for families, which respond primarily to the demographic ageing of society and low birth rates.

This section focuses both on the area of family policy, which aims to support ordinary families in the performance of their basic social functions, and on the care system for vulnerable children, which is aimed at helping at-risk children within the meaning of Section 6 of the SLPC Act and their families in unfavourable life situations. An important prerequisite for effective assistance to families is, of course, the interconnectedness of measures that are part of both systems so that these measures complement each other and follow upon each other appropriately with regard to the changing needs of families in the Czech Republic.

#### 4.4.1. Family support in the family policy system

As already mentioned, the most significant changes in family life include the following main factors: increasing variability in cohabitation, increasing life expectancy, low fertility, increasing age of mothers at the birth of the first child, increasing number of childless women, low employment of women (especially women with children) and increasing levels of women's qualifications, declining household sizes and increasing length of children's education, **as well as the availability of pre-school education.**

One of the key instruments for the inclusion of poor families with children is, in addition to supporting children's motivation for education, the development of services focused on hobby education of children from low-income households so that they can meaningfully spend their time and develop their potential in an all-round manner. At present, due to the limited income of families, these hobby activities are often unavailable to them. As part of education support, it is also important to improve the access of children from low-income households to free school lunches in primary and nursery schools, as the current support system is not always sufficient; there are several barriers to the proper function of this system, such as the non-participation of some regions in the Czech Republic, insufficient promotion of school lunches and often even ignorance on the parents' side. **Another important area is the insufficient availability of pre-school education, especially in the care for children under 3 years of age. This aspect increases the risk of social exclusion of parents as well as their return to the labour market.**

A significant obstacle to the development of primary prevention services to support the family is the absence of their legal regulation, which would clearly define them, define the rules of their operation and set up appropriate control mechanisms. Counselling services and other preventive activities fall under different governmental departments and are also funded from different sources. This situation in connection with the short-term nature of the support for projects of individual non-profit entities creates an uncertain environment for providers and users.

Primary prevention services make it possible to investigate the assumptions and causes of the occurrence of socially negative phenomena affecting families and to find ways to prevent them. These services are primarily of a preventive and supportive nature and they promote the stability of families, facilitate family formation, strengthen parental competencies, improve family relationships, support parents in caring for and raising children, and they also have a positive effect on the harmonious reconciliation of family and work.

##### **Risks and barriers:**

1. In the Czech Republic, employment of women is significantly lower compared to men;
2. Frequent absence of low-threshold services aimed at supporting families who find themselves in an unfavourable social situation (e.g. facing conflicts or violence in the family, parents lacking the necessary parental competencies, caring for one of the members that places high demands on other family members, etc.);
3. Hobby education is unavailable for children from low-income families due to the high financial demands;
4. Absence of systemic tools to support families in housing deprivation who are at risk of losing their homes.

**Objective: Ensure accessible, interconnected and high-quality services for families, children and youth.**

The proposed measures will focus on proposals for regulatory changes, changes in the system's financing and other necessary systemic steps. The measures will further target the development of low-threshold free services for the hobby education of children from low-income households, which will provide them with opportunities to meaningfully spend their leisure time and comprehensively develop their potential and will positively stimulate them to extend their education. It is also necessary to promote primary prevention in the area of the position of children and families with children, as well as to support innovative approaches to primary prevention and follow-up measures to strengthen primary prevention.

**Objective: Strengthen the economic stability of families and their independence with an emphasis on freedom of choice of family strategy, especially in balancing professional, family and personal life.**

Support for childcare services with the aim of strengthening the employment of women (especially women at specific risk in the labour market) and the social inclusion of children from families in an unfavourable social situation due to social exclusion. Create sufficient places in pre-school care for children under three years of age, as well as expanding the number and capacity of children's groups and day nurseries. Develop and support the sustainability of programmes to support children's school meals and improve awareness of these programmes for children from families in need among the relevant parents.

**Objective: Strengthen the cooperation of State administration with municipal and regional self-governments and the non-profit sector in the field of family and social policy.**

The measures will focus on the cooperation and joint action of these stakeholders in supporting the reduction of inequalities of families with various types of disadvantages in society, reducing the material and food deprivation of low-income families in disadvantaged social situations, raising families' awareness of social and family policy support instruments and other instruments of primary prevention and reducing the negative impacts of care on informal carers and their quality of life.

#### 4.4.2. Support for at-risk children and their families in the care system for at-risk children

Since 2006, several Government strategies have been adopted to transform the care system for at-risk children. Despite these efforts, the system is still not adequately optimised. One of its characteristic features is the high number of children taken from the care of parents and placed in alternative care, either institutionally provided by residential facilities for children or in the form of foster care.

**Table 4: Number of children placed in alternative care in residential facilities for children 2011–2019**

	Children placed in school facilities	Children placed in children's homes for children under 3 years of age <sup>121</sup>	Children placed in homes for people with disabilities	Children placed in facilities for children requiring immediate assistance	Total children in residential care	
<b>2011</b>	7,150	1,428	834	995	<b>10,407</b>	
<b>2012</b>	6,941	1,397	769	1,020	<b>10,127</b>	
<b>2013</b>	6,549	1,233	646	1,088	<b>9,516</b>	
<b>2014</b>	6,495	1,213	577	1,259	<b>9,544</b>	
<b>2015</b>	6,482	1,174	538	778	<b>8,972</b>	
<b>2016</b>	6,500	1,037	595	629	<b>8,761</b>	
<b>2017</b>	6,345	922	447	720	<b>8,434</b>	
<b>2018</b>	6,394	876	429	504	<b>8,206</b>	
<b>2019</b>	6,553	818	438	520	<b>8,329</b>	

Source: MoLSA

There is a persevering problem of cases where children are placed outside the family environment for illegitimate reasons (e.g. to ensure the child's education, even after the children have completed compulsory schooling; due to "educational problems" or unspecified "neglect", which, however, works as an umbrella term for a bad financial and material situation or housing deprivation of the family, etc.).

<sup>121</sup> Source: Institute of Health Information and Statistics; children over 3 years of age are also placed in children's homes for children up to 3 years of age, typically up to the age of compulsory schooling, i.e. up to 6 years of age; the age structure of children cannot be ascertained from the available statistics.

**Table 5: Number of children removed from parental care between 2016 and 2020 and reasons for removal<sup>122</sup>**

Year	Cruelty	Sexual abuse	Neglect	Educational problems	Other barriers to parental care	Total
2016	158	42	1,665	937	1,010	3,812
2017	141	24	1,640	871	1,070	3,746
2018	122	43	1,541	862	1,071	3,639
2019	167	29	1,608	843	932	3,579
2020	144	25	1,463	552	719	2,903

Source: MoLSA

Children may be placed in institutional care on the basis of inadequate legal titles, e.g. on the basis of preliminary settlement of their relationships, even if the child is not exposed to an immediate threat to life, health or serious threat to development (in 2019, a total of 3 579 children were separated from their parents, 73% of whom were removed on the basis of a preliminary settlement).

One of the reasons is the low level of human rights awareness among the entities involved in the placement of a child in institutional care. The system as a whole shows a high permeability only in the direction from the natural family; the permeability in the other direction, i.e. back to the child's own family, is very low.

According to national legislation and international obligations, institutional care should always be the last resort when it is necessary to place a child outside the family. Institutional care should never be considered the most appropriate environment in which a child should grow up. Many residential facilities for children are large-capacity and it is no exception for them to be located in remote places where children do not have the opportunity to be in contact with the local community or the opportunity to develop social ties outside the facility. In the Czech Republic, the accumulation of several types of facilities and services (social, health, educational) in one area of a residential facility is not prohibited by law,<sup>123</sup> where individual services provided in different legal regimes overlap and fade into one another. The accumulation of services within a residential facility does not support children in relations with the normal environment and confirms the tendency of the institutional facility to influence all aspects of their lives, as children do not have to go beyond these facilities, which thus have all areas of their life under their control (e.g. the children's chances to attend a regular school or engage in leisure activities with other children are limited).

<sup>122</sup> Source: Annual report on the performance of social and legal protection of children for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (the indicator has been monitored since 2016).

<sup>123</sup> In the real world, there are also situations where the facility provides services without appropriate authorisation (registration), which meet the parameters of the service formulated in the relevant law, although this law imposes an obligation on the provider to properly register this service, which also puts in place the appropriate control mechanisms. Therefore, institutional care provides a grey area for the provision of services to children without adequate authorisation.



Residential facilities for children show the characteristics of a total institution with a set regime and rules that do not create enough space to take into account the individual needs of the child, and which limit children's chances to experience the everyday life that their peers live in a family environment. The stay of children in these regime facilities, where the opportunities for children to exercise their own opinion and choice are limited, is often long term. The importance of the child's relationship with their family and other close people is also underestimated. Children leaving institutional care subsequently have difficulty coping with the demands of everyday independent life in a normal environment without a set regime and rules.

Although the number of children placed in institutional care has decreased over time (a decrease of 19%), this trend is unfortunately rather slow and slightly stagnant in recent years. In the Czech Republic, there has been an increase in the number of children placed in foster care since 2011 (by about 26%), however, not even this has meant a drastic reduction in the number of institutionalised children in institutional care. One of the reasons for this trend may be the still insufficient network of facilities and services to support the rehabilitation of the biological family.

**Table 6: Number of children placed in foster care in 2011–2020<sup>124</sup>**

	Foster care	Foster care for a temporary period	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	Entrusting a child to the care of another person	Total children in foster care
<b>2011</b>	7,170	1	2,648	4,738	<b>14,557</b>
<b>2012</b>	7,448	15	2,766	4,941	<b>15,170</b>
<b>2013</b>	7,595	33	2,764	4,901	<b>15,293</b>
<b>2014</b>	9,771	302	3,005	4,452	<b>17,530</b>
<b>2015</b>	10,380	543	3,076	4,152	<b>18,151</b>
<b>2016</b>	10,922	540	3,013	4,161	<b>18,363</b>
<b>2017</b>	11,362	605	3,032	4,263	<b>19,262</b>
<b>2018</b>	11,643	528	3,098	4,357	<b>19,626</b>
<b>2019</b>	11,931	591	3,136	4,637	<b>20,295</b>
<b>2020</b>	12,094	504	3,307	4,575	<b>20,480</b>

Source: MoLSA

The above results prove that the Czech Republic is failing to effectively fulfil its international obligations, which oblige it to gradually deinstitutionalise the care for at-risk children, within the time schedule set in the adopted Government strategies. In the context of Central Europe, the Czech Republic is also the last country to allow pre-school children to be entrusted to institutional facilities without any restrictions, despite long-term and widely published research results showing the negative effects of institutional care

<sup>124</sup> Source: Annual Report on the Performance of the Socio-legal Protection of Children for 2011–2020.

in the case of the youngest children. The placement of a young child in institutional care is perceived by international bodies<sup>125</sup> as a form of emotional neglect of the child, which as one of the forms of violence against children, is in conflict with the child's right to protection against all forms of violence under Article 19(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> In particular, the UN General Assembly, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Highest Level of Physical and Mental Health, the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the World Health Organization.

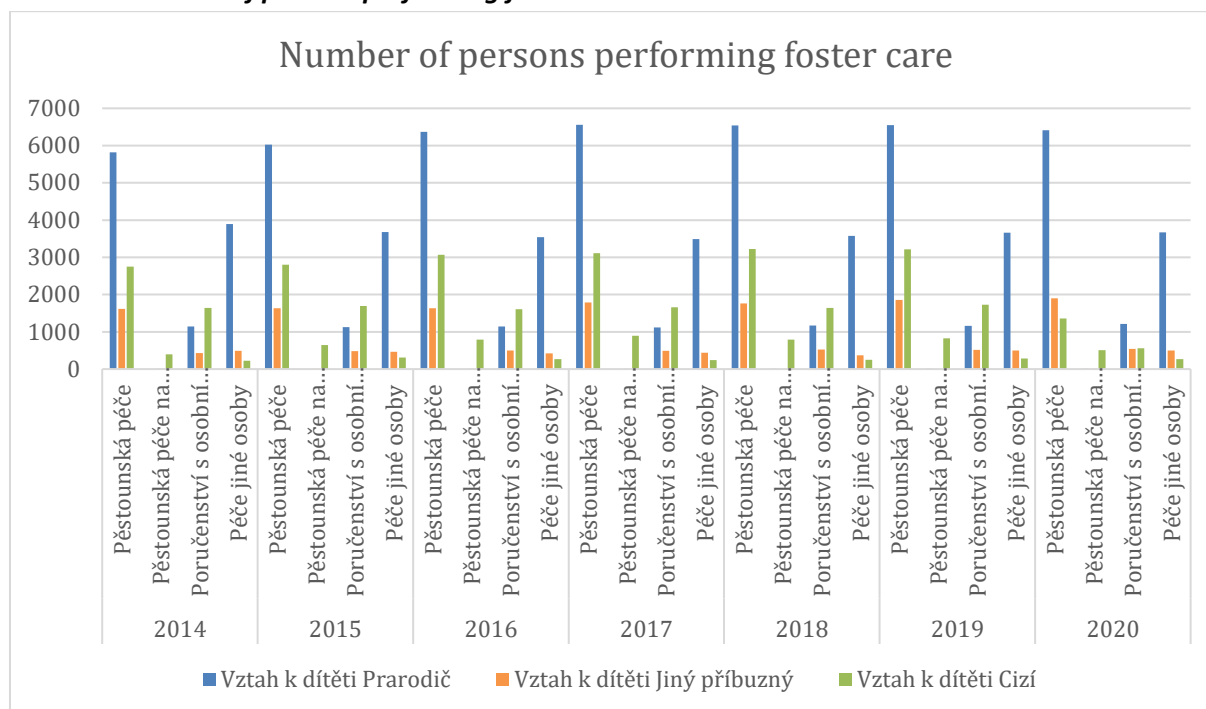
<sup>126</sup> Beyond this article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this practice is also in conflict with Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Guidelines on Substitute Care for Children.

**Table 7: Number of persons performing foster care**

31 December	Form of foster care	Relationship to the child		
		Grandparent	Another relative	Not related
<b>2014</b>	Foster care	5,817	1,619	2,755
	Foster care for a temporary period	0	1	394
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,143	430	1,643
	Care by another person	3,894	493	226
<b>2015</b>	Foster care	6,026	1,633	2,805
	Foster care for a temporary period	0	12	642
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,129	486	1,690
	Care by another person	3,677	467	313
<b>2016</b>	Foster care	6,373	1,636	3,066
	Foster care for a temporary period	0	5	794
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,147	498	1,612
	Care by another person	3,539	419	269
<b>2017</b>	Foster care	6,557	1,786	3,108
	Foster care for a temporary period	0	2	898
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,118	492	1,660
	Care by another person	3,494	443	240
<b>2018</b>	Foster care	6,537	1,766	3,226
	Foster care for a temporary period	3	0	789
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,170	528	1,646
	Care by another person	3,572	367	246
<b>2019</b>	Foster care	6,547	1,858	3,213
	Foster care for a temporary period	3	0	822
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,158	514	1,730
	Care by another person	3,662	500	288
<b>2020</b>	Foster care	6,410	1,897	1,359
	Foster care for a temporary period	3	9	511
	Guardianship with guardian's personal care	1,211	540	556
	Care by another person	3,674	497	266

Source: MoLSA

**Chart 6 – Number of persons performing foster care**



Source: MoLSA

Pěstounská péče

Foster care

Pěstounská péče ...

Foster care ...

Poručenství s osobní...

Guardianship with personal...

Péče jiné osoby

Care by another person

Vztah k dítěti Prarodič

Relationship to the child Grandparent

Vztah k dítěti Jiný příbuzný

Relationship to the child Another relative

Vztah k dítěti Cizí

Relationship to the child Not related

In many cases, placing a child in institutional care can also be considered disproportionate to the situation of the child and their family, as the situation could be dealt with effectively before the child is removed from parental care if families with children are provided with preventive services available in their place of residence in time. Unfortunately, the Czech Republic does not have a uniformly and sufficiently developed network of preventive services provided to families in an unfavourable social situation, especially in the field and outpatient form (this is most pronounced in structurally affected regions and socially excluded localities), through which it would be possible to prevent the child from being removed. A fundamental problem in this respect is the uneven distribution of financial flows, with funds invested in institutional care still accounting for the highest share of funds (42%) of the total amount of public funds spent within the system. Together with the funds earmarked for foster care (36%), they make up 78% of the total volume of funds that are invested in alternative childcare. Only 8% of funds are spent on preventive services for vulnerable children and their families.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>127</sup> MACELA, Miloslav. *Analysis of the Financing of the Care System for At-risk Children* [online]. 2018 [qtd. 9 September 2019]. Available at: <http://www.knihovnanrp.cz/online-katalog/nahradni-rodina/hmotne-zajisteni-nahradni-rodinne-pece/analiza-financovani-systemu-pece-o-ohrozene-deti-v-ceske-republice/>

An unfavourable accompanying phenomenon related to the current set-up of the system is the insufficient support for young adults who leave alternative care due to coming of age or gaining full legal capacity (in 2019, 1764 left substitute care for these reasons, in 2020 there were 1822 of these persons).<sup>128</sup> At present, young adults (both dependent students and non-dependent) lack adequate material security. Young people leaving long-term foster care and guardianship with the personal care of a guardian are entitled to a one-off allowance at the end of foster care in the amount of CZK 25 000 in accordance with Section 47h of the SLPC Act, which is paid to them by the Labour Office. A young person whose foster care for a temporary period or by a natural person other than their parents ends after gaining full legal capacity is not entitled to receive this benefit. Young adults leaving an institution for institutional or protective education are paid a one-off allowance directly at the end of their stay in an institution for institutional or protective education, pursuant to Section 33 of Act No 109/2002, on institutional or protective education in school facilities and on preventive educational care in school facilities and on amending other acts (the amount of the contribution is determined by the facility according to the needs and resources of the child). However, this one-off support is not enough for young people to be able to become fully independent, find and maintain housing and fully participate in everyday life. Both in the case of long-term foster care or personal care of the guardian, and in the case of care in a school facility for institutional or protective education, the young adult is not guaranteed the right to receive support for the entire period of their dependency (typically students due to continued preparation for their future profession). If a young adult remains in foster care in which they were placed before reaching the age of majority or full legal capacity, the person's right to financial support will continue for the period of dependency, which may complicate the situation for young people who no longer want to be dependent on foster care. At the same time, the young adult's further stay in alternative care depends on the consent of the former foster parent or guardian. In the case of school facilities for the performance of institutional education, a young person does not have a clear right to conclude a contract for voluntary residence. In addition, the requirements of this contract are not specified anywhere, which brings a strong state of insecurity to the young adult and strengthens their vulnerability. Children who reach the age of majority or full legal capacity in facilities for children in need of immediate assistance are then not entitled to the one-off allowance or any form of specific support for the duration of their dependency.

In addition to the absence of adequate material security, the situation of young adults is complicated by difficult access to employment opportunities and affordable housing; there is also a lack of accompanying support services that could be used by young adults who are in need of support for solving related problems (counselling, guidance, mentoring services). Young adults leaving protective education or prison or its relevant equivalent find themselves in a similar situation.

### **Risks and barriers:**

1. Horizontal and vertical fragmentation and complexity of the system, unclear competencies and responsibilities between individual managers. The individual components of the system fall under various ministries (especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health) and levels of public administration.<sup>129</sup> Different approaches to the management, rights and needs of the child, methodological management and financing blend together. There is a lack of binding quality standards regulated by legal regulations and methodologies

<sup>128</sup> The data are based on the annual report on the performance of social and legal protection of children for 2019 and 2020.

<sup>129</sup> State administration institutions, regional and municipal authorities, important sources of support such as housing and the development of social services are the responsibility of self-governments.

that would unify work procedures across the entire system and guarantee quality and effective protection for all children.

2. A system managed by different governmental departments does not take into account the complex needs of children, the relevant components of the system focus only on a specific part of the child's life (school facilities primarily focus on education and upbringing, health services on health needs, etc.). The importance of the child's stable relationships with family and loved ones is underestimated. The child's opinion is not sufficiently taken into account in decision-making processes, there are no mechanisms for involving children and young people in decision-making processes at all levels.
3. The financial flows in the system are unevenly distributed – it is necessary to optimise them so that the most funds are spent on preventive services, which should be the pillar of a functioning system and receive the most massive financial support. At present, there is also no minimum network of services guaranteed by the public administration (State) focused on timely assistance and rehabilitation of the family.
4. The threat to the child and the failure of the parental role is in many cases a secondary consequence of the family's problems in another area (poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, etc.). Moreover, the failure model often repeats itself in future generations of the family. In addition to developing a network of services for at-risk children and their families, it is essential to ensure that these families have access to affordable housing and adequate material security by revising and adjusting the concept of social benefits for families with children in disadvantaged social situations.

Children who are placed in alternative institutional care and who cannot temporarily or permanently return to their own families are not always or sufficiently quickly provided with a suitable alternative family environment. The most disadvantaged are children with special needs, which result from an unfavourable health condition or from a different ethnic origin or from living in a different socio-cultural environment (e.g. children – foreigners). Unlike other European countries (including Central European countries), the Czech Republic does not limit the possibility of placing pre-school children in residential facilities.

**Objective: Optimise the system of care for at-risk children so as to ensure the consistent protection of children's rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the fulfilment of their needs.**

The measures will focus on changing the philosophy of the system and related conceptual changes, which will ensure consistent protection of the rights of the child guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international documents; they will also lead to the fulfilment of children's individual needs (including specific needs resulting, for example, from an unfavourable state of health, from living in a different socio-cultural environment, etc.).

It is important to ensure the effective management, coordination and interconnection of individual components of the system, the basic principle of which must be the all-round development of the child in their own family and, if this is not possible, primarily in an alternative family environment. The individual components of the system must have clearly and transparently set boundaries of activities so that the scope of their competencies is clear. This must include setting up guarantees that will eliminate the unequal treatment of children and their families and encourage the active participation of children in decision-making processes that directly affect them.

An integral part of the changes is the setting up of functional monitoring of the care system for at-risk children based on an information system which will enable the collection of data on the number and situation of at-risk children and their families and the impact of services on their quality of life. It also includes a change in the approach to assessing the quality of the care system for at-risk children, the basic starting point of which will be the fulfilment of the child's rights and needs (not only of the material, technical, operational and other conditions of care). The monitoring system needs to be linked to the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the funds spent (whether the efforts and resources lead to the solution of the situation in the family corresponding to the best interests of the child).

**Objective: Initiate a controlled deinstitutionalisation of care for at-risk children, including systemic changes in legislation, financing and methodological guidance of staff working in the system.**

The expected impact is a reduction in the number of children growing up in foster care outside their own family. To this end, it is necessary to support the deinstitutionalisation of residential facilities for children and to develop a network of preventive field and outpatient services and low-capacity community-type residential services for at-risk children and their families, which will be available to them near their place of residence. An integral part is also the development of services and tools to support young adults leaving alternative care (including their material security) in the process of gradually gaining independence. The support should be directed to the financing of field and outpatient services, which are cheaper and have a greater reach and preventive character.

For this to be successful, the process must be properly planned and managed. It should include steps such as an analysis of the current situation and a feasibility study; education and communication of the topic to the public, specifically to founders and employees working in the system; a strategic plan for the transformation process; coordination of the implementation of the plan and support of specific entities in this process.

An integral part of deinstitutionalisation is also the expansion and professionalisation of the foster care system, as this form of care is a more suitable alternative to institutional care for children who cannot temporarily or permanently grow up in their own families. It is necessary to develop instruments (e.g. campaigns, changes in financial evaluation) to increase the number of people interested in providing foster care, to further support their openness to accept children with other or special needs (e.g. children with disabilities, children of different ethnicities or socio-cultural backgrounds or children of different sexual orientations going through their coming-out period) and to strengthen their professional readiness to provide quality and individualised care to children with regard to their needs. Changes to the system should focus on changes in the concept of foster care mediation, in the preparation and support of foster parents during the provision of childcare in an alternative family environment (accompaniment or guidance).

**Objective: Support the professional development of workers working in the system of care for at-risk children.**

A key prerequisite for the quality of childcare is competent professionals who provide this care. Therefore, the measures in this area will lead to the setting up of such instruments to develop their knowledge and skills so that children and their families can be provided with support that respects their rights and needs which will lead to an actual improvement in their living situation. An important area in this regard is the system of education, methodological support and supervision of employees.

Professional development should include the development of skills that are important for identifying and respecting the child's views and for involving children in decision-making on matters that concern them.



## 4.5. Access to education

The starting strategic document in the field of education is the Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020. Through this document, the Czech Republic is committed to the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020) as well as to Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.

Inequalities in education represent one of the most pressing problems, which were already addressed in the mentioned Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020.<sup>130</sup> Reducing inequality in education is an important topic in the development of education policy strategy in the Czech Republic for the next period, especially in connection with the creation of the Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2030 with the aim of ensuring equal access to education for all children, pupils and students. One of the most serious phenomena of recent years in relation to inequalities in education is the increase in differences both in connection with the differentiation of individual schools at partial levels of education and, above all, across individual regions. This results in an undoubtedly negative impact on the conditions, course and results of education of children, pupils and students. In this respect, it seems absolutely necessary to define partial objectives and measures to increase the quality of conditions and the course of education in the regions or at individual schools of all levels of education. However, in many cases, unjustified and premature separation of children happens, and its societal negative effects seem to outweigh the positive ones. This selection is due to the limited availability of childcare facilities, dividing children upon commencing elementary schools widely varying in quality, or commencing grammar schools. According to international comparisons, differences among children in different schools in terms of their study dispositions are very high in the Czech Republic.<sup>131</sup>

The basic precondition for a quality and functioning educational system is to enable each individual to develop their educational potential to the maximum and to ensure good accessibility and permeability of all levels of education.

The quality of pre-school and primary education helps to reduce social disparities and, in contrast, poor quality of widely available education deepens these disparities. The improved quality of pre-school and primary education is an effective measure to significantly reduce the costs of future social policies. Investing in quality and widely accessible initial education constitutes huge savings of future social spending. The educational structure in the Czech Republic is characterised by a high proportion of people with secondary education. In 2017, 70% of persons of 25-64 years of age had secondary education, the share of tertiary education in the Bachelor's degree cycle was 6% and the Master's degree 17%.<sup>132</sup>

The amendment to Act No 561/2004, on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the Education Act) introduced, from the 2017/2018 school year, compulsory pre-school education for children who reach the age of 5 before the beginning of the school year. Compulsory pre-school education is free. It is primarily performed in kindergarten for 4 hours a day. The law also allows for

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<sup>130</sup> Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020. Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports of the Czech Republic. [online]. [qtd. 4 December 2019]. Available at: [http://www.vzdelavani2020.cz/images\\_obsah/dokumenty/strategie-2020\\_web.pdf](http://www.vzdelavani2020.cz/images_obsah/dokumenty/strategie-2020_web.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> *School autonomy and accountability: Are they related to student performance?* OECD, 2011/9.

<sup>132</sup> OECD. *Education at a Glance 2018*: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>. p. 54–55.

individual pre-school compulsory education. The aim is to ensure the successful entry of all children into basic education.

From September 2017, children aged 5 and over are guaranteed a place in their catchment kindergartens. Municipalities must provide conditions for their education. Children from 4 years of age were also entitled to admission to a kindergarten established by a municipality or a union of municipalities (in accordance with the gradual effectiveness of the provisions of the Education Act) from September 2017, and children from 3 years of age were guaranteed from September 2018.

A very important area that needs to be targeted is the area of early care for children under three years of age from families facing socio-economic disadvantage. In relation to children from socio-economically disadvantaged families, the effectiveness of the intervention is significantly increased by intensive care from an early age. The Czech legislation does not provide for any support or educational activities for children under the age of three who come from such families. The current system provides support and comprehensive care only to families with children with disabilities, primarily through early care services, i.e. in the area of providing support to a child and parents of a child under 7 years of age who is disabled or whose development is endangered as a result of adverse health conditions. The service is focused on supporting the family and the child's development with regard to their specific needs, in accordance with Act No 108/2006, the Social Services Act. This above support does not include support for socially disadvantaged children.

As of 1 September 2016, an amendment to the Education Act (Act No 82/2015) became effective, which set clear rules for entitlement support in the education of pupils with special educational needs and gifted pupils. Despite the problems that accompanied the introduction of the changes, the obvious positive is the fact that children receive support in a predictable way and coverage of costs associated with support is guaranteed up to the amount set by the implementing regulation. In January 2016, Decree No 27/2016, on the education of pupils with special educational needs and gifted pupils, was approved and became effective on 1 September 2016. The Decree defines the procedures for implementing changes to strengthen the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs in mainstream schools through demanding support measures guaranteed by the State on the basis of the recommendations of the school counselling centre. The support measures are divided according to material and financial demands. An overview of support measures divided into five levels according to organisational, pedagogical and financial demands with their detailed description is contained in Annex 1 to Decree No 27/2016. Support measures are tied to a standardised financial intensity, which is uniform for the entire territory of the Czech Republic. The school thus obtains funds to ensure the provision of support measures for the education of the pupil.

Another important change in 2016 was the extensive modification of the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education (FEP PE). The annex to the FEP, which regulated the education of pupils with mild mental disabilities (MMD), was removed and used in the preparation of a unifying curriculum. As of 1 March 2016, the amended FEP PE entered into force.

The unifying curriculum supported both the unification of educational conditions for all primary school pupils and the individualised education of pupils using support measures for pupils with special educational needs, including the possibility of adjusting educational content from the third level of support, including set minimum levels of expected learning outcomes from education for the reasons of

mental disability. According to qualified estimates, in the 2017/18 school year, Roma pupils accounted for 29.5% of all pupils educated in programmes for pupils with MMD. A high share of Roma pupils are educated in primary schools which are in catchment areas for excluded localities.

However, the ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the introduced changes shows that the support is used effectively, especially in the case of children with disabilities. In contrast, no significant change can be observed in children who are handicapped by their social status and poverty in education. Support measures for these children are not being used enough.<sup>133</sup> Inequalities continue to be reflected in the high number of early school leavers, the number of children who do not continue their education after leaving compulsory schooling and the number of children who leave during secondary education.

Effective cooperation between the family and the school is absolutely essential for the development and support of at-risk children. The school supports the social function that is primarily performed by the family. Schools and school facilities do not have “jurisdiction” over parents and families of pupils; the Ministry of Education can influence the population of pupils’ parents only indirectly. For this reason, it is necessary to support cooperation across governmental departments and effective involvement of ASLPC in solving possible cases of:

- non-participation of children in compulsory pre-school education;
- non-fulfilment of compulsory schooling;
- non-cooperation of parents with school counselling facilities;
- non-functional application of support measures at school;
- early school leaving.

In order to ensure compulsory schooling or extend the education of an adolescent child, the public authorities also use repressive interventions in the life of the child and their family, which are in conflict with the child’s right to be cared for in the family. One of the most serious repressive interventions is the placement of a child in school facilities for institutional and protective education (e.g. a diagnostic institute, a children’s home with a school or an educational institution) in order to provide education and upbringing. This practice needs to change.

Instruments to prevent and address the consequences of early school leaving will be aimed in particular at lowering the threshold for access to education for socially disadvantaged children. Intervention in the field of education should primarily consist of the development of soft motivational and support programmes for children and their parents using alternative approaches to education based on a community approach. Through them, the motivation to learn and to extend the children’s education will be gradually increased with the use of positive role models (education should not be associated exclusively with the school environment; it is important to naturally move it to the environment of excluded communities). There is a potential for increasing motivation to learn in leisure and hobby education programmes for children focused on their all-round development and stimulating their natural interest in acquiring knowledge. It will also be necessary to connect the intervention in the field of education with the intervention on the social level, seeing as a stable social background; material security and overall well-being of the family is a necessary precondition for its interest and support for extending the child’s

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<sup>133</sup> Motivational and support instruments aimed, among other things, at removing structural barriers preventing the child from accessing quality education (change of social climate in schools, an open atmosphere towards children from different socio-cultural backgrounds, etc.) are used sporadically.

education. It is important to place special emphasis on the pre-school education of children, but the specific needs of parents must also be taken into account, primarily the needs of those who are more at risk of financial distress or social exclusion, such as single parents.

On the other hand, attention must be paid to changes in the education system that contribute to social climate change in schools in terms of their openness to accepting otherness. The school environment is significantly influenced by the attitudes of teachers towards children who differ in some way from other students, but also by the attitudes of students themselves (their prejudices and stereotypes), and teachers must be competent enough to work with these attitudes. The guide to achieving positive change is to support social climate change in schools so that they are open to:

- the pupils, who may have different needs to which the school is able to respond, and the school shall not make efforts to redirect the pupil to the special education segment and shall have low-threshold conditions for the education of pupils;
- the parents, who shall be perceived as the equal partners of teachers who actively participate in solving the child's situation;
- the community, whose resources shall be used by the school to informally support disadvantaged families, the development of which shall be the school's objective, e.g. by creating space for parents' activities or actively participating in community planning and participating in the development of necessary services in the community.

On a practical level, positive change can also be achieved through education, supervision of teachers, dissemination of examples of good practice and taking into account the needs of diversification of teaching with regard to the individual needs of pupils. It is necessary to take into account both the specific needs of talented children and disadvantaged children (socially or medically) or children at risk of any form of discrimination.<sup>134</sup> Public libraries play a significant role in terms of free non-formal education and leisure activities.

#### **Risks and barriers:**

1. Inequalities in education, segregation of children in education, the threat of an increasing number of segregated schools with Roma children.
2. Absence of systemically anchored early care for children under the age of three from families facing socio-economic disadvantages. Insufficient capacity and quality of pre-school care for children from socially excluded backgrounds within some regions. Low awareness of parents about compulsory pre-school education, absence of motivational instruments.
3. Unavailability of hobby education for children from low-income families.
4. Insufficient readiness and methodological support of schools and teachers to implement the principles of an equal approach in education and to work with pupils with varying degrees of support measures, lack of services of school psychologists and specialised teachers, SCC and other support services

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<sup>134</sup>*Equality and Quality in Education Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. OECD Publishing, 2012. [online]. [qtd. 4 December 2019]. Available at: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/equity-and-quality-in-education\\_9789264130852-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/equity-and-quality-in-education_9789264130852-en); Education paths and educational chances of Roma pupils at primary schools in the area of excluded Roma localities. GAC, Prague: 2009; Analysis of individual approach of teachers to pupils with special educational needs. People in Need, 2009.

enabling inclusive education in the real world. Lack of schools' own funds for further education of educators.

5. Insufficient communication and cooperation of the school with other stakeholders, especially insufficient interconnection with social work providers who have the potential to contribute to solving the unfavourable social situation of the family and thus creating suitable conditions for education and development of the child.

**Objective: Reduce the risk of poverty through education.**

The measures will be aimed at continuous monitoring and evaluating the impacts of the adopted measures in relation to the education of children from excluded localities and otherwise socio-economically disadvantaged children, and their updating at the general level and at the level of individual educational paths. Part of the objective will be the introduction of instruments to prevent and address the consequences of early school leaving, standardisation of the lifelong learning system, active support for the involvement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in hobby education and raising awareness about the links between poverty and education.

**Objective: Ensure comprehensive, interdisciplinary early educational care for children under three years of age from excluded families or non-incentive families at risk of exclusion, support for pre-school education, upbringing and care.**

The implementation of the measure will be aimed at the legislative regulation of early educational care and its provision, especially in relation to localities with a higher number of at-risk children and the development of professional, spatial and personnel capacities to ensure quality pre-school education.

**Objective: Ensure better, long-term methodological support of schools and individual educational personnel for the implementation of the principles of equal approach in education and for work with pupils with varying degrees of need for support measures. The development of school pedagogical facilities, school psychologists and specialised educational workers, as well as a system of quality education for pedagogical workers.**

The implementation of the measure will be aimed at supporting the active cooperation of schools and founders in strategic planning, development of methodological readiness of educational staff in working with children, pupils and students with special educational needs and with gifted pupils, setting up quality and accessible school counselling services, including sufficient personnel and professional capacities in education counselling.

**Objective: Develop communication and cooperation between the school and key entities, including other schools and school facilities, local Government representatives, academia, service providers, parents and others.**

The measures will support the development of mutual cooperation and communication of all relevant entities, their interconnection and the availability of follow-up services.

**Objective: Prevent the unjustified classification of children and their segregation according to their talents and socio-economic status of their family.**

The aim is to increase the quality of conditions and the course of education and reduce differences both in connection with the differentiation of individual schools at partial levels of education and especially across individual regions, and to ensure equal access to education for all children, pupils and students without distinction. The measures will offer, among other matters, instruments for preventing the concentration of children from excluded localities in selected schools and the use of increased financial demands on parents as a tool for the segregation of children.

## 4.6. Access to housing

Access to housing is a basic condition for the social inclusion of individuals and families; homelessness is seen as extreme social exclusion<sup>135</sup> making it impossible for people to access other resources.

On 28 August 2013, in its Resolution No. 666 the Government adopted a Strategy for Preventing and Addressing Homelessness in the Czech Republic until 2020, which approved the ETHOS functional definition (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) as a basic starting point to deal with the homeless and people at risk of losing their housing.<sup>136</sup> According to this definition (see page 15), “homeless” is a collective term for a heterogeneous population group comprising both people who sleep outdoors (roofless), and homeless persons who, due to the inability to provide for other housing, live in hostels and some residential social services (shelters or half-way houses), and also people whose living is uncertain, including victims of domestic violence and people who live in unsatisfactory forms of housing – i.e. in conditions that do not meet the minimum standards of living in a given cultural and social environment. Homelessness is a complex, dynamic and differentiated process in which different individuals and groups go through different entry and exit points.<sup>137</sup> The risk of homelessness can cover a wide range of situations and conditions in which a person may find themselves, from the risk of losing their home to the situation when the person returns to standard permanent and non-segregated housing.

Each of the situations identified in the ETHOS definition represents a significant threat to the individual, and more often than not, a limitation or inability to meet their basic needs. The negative impact of housing deprivation is manifested in all spheres of life – economic, social, health and spiritual. Therefore, housing is a fundamental condition for human development. This fact also determines how homelessness and housing need can be effectively tackled: a range of instruments must be used, such as preventive measures to prevent persons from becoming homeless, sufficient supply of standard rental housing available to target groups facing housing deprivation, available assistance in the form of social work and social services focused on the issue, a benefit system that meets the needs of target groups, ensuring access to the labour market for the vulnerable, or the effective availability of health care for socially excluded people.

At present, there is no comprehensive legal regulation in the Czech Republic regulating the rules for ensuring protection and support in the area of access to housing. The legislative solution for social or affordable housing is managed by the MoRD, which has prepared, instead of the Act on Social or Affordable Housing, which has been withdrawn from the legislative plan of the Government of the Czech Republic, a subsidy and loan programme implemented by the State Fund for Investment Support, called “Construction for Municipalities”, in accordance with Government Regulation No 112/2019, on the conditions for the use of funds from the State Fund for Housing Development for the acquisition of social and affordable housing and social, mixed and affordable houses, as amended. Social flats are intended for eligible households who have low income and inadequate housing. At the time of finalisation of this Strategy, i.e. the end of 2019, the legislative solution of social or affordable housing had not been submitted

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<sup>135</sup> HRADECKÁ, Vlastimila, HRADECKÝ Ilja. Homelessness – extreme exclusion. Prague: Hope, 1996. ISBN 80-902-2920-4.

<sup>136</sup> As part of the expansion of the Strategy to include the issues of homelessness, the definition of ETHOS has also been incorporated into the text of this Strategy (see pages 15-16) and endorsed by the Government.

<sup>137</sup> HRADECKÝ, Ilja et al. *Summary Material for Creating a Policy of Working with Homeless People in the Czech Republic until 2020*. Prague: 2012. Available at [www.esfcr.cz](http://www.esfcr.cz).

to the Government of the Czech Republic – at the same time, the parameters and deadline for submission are not known.

Partial aspects of the provision of assistance to citizens in the field of housing are currently laid down mainly in the following laws: Act No 128/2000, on municipalities (municipal establishment), as amended, which governs the municipalities' powers in the area of housing, i.e. the general power of a municipality to care for the housing needs of its inhabitants,<sup>138</sup> Act No 111/2006, on assistance in material need, as amended (persons in material need are provided with assistance in material need, including housing supplement) and Act No 110/2006, on living and subsistence minimum levels, as amended, Act No 117/1995, on State social support, as amended (housing allowance) and Act No 108/2006, on social services, as amended (especially social counselling, outreach programmes, shelters, half-way houses, sheltered housing, overnight facilities, day centres and socially motivational services for families with children).<sup>139</sup>

The area of investment support for housing concerns in particular Act No 218/2000, on budgetary rules and amending certain related acts (the Budgetary Rules) and Act No 211/2000, on the State Investment Support Fund, as amended by Act No 61/2005 and Act No 113/2000.<sup>140</sup>

On 12 October 2015, the Government adopted the Concept of Social Housing of the Czech Republic 2015–2025 (hereinafter the “Social Housing Concept”).<sup>141</sup> This material is a framework document that defines the direction of building a social housing system for people in need in the Czech Republic. The Social Housing Concept considers social housing as a complex system of assistance to people facing housing deprivation, which connects housing and social policy instruments and its key principles include individualised social work and the principles of Housing Led and Housing First – an innovative method used to help homeless people in need of comprehensive support, which focuses on the provision of standard housing without prior treatment or “training”, on support based on their individual needs (i.e. housing in dwellings outside socially excluded and segregated areas) and using all tools to prevent housing loss. Social housing is perceived as a complex set of instruments that, in its interconnectedness, helps to end homelessness.

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<sup>138</sup> In accordance with the Act on Municipalities, the independent competence of a municipality in its territorial district shall cover taking care of creating suitable conditions for social care development and for meeting the needs of its citizens, in accordance with the local context and local practice. This concerns, in particular, satisfying the needs in housing, health protection and development, transport and telecommunications, the need for information, upbringing and education, overall cultural development and protection of public order.

<sup>139</sup> The municipality has several obligations towards all persons present in its territory: According to the Act on Social Services, a municipality acts not only with regard to its citizens, but also to all persons or groups of persons present in its territory (these concern the persons who actually live there). The municipality is obliged not only to determine the needs for the provision of social services to persons or groups of persons in its territory, but also to provide assistance to these persons (for example, residential social services – shelters), in cooperation with social service providers or other municipalities and regions. Section 94 of Act No 108/2006, on social services, as amended.

<sup>140</sup> Other instruments to support housing are Government Regulation No 2/2021, on the conditions of use of funds from the State Fund for Investment Support in the form of a loan to support the construction of rental housing in the Czech Republic, and the MMR subsidy programme Support for the Construction of Subsidised Apartments, as well as legislation governing the area of rental housing, i.e. Act No 89/2012, the Civil Code, as amended or Act No 40/1964, the Civil Code, as in effect on the date of the establishment of legal relationships (in accordance with the transitional provisions, in particular Sections 3074 to 3077 of Act No 89/2012, the Civil Code).

<sup>141</sup> Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/27267/Koncepce\\_socialniho\\_bydleni\\_CR\\_2015-2025.pdf](https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/27267/Koncepce_socialniho_bydleni_CR_2015-2025.pdf).



According to experts in the field of social housing, the social housing system must include the following comprehensive tools:<sup>142</sup>

- Housing loss prevention instruments;
- Instruments to support housing retention and to help with obtaining new housing through social work;
- A system of social services and social work for solving crisis life situations;
- Community work instruments;
- Instruments for the creation and development of a social housing network;
- Financial instruments for municipalities and other providers of social housing, financial instruments for citizens in the form of social housing benefits.

Inaccessible or low-quality housing is a fundamental and long-term unresolved problem. The common denominator of excluded localities and a fundamental issue of social exclusion remains the deeply substandard quality of housing at relatively high rents, which is often paid through housing benefits in a situation where the current housing market for this group of people is closed or severely limited.<sup>143</sup>

Continuously rising rent prices are one of the main causes of housing unaffordability in the Czech Republic. For example, according to reality.idnes.cz, rents in the Czech Republic have risen by 40% on average over the last five years. On average, a Czech household spends 15.9% of its net income on housing. However, in rental housing, these costs are up to three times higher than in owner-occupied housing. Vulnerability on the housing market no longer only affects the most disadvantaged, who should be prioritised for social housing (groups defined in ETHOS or meeting the income condition of spending more than 40% of disposable income on housing), but also low and middle income households, the latter of whom are finding it increasingly difficult to bear the cost of housing. However, the priority groups are determined by the social housing providers themselves, taking into account the local and regional situation, and their selection is not always based on the analysed needs of all target groups in the region or it is not properly and transparently justified. The average age of inhabited apartment buildings in the Czech Republic was 52.4 years and the average age of single-family houses was 49.3 years. The average age of occupied dwellings at the date of the census was 46.5 years. Compared to other EU countries, the Czech housing stock is rather old. In the European context, the Czech Republic is one of the countries with a lower floor area of dwellings.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Conclusions drawn from the working groups on the revision of the Concept of Social Housing of the Czech Republic 2015–2025, which took place in the period 5–7/2018.

<sup>143</sup> CERGE EI team. *Attention Discrimination: Theory and Field Experiments* [online]. Prague: 2013 [qtd. 04/12/2019]. Available at: <https://www.cerge-ei.cz/pdf/wp/Wp499.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> Housing in the Czech Republic in numbers, Ministry for Regional Development. 2019.

From the point of view of research, mapping the area of housing deprivation is complicated,<sup>145</sup> as it is necessary to take into account, among other things, the risk of housing loss. This is particularly difficult for groups living in insecure and substandard housing. These are, for example, persons at risk of domestic and gender-based violence who have specific needs in terms of not only the social services provided (specialised shelters, including shelters with a hidden address), but also specific needs in terms of housing and housing support (the need for a safe dwelling, long-term social and therapeutic support, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to take the specifics of this target group into account when formulating measures in the area of access to housing.

At the same time, it is difficult to statistically accurately identify the group of homeless people and people at risk of social exclusion. Nevertheless, it is necessary to present several research analyses that seek to bring at least approximate data into this issue. Therefore, some of them are mentioned below; the census methodology may differ.

The analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic<sup>146</sup> showed that 95 000 to 115 000 people live in socially excluded localities, approximately 40% of the total number live in places with a predominantly poor to uninhabitable characteristic of dwellings. The estimate of the total number of homeless people – in the sum of people who are acutely homeless, i.e. falling into the obvious homelessness category and including hidden homelessness in the Czech Republic (as of 2011) was 27 482 in 2012, according to experts.<sup>147</sup> There are many more potentially homeless people (i.e. people at risk of housing loss); the material states that the total number can increase by up to 100 thousand if these are included.

The MoLSA research from 2015 showed that <sup>148</sup> in the territory of the Czech Republic, municipalities with extended powers estimate that there are almost 119 thousand people at risk of housing loss (in unsuitable and insecure housing).<sup>149</sup> The total estimate of people without housing was almost 68.5 thousand, which includes people that are not living according to the ETHOS (including people outside or in overnight facilities, people in shelters and hostels and other residential facilities). Of the total estimated number of people without housing, 23.6% were women, 11.9% were under 18 and 10.3% were over 65.

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<sup>145</sup> In 2016, the MoLSA commissioned the project “Analysis of the structure of municipal housing in the Czech Republic”, the aim of which was to obtain detailed statistical data on the composition of the municipal housing stock according to its size structure and the purpose of its use. The project carried out an extensive quantitative research involving a total of 2 229 municipalities, which represented 35.6% of the total number of municipalities in the Czech Republic. In these municipalities there are a total of 179 969 municipally owned dwellings, of which 53.1% are municipal flats, 18.5% are social flats and the remaining 13.8% are obstacle-free flats. However, the results of this analysis cannot be considered decisive, as it was not possible to obtain data from all municipalities in the Czech Republic. Source: PROCES – Centrum pro rozvoj obcí a regionů, s.r.o.: Analysis of the structure of municipal housing in the Czech Republic. [online]. Ostrava: 2016. Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225517/Analyza\\_struktury\\_obecnich\\_bytu\\_v\\_CR\\_TB05MPSV008.pdf/dd93c749](https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225517/Analyza_struktury_obecnich_bytu_v_CR_TB05MPSV008.pdf/dd93c749)

<sup>146</sup> Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic et al., 2015.

<sup>147</sup> HRADECKÝ, Ilja et al. *Summary Material for Creating the Concept of Working with Homeless People in the Czech Republic until 2020*. Prague: 2012, pp. 77 and 81; Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/33905/Souhrnnny\\_material\\_pro\\_tvorbu\\_Koncepcce\\_prace\\_s\\_bezdomovci\\_v\\_CR\\_na\\_obdobu\\_do\\_roku\\_2020.pdf](https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/33905/Souhrnnny_material_pro_tvorbu_Koncepcce_prace_s_bezdomovci_v_CR_na_obdobu_do_roku_2020.pdf)

<sup>148</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. *Evaluation of a Survey of Homelessness Solutions in Municipalities with Extended Powers*. Prague: 2015. [online]. [qtd. 27/11/2019] Available at: <https://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/24488/>

[Vyhodnoceni\\_pruzkumu\\_reseni\\_bezdomovectvi\\_v\\_obcich\\_srozsirenou\\_pusobnosti.pdf](#)

<sup>149</sup> People in unsuitable housing were defined as persons living in temporary and unusual buildings, in uninhabitable or overcrowded dwellings, etc. People in unsatisfactory housing were defined as those temporarily living with family or friends, without legal entitlement, in squats, persons at risk of eviction from their own dwellings, etc.

In July 2019, the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs presented the results of the first phase of the output of the “Research of the homeless population in the Czech Republic with regard to economic activity depending on the phases of the life cycle (7/2018 – 6/2020)” project, namely in the “Census of homeless people in the Czech Republic 2019” study.

The aim of the research is to present the results of the most comprehensive census of homeless people in the Czech Republic to date. The census of monitored persons took place in the second week of April 2019 and was carried out in 403 municipalities in the Czech Republic. The estimated total number of homeless people in the Czech Republic was 23 900, of which 2 680 were children under 18,<sup>150</sup> however, taking into account the fact that, for example, persons in commercial hostels were not included, the estimate of the number of people falling into hidden homelessness was not included. However, the study is of great importance in terms of repeatable feasibility. Approximately half of these persons (11 608) belonged to the roofless category, i.e. they slept outside or in dormitories for the homeless. Roughly one-third of the counted persons (6 135) lived in shelters, and roughly one in ten people were homeless at the time of the census in a healthcare facility (2 774), most often in a psychiatric hospital. Prisons also housed a significant number of homeless people (1 500) who would have nowhere to return after release because they had no accommodation before entering prison or lost it during imprisonment.

The breakdown by region showed that, in total, most homeless persons were counted in the Moravian-Silesian Region (3 541) and Prague (3 235), followed by the South Moravian Region (2 453), the Central Bohemian Region (2 201) and the Ústí nad Labem Region (2 009). This basically corresponds to the breakdown of regions according to size, but with the fact that some homeless people from the Central Bohemian Region undoubtedly migrate to Prague. When recalculating homeless persons per thousand inhabitants of a given region, the highest concentration of these persons is in the Karlovy Vary, Moravian-Silesian, Ústí nad Labem regions and in Prague. In contrast, the lowest numbers of homeless people per thousand inhabitants are apparent in the Vysočina and South Bohemian Region, i.e. regions with a small number of large cities. Regarding the category of roofless persons, i.e. those sleeping outside or in dormitories for homeless people, their numbers per capita are significantly higher in Prague and in the Karlovy Vary and Moravian-Silesian regions.

The Housing Exclusion Report 2021 states that between 35 000 and 62 000 households are in housing deprivation and that between 20 000 and 51 000 children under the age of 18 are growing up in such households. Another 130 000 to 190 000 households with approximately 100 000 children are at risk of losing their housing. A further approximately 300 000 to 350 000 households, of which one third are households of senior-age persons, suffer from excessive housing costs (spending more than 40% of their income on housing). According to this Report, approximately half a million Czech households with just under one million people face one of the three housing problems mentioned above. Households in housing deprivation are mostly located in the largest cities of the Czech Republic, i.e. Prague, Brno and Ostrava. It was also confirmed that North Bohemia and North Moravia are more affected by housing deprivation as regions with a higher proportion of inhabitants in difficult social circumstances.<sup>151</sup> With rapidly rising energy prices, the number of such households will grow even further. The high burden of expenditure

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<sup>150</sup> Source: NEŠPOROVÁ, Olga, HOLPUCH, Petr, JANUROVÁ, Kristýna, KUCHAROVÁ, Věra. Results of the project Research of the homeless population in the Czech Republic with regard to economic activity depending on the phases of the life cycle, Census of homeless people in the Czech Republic. 2019, p. 78

<sup>151</sup> Housing Exclusion Report 2021, [online]. 2021 [qtd. 19/10/2021]. Available at <http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Ostatni/Bydleni-jako-problem-2021.pdf>

on housing placed on household includes the energy-intensive operation of the housing stock: energy and operation account for about half the total expenditure on housing.<sup>152</sup> In the Czech Republic, 2.8% of the population, i.e. 298 000 people, cannot heat their homes sufficiently.<sup>153</sup>

In the absence of social housing and because of the abuse of social housing benefits by landlords, the inhabitants of the excluded localities and the State have found themselves in the position of hostages of poverty industry entities.

The conditions and possibilities for assistance from municipalities continue to differ significantly; many social housing activities are fully dependent on EU funding. Housing support through housing benefits has shown a declining trend in the long run.

Expenditure on housing represents the greatest burden on low-income households and over-indebted families; particularly vulnerable are households with a single income (single-parent families, families with unemployed members) and single-member households, especially in the case of the elderly. The highest burden is placed households who live in big cities with higher rents. Housing needs to be made more accessible to all these target groups.

There is currently no comprehensive EU-wide definition of energy poverty, but some Member States have already developed their own definitions. The European Union considers energy poverty to be a major issue, which further accentuates income poverty or health problems (problems with energy affordability cause additional debt, increased stress and generally worsened conditions for already poor households, which can lead to disconnection from energy or excessive reduction of its consumption, which in turn can lead to health-related issues); therefore, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has recommended that the Member States implement a general definition of energy poverty into their legal systems in order to harmonise its measurement and related statistics. According to the VŠE TK01010194 project focused on vulnerable consumers and energy poverty, energy poverty is typically characterised as a situation where “a household is unable to adequately heat its home or meet its other energy needs at an affordable price”. According to the results of this project, it appears that there is a need to define in legislation, in particular, the concepts of “sufficient” heating and “necessary” energy needs and to create an umbrella body within the State administration responsible for addressing the issue of energy poverty.

Housing costs have increased significantly in the last two years. According to the survey, rents grew the fastest in 2017 in Hradec Králové (by 28% year-on-year), in Prague by 12% (compared to 2010, this is an increase in rents by more than half).<sup>154</sup> Overall, rents in Prague are growing at an annual rate of 7.4% in the long term. According to a Deloitte survey<sup>155</sup>, average selling prices of real estate in Prague and all regional cities increased by 11% in 2019. According to Deloitte, a slight decrease in rental prices in Prague by 2.6% can be seen in 2020. This decline can be linked to the impact of the economic crisis caused by the

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<sup>152</sup> Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) 2017. Household expenditure and consumption, family accounts statistics for 2016. [online]. CZSO. [qtd. 15 October 2018]. Available at:

<https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/46388837/16001817.pdf/580aa93e-a92e-44a5-9255-d7dbcc346955?version=1.0>.

<sup>153</sup> Očenášková, A. : About 300 000 Czechs cannot heat their homes properly. They have been affected by “energy poverty”. (2021) [online]. Available at: <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/ekonomika/tri-sta-tisic-obyvatele-ceska-si-ve-svem-byte-nemuze-dostatec/r~4801a41850d011eb9d74ac1f6b220ee8/>

<sup>154</sup> Deloitte: Property Index – property prices. How Europeans live and how much it costs them. Online. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/cz/cs/pages/real-estate/articles/cze-index-nemovitosti.html>

<sup>155</sup> Deloitte: Property Index – property prices. How Europeans live and how much it costs them. Online. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/cz/cs/pages/real-estate/articles/cze-index-nemovitosti.html>

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this impact of a slight decrease in the price of housing can only be observed for rental housing, not for owner-occupied housing.

In the Czech Republic, the trend of favouring own housing over rented housing continues. According to the “Property Index” study by Deloitte (2018)<sup>156</sup>, of the 12 countries compared, Czechs have to save for new home ownership longer than residents of other European countries (e.g. France, Germany, UK). However, according to Zeitgeist Asset Management (2019)<sup>157</sup>, the share of owner-occupied housing in the Czech Republic is currently 78% and the share of rented housing is only 22%. By contrast, in Germany, for example, only 46% of housing is owner-occupied. Therefore, owner-occupied housing is significantly prevailing over rented housing in the Czech Republic. However, owner-occupied housing prices have increased by 60% over the last 12 years and rental prices have increased by 79% over the same period (Eurostat, 2019).

Housing allowance and housing supplement are provided to households that already have a home, so they do not reduce the affordability of housing for people excluded from housing. In this way, assistance for persons or families who are facing income execution is not addressed, and as a result they are in fact left with no money for housing costs, financial assistance for persons or families without proper housing contracts or finding housing for persons/families who have lost their homes or have nowhere to live.<sup>158</sup> Act No 286/2021, amending Act No 99/1963, the Code of Civil Procedure, as amended, Act No 120/2001, on court bailiffs and enforcement activities (the Enforcement Code) and amending certain other acts, was approved in July 2021. This Act was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies as Document of the Chamber 545. The legal regulation of the suspension of unsuccessful executions should contribute to the improvement of the position of debtors in execution, both the general legal regulation of this institute (suspension of unsuccessful executions after six years) and the “grace summer” (suspension of executions conducted to recover claims of public debtors after payment of the principal) or suspension of trivial executions to recover amounts not exceeding CZK 1 500. In addition, a flat-rate reimbursement of the wage-payer’s costs for acts performed by the wage-payer in execution by deductions from wages and other income was approved. This compensation should help to increase the willingness of employers to employ persons in execution.

The instrument for entering standard housing is the benefit of assistance in material need, extraordinary immediate assistance, which can be used to cover securities (i.e. deposits required within the framework of tenancy agreements). The threat of social and spatial exclusion affects mainly households that are disadvantaged in the housing market because of the lessor’s prejudice that they pose a great risk – such as homeless people, people living in shelters and crisis forms of housing, households living in socially excluded localities, single-parent families with children, households with a larger number of children, the elderly, households with an uncertain income from employment or business, households of some ethnic

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<sup>156</sup> Deloitte: Property Index Overview of European Residential Markets, 2018, online. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/dk/Documents/realstate/Downloads/Property%20index%202018.pdf>

<sup>157</sup> Peter Noack, Zeitgeist Asset Management: interest in rental housing to increase sharply in Czech Republic, 2019, online. Available at: <https://www.zeitgeist.re/cs/news/zajem-o-najemni-bydleni-v-cr-prudce-vzroste->

<sup>158</sup> *Proposal for a Comprehensive solution to social housing*, analytical part, June 2013.

minorities (e.g. Roma<sup>159</sup>) and foreign immigrants. Nevertheless, the instruments that would make available free market with standard housing to disadvantaged households are not yet used in the Czech Republic (e.g. guarantee mechanisms, social rental real estate agencies, etc.). High-quality field social work with the community along with the application of housing policy tools, including the consistent application of anti-discrimination policy is not accessible everywhere. This is governed by the Anti-Discrimination Act, which, among other things, enshrines the right to equal treatment in access to housing and in provision of housing. However, the practical application is inconsistent, and people are excluded from publicly offered services (renting or buying a flat) on discriminatory grounds, and the principles for allocating municipal housing may also contain elements of discrimination. The principles are subject to supervision by the Ministry of the Interior, and discriminatory conduct can be brought to the attention of an administrative authority or the Ombudsman. Non-discriminatory housing policy also means avoiding spatial exclusion of socially disadvantaged persons<sup>160</sup>. Risk also lie in the insufficient application of the priorities of the 2008 Policy of Territorial Development of the Czech Republic (Government Resolution No 929/2009) in the field of preventing spatial segregation.

To assess the overall extent of social exclusion, the Social Inclusion Agency has created a Social Exclusion Index in its 2020 Methodology for Assessing the Level and Extent of Social Exclusion in the Territory<sup>161</sup>. In terms of quality, this is a more extensive tool than the previous “Gabal maps of socially excluded localities” (2006 and 2015)<sup>162</sup>; this new tool is able to record and compare the status of the development of social exclusion over time (the level of social exclusion at a certain point in time between different territorial units).

Social segregation negatively affects not only residents of segregated localities, but also residents of the neighbourhood. The concentration of socially excluded persons in developed countries has led in the past to the strengthening of the social and spatial segregation processes.<sup>163</sup> In order to effectively prevent it, the MoLSA, in cooperation with the Faculty of Science, Charles University, has developed a Methodology for Identifying Residential Segregation, which enables municipalities to identify localities of the current residential situation and also to reveal their potential future emergence. The methodology enables the prevention of the emergence of new localities of residential segregation.<sup>164</sup> In order to identify the target group, which is at risk of social exclusion and is characterised by difficulties in acquiring housing and whose concentration in the area of towns and villages may lead to undesirable segregation, the living allowance,

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<sup>159</sup> According to a 2016 survey, Roma lived in lower-quality housing than the general population. If it was true for the general population that there were 1.4 rooms per person in the household, it was only 0.7 rooms for the Roma. Compared to the general population (3.8%), Roma considered their dwellings to be too dark 4.5 times more often (17%). 21% of Roma lived in dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations or with rot in window frames or floors; 9.2% of the general population had these difficulties.

<sup>160</sup> *Recommendations for municipalities and cities to prevent the creation and expansion of socially excluded localities with emphasis on ensuring housing needs*. Brno: Office of the Ombudsman, 4/2009. ISBN 978-80-254-4383-5. Available at: [http://www.ochrance.cz/uploads/tx\\_odlistdocument/Doporuceni\\_socialni\\_vyloucen.pdf](http://www.ochrance.cz/uploads/tx_odlistdocument/Doporuceni_socialni_vyloucen.pdf).

<sup>161</sup> LANG, P., MATOUŠEK, R.: *Methodology for Assessing the Level and Extent of Social Exclusion in the Territory*. 2020. Social Inclusion Agency. Available at: <https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/wp-content/uploads/Metodika-pro-posouzen%C3%AD-soc.-vylou%C4%8Den%C3%AD.pdf>

<sup>162</sup> *Socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic by municipalities with extended powers*. 2015. Social Inclusion Agency. Available at: [https://irop.mmr.cz/getmedia/d4f44133-cb62-4854-ad9e-6e4aba1fc2f1/Mapa-socialne-vyloucenych-lokalit\\_79-80-vyzva.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://irop.mmr.cz/getmedia/d4f44133-cb62-4854-ad9e-6e4aba1fc2f1/Mapa-socialne-vyloucenych-lokalit_79-80-vyzva.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

<sup>163</sup> LUX, Martin, MIKESZOVÁ, Martina a SUNEKA, Petr. 2010. *Support for the Availability of Housing for People Acutely at Risk of Social Exclusion – an International Perspective and Proposals for Action in the Czech Republic*. Prague: Institute of Sociology, ASCR, v.v.i. 64 p.

<sup>164</sup> ŠÝKORA, Luděk 2018. *Initial verification of the Methodology for identification of residential segregation sites in Czech municipalities*. Prague: MoLSA.

i.e. the institute of persons assessed together for the provision of living allowance was chosen as the indicator. This simple indicator captures social inequality in an integral way for a broad spectrum of people in unequal social positions (unemployed, large families with children, vulnerable elderly).

In 2019, the MoLSA commissioned the INESAN Institute to prepare an analysis entitled *Research on Neighbourhood Relations and Attitudes on Social Housing*.<sup>165</sup> This representative survey from May 2019 shows that the citizens of the Czech Republic support the regulation of social housing by a separate act. The survey found that 85% of citizens support the creation of an act that would focus on social housing, with an even higher level of support (92%) among those respondents who have some personal experience with residents of social housing. The survey also showed that 93% of respondents believe that the establishment of social housing is necessary and 79% of respondents think that there should be more social housing than there is now. However, at the same time, the majority of respondents said that each municipality should be able to decide independently whether or not to build social housing (87%). Therefore, there is strong support among residents for the development of social housing, and other residents of the community should be taken into account in its planning and creation. To the greatest extent, respondents would accept families with children, single mothers and single parents with children, people after divorce, victims of domestic and gender-based violence, the elderly, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities in their neighbourhood (more than 70%). These are precisely the groups of people targeted by social housing, as they are among the most vulnerable in connection with housing loss.

It appears that social work should focus on neighbourhood relations and social workers should be further educated in this area.

At the same time, a methodology for determining housing deprivation and the target population for the purposes of social housing was prepared and certified at the MoRD, in accordance with the rules for providing EU public support based on market failure at the individual level.<sup>166</sup> The MoRD used this material in the preparation of the parameters of the Construction for Municipalities programme (GR No 112/2019).

The number and share of municipal and State housing decreases. In the census of the Czech Statistical Office in 1991 there were almost 214 thousand municipal and State residential houses, in 2001 their number decreased to 79 thousand, in 2011 the State or municipality owned 48 146 inhabited houses with dwellings, which was 2.7% of all inhabited houses with dwellings in the Czech Republic. Municipal and State housing are more common in large cities. Overall, the share of rental apartments is falling sharply.<sup>167</sup> With regard to new construction, family houses dominate over apartment buildings; in the case of newly built apartment buildings, there is a dominant part of larger and more expensive apartments<sup>168</sup>. The problem of “derelict” privately owned buildings with a link to “poverty industry” also persists (rental of

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<sup>165</sup> *Research on Neighbourhood Relations and Attitudes on Social Housing – overview of research results*. 2019. INESAN. Available at:

[http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/MPSV\\_2019\\_Vzkum\\_sousedskch\\_vztah\\_a\\_postoj\\_k\\_SB\\_veejnost\\_final.pdf](http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/MPSV_2019_Vzkum_sousedskch_vztah_a_postoj_k_SB_veejnost_final.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> *Methodology for identifying market failures in housing*. [on-line] [qtd. 06/11/2019]. Available at: [https://www.mmr.cz/getmedia/9e13284e-de37-4cf1-88eb-aaa56cbd8d36/2-3\\_Metodika-TSB\\_komplet.pdf](https://www.mmr.cz/getmedia/9e13284e-de37-4cf1-88eb-aaa56cbd8d36/2-3_Metodika-TSB_komplet.pdf).

<sup>167</sup> However, the Concept of Housing of the Czech Republic until 2020 (MoRD) refers to the need to support rental housing in order to make housing available to those groups of people who cannot afford their own housing.

<sup>168</sup> Drápal, S. *Facts on the Evolution of Home Ownership in the Czech Republic for the Last 10 Years* (a paper for a conference *Services for Homeless People and Their Future*). Czech Statistical Office, Prague, 18 September 2012.

substandard housing, i.e. forms of housing such as accommodation facilities or non-residential space for inadequate amounts paid de facto from benefits in material need).<sup>169</sup>

Support instruments, even the existing ones, are used insufficiently. Grant programmes only provide an economic stimulus, the amount of which is limited by the EU rules laid down for public support.<sup>170</sup> In addition to the aforementioned Construction programme, the State Investment Support Fund provides loans for rental and owner-occupied housing to selected target groups (elderly, young families under 40 years of age, persons with disabilities). These are only loans, not subsidies, and the recipients need to meet quite demanding conditions. Therefore, the IROP subsidy programmes financed during the programming periods from the European Regional Development Fund provide the biggest benefit in this area. Although the legislation obliges municipalities to ensure the needs of its citizens, including housing, many municipalities believe that social transfers (including social housing) are the responsibility of the State and should thus be financed from the State budget.<sup>171</sup> The Czech Republic also does not use innovative instruments to ensure a sufficient amount of social housing, such as social real estate agencies and similar services. Among the approaches within the municipal housing policy, the main ones that have proved successful are housing contact points, the introduction of case management within the networking of organisations in the locality, the use of social real estate agencies, financial instruments such as crisis and guarantee funds or material instruments such as food and furniture banks. A good mapping of the situation in a given locality is a prerequisite for all housing-related activities. The sustainability of the established system of social housing and the related social work and other applied instruments is becoming a hot topic. The transition of people from social rental housing to affordable rental housing poses another problem, because in many cases, such transition does not exist or does not work in the municipalities.

Sufficient regulation is lacking in the Czech legal system in terms of the protection of persons at risk of eviction (e.g. the obligation to discuss evictions with the persons concerned in order to find alternative solutions to eviction, setting sufficient notice and prohibition of evictions in unfavourable times, the obligation of municipalities to consult persons or to offer support to evicted persons with finding housing, especially in the case of at-risk groups or persons).<sup>172</sup> Particularly in the case of seeking an alternative solution along the lines of the FAWOS mechanism, there is an effort to introduce into the legal system, as part of the prevention of housing loss, an information obligation of the court/public institutions towards municipalities. Currently, two ways of introducing this are being explored. In the first instance, the court would instruct the defendant in the first written step in the proceedings to contact the relevant municipality, which may provide social assistance in the area in order to maintain housing or provide other housing. Subsequently, in the event that the court decides on eviction and this decision becomes final and

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<sup>169</sup> Regional Development Strategy, National Concept for the Implementation of Cohesion Policy after 2020

<sup>170</sup> *Proposal for a Comprehensive Solution to Social Housing*, analytical part, June 2013. The task of elaborating a comprehensive solution for social housing by the end of 2013 follows from the Concept of Housing in the Czech Republic until 2020, its main manager is the MoRD and it is co-sponsored by the MoLSA.

<sup>171</sup> LUX, Martin. *The Czech Republic: Locked between Municipal and Social Housing*. 2012 In: J. Hegedüs, M. Lux, N. Teller (eds.): *Social Housing in Transition Countries*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>172</sup> Decision of the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe of 17 May 2016 in Case No 104/2014 European Roma and Travelers Forum (ERTF) v. the Czech Republic. It follows from the above that the Czech legislation lacks some important instruments and measures, such as previous consultation before eviction (especially in terms of evictions under the Building Act), the obligation of municipalities to submit proposals for alternative housing, the obligation of municipalities to consult or provide assistance with finding housing for the evicted, especially for at-risk groups or persons (children, the elderly, etc.) and a ban on evictions in adverse weather conditions or at inconvenient times (e.g. in winter, at night). The implementation of the above conclusions of the judgment into the Czech legal order will be dealt with by the College of Experts on the Enforcement of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.



enforceable, it would also inform the relevant municipality that such a decision has been made. However, negotiations on the specific form of the proposed measure are still ongoing. The MoRD is also addressing the issue in its analysis of lease relations, the preliminary results of which are expected in the first half of 2022. It is also addressing the issue in its Housing Commission and in discussions at the Professional Civil Law Collegium of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences.

Furthermore, instruments for the prevention of housing loss are not sufficiently used and systematically linked. Housing loss prevention instruments include social policy instruments (e.g. housing benefits – especially housing allowance), but also social services and social work and housing policy instruments (civil code measures, State housing policy, implementation of housing policy at the municipal level, early warning of debts, work with debtors, efficient and fair selection of tenants, cultivation of the housing market, etc.). Interconnection with courts is also important (e.g. in the area of early notification of judicial eviction from a dwelling, etc.).

A key and integral part of social housing is represented by social work, i.e. the activities of social workers, without whose support there would be no effective and long-term sustainable operation of the social housing system. At the same time, it turns out that social work is a necessary condition for the functional setting of local social housing systems. The cumulative role of social work support and rent control is one of the challenges often faced by municipal social workers. Furthermore, the maximum number of clients per worker, support for the training of social workers and, in particular, advocacy for the financial sustainability of social work in municipalities and the creation of subsidy titles for this area are necessary for the adequate quality of social work.

In social work practice across the whole Czech Republic, the application of the “housing with support” method is still insufficiently used; the method consists of the social worker supporting the person or family to keep their housing, and also in collaboration with a team of relevant actors as to the needs of the client (a nurse, a representative of the local social department, the owner of the apartment or a peer, i.e. a person with a similar experience, etc.).<sup>173</sup>

The effective implementation of prevention in the form of field social work is negatively affected by understaffing (or inefficient use of the recommended types of employment) of social workers in municipalities, of the workers at the authorities for the social and legal protection of children and those of the Labour Office. The emphasis on standardisation of social work and setting and enforcing performance indicators is often counterproductive in addressing the life situation of clients and it cripples the preventive effect of services that are supposed prevent situations that have not occurred or should not occur. As the service system becomes more sophisticated, the number of barriers encountered by social workers and clients increases. This particularly affects people facing high levels of exclusion, such as homeless seniors, people with infectious diseases whose health condition does not require hospitalisation but who need a medical regimen, homeless and income-deprived people with reduced self-sufficiency, and people with mental illness, including addictions.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See the *Concept of Prevention and Addressing Homelessness in the Czech Republic until 2020*, approved by Government Resolution No 666 of 28 August 2013.

<sup>174</sup> STATEMENT OF THE CONSENSUS CONFERENCE PANEL, A consensus conference addressing the return of homeless people into housing, 2021.

At the same time, solutions of housing deprivation must take into account its broader context – as a social phenomenon and not only a consequence of the unavailability of housing. It is often affected by a several interacting adverse social situations (poverty, limited access to health care and education, debt, etc.) and therefore requires a multi-disciplinary co-ordinated response. Comprehensive and coherent interventions of the entities that would complement each other and respond synergistically to the individual needs of people facing housing deprivation are still limited by the insufficient coverage or availability of the bundle of services at a single place, as well as their mutual setup for co-operation and orientation in the offer, competencies and legal framework of relevant agendas. Their “case” interactions are few and remain content-poor, monotonous and often asymmetrical. This leads to, among other things, the undesirable tendency of social services to take on a basically assisting role vis-à-vis institutions that use them to facilitate their own contact with the client, to achieve his or her cooperation and, to some extent, to control him or her (messages, escorts, assistance at meetings, verification of data, etc.), especially in contact with the Labour Office, or the authorities of social and legal protection of children, but also with school facilities. A significant part of the work of social services is limited to accompanying people, intermediating messages and assisting them in filling out documents from other institutions. Similarly, the capacity of these institutions to build relationships with clients and respond to their needs is not being developed.

In terms of improving people's access to affordable rental housing, the future direction of policies aimed at the creation of a social housing system will have a significant impact; in addition to various forms of social housing (in response to different needs and barriers mentioned above) these policies would clearly regulate the position of the State, municipalities and other actors. The absence of these instruments has a negative effect on the increase in the number of people living in substandard housing or staying in social services facilities.<sup>175</sup> As a result, this situation brings increased costs for social systems, but also for health care systems, the judiciary, prisons, etc.

In order to set up effective social housing policies, it is also important to regularly collect data on the number of people excluded from housing and also on the state of the housing stock in the Czech Republic with regard to the situation in the area of social and other supported forms of housing.

The principle of “housing as a reward” means an approach that is reflected in the setting of inadequately strict conditions for obtaining a standard tenancy agreement in a municipal dwelling, which secondarily excludes some already socially excluded persons or families, or the elderly. The phenomenon of “cherry - picking” occurs also on the part of non-profit organisations.<sup>176</sup> This is notwithstanding the experience from abroad which shows that with proper support most of the former homeless people (including those with complex problems – victims of long-term domestic and gender-based violence, various addictions combined with mental illness, etc.) are able to keep standard housing in the long-run without any problems.<sup>177</sup> In the area of housing support, it is necessary to take into account the elderly, especially those who have lost a significant part of their household income (i.e. widows or widowers) through the loss of

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<sup>175</sup> This is in contradiction with the principle of de-institutionalisation, see e.g. Government Resolution No 127/2007 Concept of support for the transformation of residential social services to other types of social services provided in a natural community and promoting social inclusion of users.

<sup>176</sup> This term denotes a situation where people who have the greatest chance of success are chosen for programmes aimed at returning to housing; the most vulnerable and weakest ones are once again left without help.

<sup>177</sup> AUBRY, Tim, NELSON Geoffrey, TSEMBERIS Sam. (2015). „Housing First for People With Severe Mental Illness Who Are Homeless: A Review of the Research and Findings From the At Home–Chezsoi Demonstration Project“. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 60 (11)

their partner. In this area, the influence of the gender pay gap can be observed, which will be transformed from the period of economic activity into a gender gap in pensions. Income differences, together with the higher average life expectancy of women, when the partner households of seniors become households of individual female seniors, make this group the most at risk of poverty. Social exclusion in this group is also exacerbated by the fact of loneliness and isolation, the gradual deterioration of health and increasing dependence on the help of another person. In view of the above, there is a need to target and create programmes that reduce the risk of social exclusion of the elderly.

**Risks and barriers:**

1. Unaffordable housing;
2. Social and spatial exclusion;
3. Declining number and share of municipal and State housing;
4. No instruments are used to make the free market of standard housing available to disadvantaged households;
5. Unavailability of outreach social work, uncertainty of financing;
6. Lack of support instruments for municipalities and low use of existing ones;
7. Insufficient use and systemic interconnection of housing loss prevention instruments;
8. Lack of legislation and instruments and insufficient funding to address social housing.
9. Persistent discrimination in housing;
10. Use of inefficient procedures based on the principle of merit;
11. Insufficient advice and legal aid in the field of housing.
12. Lack of financial resources for the provision of social prevention services and social work in the public administration specifically helping people facing housing deprivation and the suboptimal technical and material condition of the facilities available to providers.

**Objective: Increase the availability of housing for people at risk of exclusion from housing or those having lost it.**

Adapt legislation supporting the availability and sustainability of affordable rental housing (Social/Affordable Housing Act) and strengthen legal certainty in all housing legislation (reduction of unrelated systemic changes, e.g. revision of benefits), creation and development of appropriate financial instruments to implement the social / affordable housing plan.

Minimisation of long-term housing in substandard forms with regard to the safety of people living in such housing, as there is currently no comprehensive legislation regulating the rules for ensuring protection and support in the area of access to housing.

Creation and development of appropriate financial instruments for the implementation of the social housing plan. Linking the financing of social work and investment programmes to social housing, always integrated calls. Housing shall always mean living in standard non-segregated flats. Minimisation of long-term living in substandard forms of housing with regard to the safety of people living in such environments.

Reduction of conflicts in housing, resolving problematic situations and promoting a happy neighbourhood of people at risk of social exclusion and the general population, mediation, development of community work, housing, etc. Prevention of energy poverty, protection of at-risk target groups. Adapting the housing stock to address major societal challenges (demographic ageing, energy poverty, climate change), taking into account the diversity of local housing conditions. Housing will comply with the principles of solidarity, equality, subsidiarity, accessibility and voluntariness, with an emphasis on prevention, efficiency and individual social work. Introduction of a system for preventing housing loss, support in the acquisition of standard housing and retention of newly acquired housing (support for social and community work). Develop Housing Led and Housing First approaches in the area of social services and social housing in the area of obtaining and retaining housing, ending support for systems based on merit. Ensure the provision of education in the field of discrimination and housing support for a wider range of stakeholders and entities in the field of social housing. Systemic development of social real estate agencies, social housing systems for at-risk families, including senior households, development of social services for people facing housing deprivation who are at risk of multiple social and health problems, including prevention and development within the education system. Develop systemic cooperation between the State, municipalities and regions and support the development of methodological guidance by the MoLSA in the field of social services, social work and social inclusion.

**Objective: To reduce the risk of housing loss and homelessness through comprehensive and individualised support using multi-disciplinary co-operation of the staff of the Labour Offices, municipalities, NGOs and social services.**

Support for programmes for the development of coordinated non-hierarchical co-operation of entities in the field of work with homeless people facing housing deprivation and material need. Increasing the awareness and education of staff about the specifics, agendas, scope and tools for addressing homelessness and housing deprivation. Setting up communication processes between these entities, especially programmes “from above”, i.e. supported by employers, the contracting entities of these agendas, not dependent on individual activities and the will of the “bottom”, dependent on the interest of specific workers.

## 4.7. Access to healthcare

Health is a key prerequisite for the favourable socio-cultural and economic development of individuals and society as a whole. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete mental, physical and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. The Human Development Index (HDI) understands health – expressed in terms of the life expectancy index – as one of the three basic conditions for human life and development, together with access to education and ensuring a satisfactory standard of living. The health of the population is significantly reflected in the total HDI value. It is a proven fact that human health is directly determined by the environmental and socio-economic conditions of a person, which are their level of education, social status, working conditions, availability of social and health services and stability and amount of income and the environment in which people live. When these conditions are out of balance, health inequalities often occur without the active involvement of the people concerned.

Differences related to these social, economic and environmental determinants often arise beyond people's ability to decide about them. In 2012, the final report of *the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health* issued the following call for a society-wide solution to this situation, which is the basis of a major international debate today: “Systemic health inequalities are perceived as unjustified and unfair and need to be addressed with the participation of all sections of society, including governmental departments”.

Groups at risk of inequalities include children and the elderly (especially those living alone), the long-term unemployed, single-parent families and the homeless. Another factor contributing to health inequalities is ethnicity. A high proportion of people living in socially excluded localities are Roma, and their socio-cultural specifics must be taken into account when setting individual objectives. Research shows that life expectancy for Roma is about 10-15 years less than for the rest of the Czech population.<sup>178</sup> Neonatal mortality in the Roma population is twice as high as the national average, the Roma population also suffers more injuries than the national average, and Roma living in socially excluded localities are also more likely to contract serious infectious diseases such as TB, hepatitis, etc.<sup>179,180</sup>

Inequalities can also be observed with regard to respondents' state of health. Here we observe, among other matters, differences in the occurrence of risk factors, such as tobacco, alcohol and drug use and obesity, where the level of education of respondents plays a role. With a share of overweight or obese people reaching 55%, the Czech Republic is among the five EU countries with the highest incidence of obesity. Groups with lower education in particular lead risky lifestyles: for example, among people aged 30–44, the share of smokers among university students was 8.4%, while for people with primary or lower secondary education at the same age, it was 55%.

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<sup>178</sup> Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Other National Commitments in the Field of Health, Czech Republic (A multi-stakeholder perspective report on 2005-2014 developments), p. 13.

<sup>179</sup> HNILICOVÁ, Helena. *Equi Health Roma Report 2014*, Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic: 2013, further HNILICOVÁ, Helena, DOBIÁŠOVÁ, Karolína *Health Support in the Czech Republic. Healthcare in the Czech Republic*. 2012

<sup>180</sup> MARYŠKOVÁ, Andrea. *Specifics of providing health services to a Roma patient*, 2010. [online]. [qtd. 02/07/2019]. Available at: <https://zdravi.euro.cz/clanek/sestra/specifika-poskytovani-zdravotni-pece-romskemu-pacientu-449664>

Although equal access to health care in the Czech Republic is ensured by valid legislation,<sup>181</sup> which reflects, among other things, the international legal obligations of the Czech Republic,<sup>182</sup> and significantly supports solidarity and the rights of the insured in the public health insurance system, research by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic shows that there are barriers to real equal access formed by low health literacy, difficult local, geographical and financial availability of health services and direct and indirect discrimination, especially in the registration of socially excluded persons to primary health care providers.<sup>183,184</sup> At the same time, parents are not obliged to register their child with a general practitioner for children and adolescents in the Czech Republic. A subsequent topic of expert discussion is the question of whether the Czech Republic complies with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child if some children are denied access to preventive medical care due to their parents' attitude.

A characteristic part of homelessness, or any form of housing deprivation<sup>185</sup>, is the serious health risks and deteriorated state of health of these socially excluded people compared to the majority society. Although homelessness is associated with a higher incidence of many diseases, adequate health care is, with few exceptions, virtually unavailable to homeless people, as are mainstream reimbursable social care services.

A large body of sub-data demonstrates the significantly worsened state of health of people facing housing deprivation. For people in a roofless situation<sup>186</sup>, these are mainly groups of respiratory diseases, chronic wounds, tibial ulcers and skin diseases. Chronic heart disease, diabetes, stomach and intestinal disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, frostbite and neurological problems are also increasingly common. The mental health status of homeless people is also dramatically worsened, with a high incidence of addictions/dual diagnoses, depressive states, stress and adjustment disorders, a significant incidence of psychotic disorders, and also a significant amount of personality disorders. People without a roof are the most vulnerable group, but the situation in terms of health is similar among those who live in homeless hostels. Living in the inadequate conditions of accommodation facilities and socially excluded localities<sup>187</sup> always means living in a health-risk environment, in terms of physiological risks (e.g. mould), psychological risks (crowded dwellings, noise), infectious risks and, last but not least, in an environment with an increased risk of accidents.<sup>188</sup> The Homeless Population Survey 2019 conducted by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs confirmed that the health of a significant proportion of homeless people is poor.

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<sup>181</sup> Act No 372/2011 Coll, on health services and conditions for their provision, as amended (the Health Services Act); Act No 373/2011, on specific health services, as amended; Act No 48/1997, on public health insurance and amending and supplementing certain related acts, as amended, Act No 258/2002, on the protection of public health, as amended.

<sup>182</sup> In particular, the obligations arising from the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (No 96/2001 in the Collection of International Conventions).

<sup>183</sup> BALTAG, T. *Frydlantsko – availability of health services*. 2018. Prague: Social Inclusion Agency. Available at: <https://docplayer.cz/127671990-Frydlantsko-dostupnost-zdravotni-pece-zpracovala-mgr-tereza-baltag.html>

<sup>184</sup> FRA – EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS. *Inequalities and multiple discrimination in access to and quality of healthcare* [online]. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013 [qtd. 28 November 2019]. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/inequalities-discrimination-healthcare\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/inequalities-discrimination-healthcare_en.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> The impact on health and the de facto (un)availability of health care does not only affect those who sleep "on the streets", but also, to varying degrees of urgency, those who live in homeless hostels, accommodation facilities, socially excluded localities or poor families who move frequently.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. ETHOS typology categories p. 15-16.

<sup>187</sup> See also Decision of the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe of 17 May 2016 in Case No 104/2014 European Roma and Travelers Forum (ERTF) v. the Czech Republic. The decision shows that in the Czech environment, Roma families are harmed by unhealthy living conditions and do not have adequate access to health care.

<sup>188</sup> See DUTKA, J., GLUMBÍKOVÁ, K., ČADA, K. (2018). Health of residents in sub-standard housing. [online]. Prague: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Available at: [http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Ostatni/Zdrav%C3%AD\\_obyvatel\\_postr%C3%A1daj%C3%ADch\\_standardn%C3%AD\\_bydlen%C3%AD.pdf](http://www.socialnibydleni.mpsv.cz/images/soubory/Ostatni/Zdrav%C3%AD_obyvatel_postr%C3%A1daj%C3%ADch_standardn%C3%AD_bydlen%C3%AD.pdf)

More than half (53%) of homeless adults staying on the streets, in night shelters, municipal accommodation facilities and homeless hostels rated their health (physical, mental or both) as poor.<sup>189</sup> This is four times the proportion found in the general adult population.<sup>190</sup> The deteriorated availability of medical care for homeless people brings about their specific behaviour, which is characterised by two extremes. While a significant proportion of homeless people reported that they had not visited a doctor at all in the last year (37% of those who sleep outside), another proportion needed and received medical care very often. Five percent of homeless people (including those without a flat) have visited a doctor more than 20 times and 4% more than 50 times in the last year.<sup>191</sup>

Difficult or effectively inaccessible health care for homeless people and other groups of people living in inadequate housing stems from a number of factors, which can be divided into obstacles on the part of patients (non-adherence to or refusal of care, etc.) and on the part of health care facilities, where care is refused or terminated prematurely for a number of reasons. The confluence of the above-mentioned poor health, risks and limited access to health care for people facing housing deprivation requires a conceptual national approach, which should be comprehensive, using a range of tools and involving a range of actors. The Czech Republic currently lacks<sup>192</sup> a similar concept and in future efforts to address the health and health care of people excluded from standard housing, it will be necessary to prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy to combat the health impacts of homelessness. This means addressing opportunities to provide health care with minimal obstacles to people living “on the street”, making quality outpatient health care available to people facing housing deprivation, and improving access to inpatient and follow-up care. Legislative or administrative obstacles to fulfilling these needs are present at all levels (health services can only be provided in health care facilities and in the patient’s own social environment; a facility that is registered as a social service and a health care facility cannot pay for a health care worker from social services subsidies, etc.), which are detailed in the analysis prepared for the MoLSA in 2015<sup>193</sup>, including a set of recommendations, most of which have so far been implemented only by the activities of the non-profit sector, which is dependent on the current funding opportunities and enthusiasm. Attention to the specificities of health care in social exclusion is marginalised in the health sector, even as soon as on the level of qualification training of health professionals, where thematically relevant teaching is included in the curriculum of enlightened medical faculties only as a compulsory elective subject. The actual implementation of health care for the homeless has been deepening in recent years in the wake of the Street Medicine movement, built on the voluntary work of medical students, with voluntary support from some educational institutions and donors, in collaboration with social service providers, i.e. in developing and increasingly sophisticated but non-systemic solutions from “below”.

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<sup>189</sup> The research sample of the Homeless Persons Survey consisted of 1 013 persons without a roof or without a flat; the results are representative of this population. NEŠPOROVÁ, O., HOLPUCH, P. Population of homeless persons in the Czech Republic – persons sleeping outside, in night shelters, in homeless hostels and in municipal accommodation facilities, Prague: RILSA Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_478.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_478.pdf), pp. 70 -71

<sup>190</sup> According to the Statistics on Income and Living and Housing Conditions (SILC) survey, conducted annually by the Czech Statistical Office, about one in ten respondents (11%) in the Czech Republic rated their health as poor in 2017.

<sup>191</sup> NEŠPOROVÁ, O., HOLPUCH, P. Population of homeless persons in the Czech Republic – persons sleeping outside, in night shelters, in homeless hostels and in municipal accommodation facilities, Prague: RILSA Available at: [http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz\\_478.pdf](http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_478.pdf), pp. 74 -75

<sup>192</sup> In terms of strategic materials approved by the Government by 2020, the need for a conceptual solution to the issue of access to health care for homeless people has been dealt with in the *Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2015–2020*.

<sup>193</sup> HRADECKÝ, I., TĚMÍNOVÁ, M., AMBROŽ, M., RŮŽIČKA, J. (2015) *Proposal to address selected health and social aspects of homelessness in relation to regional and local specificities*, Praha: MoLSA.

Educational programmes in the form of health literacy are also essential in the sense of low-threshold and systematic activities aimed at the socially excluded themselves and in the form of education of the general public.<sup>194</sup>

Mental health care forms separate area in health and social inclusion, as it stands at the boundary between the social and health systems. Czech society is only now joining the dominant trend of a number of European (and other) countries in the introduction of community care, which is associated with the deinstitutionalisation and reduction of the number of large psychiatric facilities and their at least partial transformation into community services. People with mental health problems, whose illness usually means a high socio-economic burden, are currently forced to use an outdated system of care that isolates them from their community, the labour market and mainstream society. Furthermore, health problems still present a stigma in the Czech Republic. The awareness of the public about mental health issues and illnesses is inadequate. Although there are some drug prevention programmes, there are few programmes for mental health promotion, prevention of stress and mental disorders. Primary care is insufficiently connected with the area of mental health care. Primary health care providers are not always fully educated in the field of early diagnosis and modern approaches to the prevention, therapy and rehabilitation of mental health disorders. Community facilities and services have been developing in recent years (mental health centres, crisis centres, day hospitals, sheltered workshops, sheltered housing, etc.), but they are insufficient in both number and capacity. Related to this is the unresolved issue of competencies and cooperation between the health and social care sector, especially in the area of integrated, long-term and follow-up care, including care for people with mental illness or palliative and hospice care. It is necessary to add that, in addition to the above, there is an absolute lack of outpatient clinics and inpatient capacities for child psychiatry in the Czech Republic. This fact was pointed out as early as in 2009 by the National Action Plan for the Transformation and Unification of Care for At-Risk Children.<sup>195</sup>

The hospitalisation of children with mental health problems is the only way to provide acute health care to these children. Currently, the waiting time for an appointment at a child psychiatry clinic is 5 months. Therefore, child psychiatrists themselves recommend hospitalisation of children in psychiatric hospitals.

Due to the division of health and social affairs in the Czech Republic, as well as the fact that the MoLSA and the Ministry of Health are not always the joint managers of individual topics, it is necessary to constantly follow up and develop a discussion on the possible shortcomings of the socio-health border,

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<sup>194</sup> For a comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing the health issues of homeless people, see the *Concept of Preventing and Tackling Homelessness Issues in the Czech Republic until 2015–2020*, Chapter 4.3, p. 37-42; for the specific design of the solution, see the measures contained in the same Concept on p. 51.

<sup>195</sup> The number of all children's hospital beds per 10 000 children is declining year-on-year; in 2016, 1 bed was adapted for this number of children. Source: Psychiatric care 2017, Health Statistics, Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic. Available at: <https://www.uzis.cz/publikace/psychiatricka-pece-2017>, p. 35

In connection with the demands of today and of the economically developed countries, the occurrence of anxiety and depressive disorders of children is increasing and is expected to increase, both due to high demands placed on children in schools and the worsening issue of child abuse and neglect. The issue of children from single-parent families, socially weak families and mental disorders related to addictive diseases is becoming more serious. Source: Mapping out the state of psychiatric care and the direction it is taking in accordance with the strategic documents of the Czech Republic (and other countries). Expert report from the project. The Czech Psychiatric Society o. s. 2012. [https://www.ceskapsychiatrie.cz/images/stories/OZ\\_zkr\\_komplet.pdf](https://www.ceskapsychiatrie.cz/images/stories/OZ_zkr_komplet.pdf), p. 121



not only by these two ministries. The topics of individual ministries intersect, for example, in this Strategy and, conversely, in the Health Strategy 2020.<sup>196</sup>

In the Czech Republic, the number of people who have been in a long-term unfavourable state of health is increasing, which increases their demands for health and social services provided simultaneously, in various intensities and changing proportions. It is necessary to focus mainly on the interconnection of the system of health and social services, because when they are provided legislatively and functionally separately, it is not possible to adequately respond to the changing needs of people with different levels of dependence on health and social care. The current system of health and social services needs to be restructured so that a quality, individualised, health and social service is available for people of all ages with different levels of dependence on care, in all its necessary forms (from outpatient/field, provided in the patient's own social environment to inpatient/residential, usable for temporary or permanent solution of the patient's life situation).

Palliative and hospice care is provided both in medical facilities and hospices, as well as in the patient's own social environment. The multidisciplinary teams providing palliative care include both health professionals and social workers, as well as spiritual support. Therefore, this area is very important in terms of linking health and social services.<sup>197</sup>

#### **Risks and barriers:**

1. Insufficient communication and interrelationship between health and social service providers: different organisation of social and health services, different legislation, different sources and methods of financing – the systems are incompatible with each other;
2. Insufficient cooperation of the Ministry of Health and the MoLSA in the areas of integrated, follow-up and long-term care and mental health care;
3. The overall low health literacy of the population, including socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion;
4. Regional differences in access to health care;
5. Ignorance of the rights and obligations of the patient and the insured on the part of persons who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion;
6. Lack of competence of the insured to comply with the regime set within the provision of health services;
7. Limited access to health care for at-risk groups;
8. Lack of competence in intercultural and inter-social communication of health care providers as well as the insured / patients.

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<sup>196</sup> The area of health care is comprehensively defined in the Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care in the Czech Republic until 2030, the update of which was commissioned and approved by Government Resolution No 622 of 29 July 2015 on the Sustainable Development Agenda. This document further elaborates, among other matters, the area of disease prevention and increasing health literacy and the responsibility of citizens for their own health, primary care reform, including improving access to care, especially for at-risk groups, reducing regional disparities in access to health care, health and social care integration and continuing mental health care reform. The objective and tasks set out in the strategic document of the Ministry of Health presuppose continuous and effective cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the MoLSA.

<sup>197</sup> Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care in the Czech Republic until 2030

**Objective: Systematically address the de facto unavailability of health services for socially excluded persons, persons at risk of social exclusion and otherwise disadvantaged persons.**

The measures will focus on levelling the availability of health services for the target group in a given area (municipality, district, region) regardless of its financial and socio-economic conditions. The application of the measures will lead to a reduction in inequalities between socially excluded and disadvantaged people and the majority population; cooperation between social services, health services and scientific institutions will be improved.

**Objective: Increase health literacy in the area of rights and obligations applied in access to primary health care for socially excluded persons, persons at risk of social exclusion and otherwise disadvantaged persons.**

Fulfilment of the objective will be focused on improving awareness about and orientation in the field of rights and obligations of the insured and the patient applied in access to primary health care, including prevention. Effective acquisition of knowledge about the rights and obligations of the insured and the patient aims to strengthen competencies in registration with primary care physicians and effective defence in the event of discrimination in the provision of health services. At the same time, it focuses on developing the ability to change the behaviour of the target group in favour of a healthy lifestyle.

**Objective: Development of a model of a culturally and socially sensitive approach in health care.**

The measures will be aimed at the development of education of health and community workers (lay and professional) in the field of socio-cultural specifics of the target group and at the development of skills of intercultural and inter-social communication and mediation. The implementation of the model presupposes the development of effective cooperation between the social and health sectors.

**Objective: Support the deinstitutionalisation of psychiatric care, assistive technologies and related services; optimising and increasing the availability of care on the socio-health border.**

The measures will aim at the gradual transformation of institutional and residential services into community-type services and care in order to reduce the socio-economic impact on the quality of life of people from the target group living with a chronic illness or other health disadvantage. The support presupposes the harmonisation of the social and health sectors in all areas (financing, legislation, management and organisation of work, development of competencies and skills, connection to other areas – affordable housing, employment support, etc.). The measures will lead to the setting of standards and competencies and cooperation in the field of care at the socio-health boundary.

Optimising the socio-health boundary will also help to develop the transfer of care to the patient's community/own social environment (e.g. psychiatric care, palliative care), thus increasing the availability of this care in all regions. A functionally and legislatively interconnected system of health and social services for all age categories of patients will enable the individual setting of health and social services according to the current needs of the patient.

**Objective: Supporting access to low-threshold outpatient and outreach health care that takes into account the possibilities and limits of homeless people (limited health literacy and limited possibilities to follow a treatment regimen in a specific level of housing deprivation, limited possibilities to pay for indicated medical devices, medicines, food supplements, etc.).**

Measures must include an incentive-based approach to reimbursement and motivation related to health services; education of the professional public about outbound approaches (active medicine going to patients, not passively expecting them to visit) is essential.

Outreach health care is to be systematically developed as a multi-disciplinary, integrated model of teamwork with social and other public services, in contact with hospital and emergency care providers. This allows homeless people to be connected to sources of food, clothing, and basic benefits, safety, health, housing, and transportation options.

**Objective: Methodological support for inpatient health care providers to work with social workers prior to discharge of a homeless patient.**

The measure should include the development of a methodology for inpatient health care providers and social workers prior to the discharge of a homeless patient.

The measures must include an incentive-based approach to reimbursement of health services and a motivating element. Health care must be available – covered by public health insurance even if clients (citizens of the Czech Republic) do not pay health insurance.

## 4.8. Ensuring decent living conditions

In terms of comprehensive and coherent efforts in the fight against social exclusion, every person has the right to the resources and social assistance sufficient to lead a dignified life. Support for adequate income guaranteeing a dignified standard of living for people and their families is one of the fundamental pillars of active inclusion. The right to sufficient resources should be combined with an active readiness of a person to work or participate in professional training, with national policies necessary for economic and social integration of persons, and with the determination of resources necessary to lead a dignified life.

The primary factor which, in accordance with the European concept of active inclusion, is to contribute to the integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and ensure a dignified life, is participation in the labour market and dignified remuneration for work. In official documents,<sup>198</sup> the Czech Republic considers a functional, flexible and open labour market and increasing employment to be the best contribution to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion in the society.

### Average wage

In 2020, according to the CZSO, the average gross monthly nominal wage per full-time equivalent in the Czech economy reached CZK 35 662, representing an annual nominal increase by 3.1% (i.e. CZK 1 084).<sup>199</sup> The intensity of the increase in the average salary has been on an upward trajectory since 2013, but the record value of the year-on-year increase (8.8%) from 2001 has not been exceeded.

In the long run, the profit-dominant position of the City of Prague is evident, where the average gross wage is about 123% of the national average. On the other hand, the Zlín Region is well below the average for the whole of the Czech Republic (less than 90% of the average). However, since 2013 this relationship has been slightly levelling. This is due to the fact that the average gross wage increased recently been (2013-2020) nominally in the City of Prague by 34%, while on average for the whole of the Czech Republic there was an increase of 42%.

### Minimum wage

In terms of ensuring a dignified income from employment, a minimum wage is the key tool to ensure a decent income and to reduce the risk of (income) poverty and social exclusion; the minimum wage is the lowest permissible level of pay in a basic employment relationship. Its basic legal regulation is laid down in the Labour Code (Act No 262/2006, as amended). The amount of the basic rate of the minimum wage, the derived rates of the lowest levels of the guaranteed wage and the rules for calculating the minimum wage and the highest levels of the guaranteed wage for other working hours are set by Government regulation.<sup>200</sup>

The minimum wage has two basic functions in relation to employees and employers: the social-protective function and an economic-criteria function. The social-protective function of the minimum wage is intended to protect the employee from poverty and enable them to live at a level of modest material

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<sup>198</sup> Such as the National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic

<sup>199</sup> Wage data for 2020 cannot be considered definitive and may be updated.

<sup>200</sup> Government Order No 567/2006, on minimum wage, on the minimum guaranteed wage levels, on the definition of unfavourable working environment and on the amount of wage supplement for working in unfavourable working environment, as amended.

consumption and social contact. It aims to provide employers with a basic level playing field for wage competition (to prevent wage undercutting of domestic and foreign labour). The economic-criteria function of the minimum wage creates preconditions for the income-based motivation of citizens to seek, accept and carry out work activities, i.e. to provide benefit to employees with income from working over persons with only social income. For employers, it represents the lowest level of wage costs for their employees. Therefore, in order for the minimum wage to fulfil the above functions and in particular its incentive-motivational role, its level should be adequately set.

From 1 January 2021, the basic minimum wage in the Czech Republic for a working week of 40 hours has been CZK 15 200 per month, i.e. CZK 90.50 per hour. In 2020, the minimum wage was 40.9% of the average wage.<sup>201</sup> In the past, there were periods when the minimum wage was stagnant for a long time and ceased to fulfil its basic functions. This last occurred in 2007-2012, when the ratio of the minimum wage to the average wage fell to 31.9% in 2012.

### **Benefits systems**

Complementary to employment policy, benefits systems constitute other elements of social protection in those fields of poverty and social exclusion which for various reasons cannot be addressed or completely resolved by labour market integration. Low-income persons and households in the Czech Republic are supported through social benefits paid from insurance and non-insurance systems. The system of State social support improves the financial situation of families with children and helps to reduce the economic risk of parenting.

The main system explicitly aimed at those who are poor and at risk of social exclusion is the system of assistance in material need, providing benefits and basic social counselling in situations where a person or family lacks sufficient income and their overall social and financial situation does not allow them to meet the basic necessities of life at a level acceptable for society.<sup>202</sup>

### **Living and subsistence minimum**

Act No 110/2006, on the living and subsistence minimum, was issued with effect from 1 January 2007. It sets the living minimum as the minimum socially recognised limit of the monetary income of natural persons to provide for food and other basic personal needs. Further, it sets the subsistence minimum as the minimum level of monetary income of persons which is considered necessary to ensure food and other basic personal needs at a level that allows survival.

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<sup>201</sup> In 2020, the average gross monthly wage reached CZK 35 662; the minimum wage was CZK 14 600.

<sup>202</sup> Living allowance and housing supplement are paid repeatedly, while immediate emergency assistance helps to address one-off life situations. Social work is an integral part of assistance in material need.

The living and subsistence minimum are criteria for the establishment of the entitlement to and the amount of benefits in material need (they are not a benefit) and the criteria used to determine entitlement to the relevant State social support benefits. They are mainly used in Act No 111/2006, on assistance in material need, where they play a decisive role in the assessment of material need as well as a socially protective variable. They are also used in Act No 117/1995, on State social support, in determining entitlement to certain benefits. The living and subsistence minimum are also used in other areas – for example in court practice for determining the non-seizable amount in the case of executions (Government Decree No 595/2006), etc.<sup>203</sup>

Neither the living minimum nor the subsistence minimum include from 1 January 2007 the necessary housing costs. Protection and assistance in the area of housing for individuals and families with low incomes is addressed separately within the system of state social support by providing a housing allowance and in the system of assistance in material need by a housing supplement.

Under the valorisation condition set out in the Act on the Living and Subsistence Minimum, the Government may increase the living minimum amount and the subsistence minimum amount by its regulation in the regular period from 1 January if maintenance costs and other basic needs increase by at least 5% during the relevant period. When fulfilling the valorisation condition, the Government has the possibility, but not the obligation, to increase the amounts of the living and subsistence minimum. The law makes it possible to valorise the amounts of the living and subsistence minimum even in an extraordinary period.<sup>204</sup>

The valid living and subsistence minimum amounts set on 1 January 2007 were so far valorised twice (from 1 January 2012 and 1 April 2020). The amounts have been increased to maintain their original fair value. The last valorisation from 1 April 2020 took into account the actual increase in the relevant consumer prices reported by the Czech Statistical Office from October 2011 to September 2019 by 13.2%. The valorisation condition for proper valorisation from 1 January 2021 was not met and therefore the Government could not increase the amounts of the living and subsistence minimum.

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<sup>203</sup> The subsistence minimum is also used in the Civil Code (Act No 87/2012 – in determining maintenance obligations), the Act on the Provision of Benefits to Persons with Disabilities (Act No 329/2011 – in determining the amount and entitlement to the allowance for a special aid), the Act on the Social and Legal Protection of Children (Act No 359/1999 – the amount of the contribution for the payment of residence and care), the Act on Asylum (Act No 325/1999 – financial support for asylum seekers), the Act on the Residence of Foreigners (Act No 326/1999 – sufficient means to stay in our territory), the Act on Temporary Protection of Foreigners (Act No 221/2003 – financial support for a foreigner enjoying temporary protection) and the Act on Radio and Television Fees (Act No 348/2005 – exemption from radio and television fee).

<sup>204</sup> In accordance with Section 9 of Act No 110/2006 – on the living and subsistence minimum

**Table 8: Development of living and subsistence minimum amounts in 2007–2020 (in CZK per month)**

MoLSA data	Effective from: 1 January 2007	Valid amounts from: 1 January 2012 <sup>205</sup>	Difference between 2012 and 2007	valorisation from: 1 April 2020 <sup>206</sup>	Difference between 2020 and 2012
<b>Amount of the living minimum</b>					
– individual	3,126	3,410	284	<b>3,860</b>	450
– first person in the household	2,880	3,140	260	<b>3,550</b>	410
– second and another person in the household who is not a dependent child	2,600	2,830	230	<b>3,200</b>	370
– child up to 6 years of age	1,600	1,740	140	<b>1,970</b>	230
– child between 6 to 15 years	1,960	2,140	180	<b>2,420</b>	280
– child between 15 to 26 years (dependent)	2,250	2,450	200	<b>2,770</b>	320
<b>Subsistence minimum amount</b>	2,020	2,200	180	<b>2,490</b>	290

Source: MoLSA

### In-work poverty

The “in-work poverty” indicator is an internationally comparable indicator expressing the proportion of persons classified as employed persons aged 18-64 who work for more than six months in a calendar year and who are at risk of poverty. This means that they live on a balanced disposable income of less than 60% of the national median balanced disposable income.

In accordance with this definition and the results of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM), the Czech Republic is one of the countries with the lowest in-work poverty rates within the EU. In 2016 it was 3.8% and in 2017 it showed a decrease of 0.2 percentage points and reached the level of 3.6%. In 2019 and 2019, both were 3.5%. For a rough comparison, the EU-27 average based on the latest internationally comparable Eurostat data (for people aged 18 to 64) was 9.0%.

<sup>205</sup> Amounts also valid in 2013–2019.

<sup>206</sup> Amounts also valid in 2021. The valorisation was based on the increase in the relevant consumer price index for the relevant period (October 2011–September 2019), which was reported by the CZSO and amounted to 13.2%.

## Overview of the development of poverty and social exclusion in a time series

**Table 9: Poverty in the Czech Republic (persons at risk of poverty in 2008–2019 in%)**

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
AROPE (at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate)	15.3	14.0	14.4	15.3	15.4	14.6	14.8	14.0	13.3	12.2	12.2	12.5
AROP (at risk of poverty rate)	9.0	8.6	9.0	9.8	9.6	8.6	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.1	9.6	10.1
MD (material deprivation)	6.8	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.6	6.6	6.7	5.6	4.8	3.7	2.8	2.7
VLWI (households with very low work intensity)	7.2	6.0	6.4	6.6	6.8	6.9	7.6	6.8	6.7	5.5	4.5	4.2

Source: Eurostat

In connection with the current development in the area of poverty and social exclusion, it seems realistic to maintain the Czech Republic's new, more ambitious objective within the *Europe 2020* Strategy (reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 100 000). In 2019 (1 306.5 thousand persons), compared to 2008 (1 566.0 thousand persons), the number of persons at risk of poverty, material deprivation or living in households with very low work intensity was reduced by 259.5 thousand.

### Risks and barriers:

1. Stagnant level of living and subsistence minimum, which due to inflation and rising prices;
2. Insufficient enforcement of consumer rights. The value of the dispute is often low and consumers do not enforce their rights in courts. Court proceedings are lengthy and initial costs are high.

### Objective: Ensure adequate income and prevent loss of income for people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion

Ensure an income that enables a dignified life even for people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion. Adjust and ensure a corresponding regular increase in the amounts of the living and subsistence minimum. Ensure a sufficient standard of living throughout the life cycle at a socially acceptable level. Regularly increase all minimum income categories, especially the minimum wage, the increase of which leads to a reduction in in-work poverty.



## 4.9. Ensuring security and public order

### Crime prevention and civil coexistence

Effective crime prevention is a key factor in promoting sustainable development. Reducing crime and increasing safety improves business conditions and employment, allowing targeting resources in socio-economic development rather than crime control.

From the ethical, financial and practical perspective, it is not desirable or feasible to respond to crime only by repression or judicial resources. Social situational prevention, as recommended by the Department of Crime Prevention of the Ministry of the Interior, is an effective tool that is closely linked to the positive socialisation and education of people, related to the code of ethics and the applicable legal order. Social prevention constructed in this way seeks to ensure that individual members of society or groups thereof are exposed to positive factors, and thus diverted from inappropriate or socially undesirable behaviour. With the help of social prevention built in this way, they can be offered acceptable alternatives to the way of life and at the same time they can be protected from the influences that are able to steer them towards a delinquent life. Social prevention should adhere to the principle of an open democratic society in order to preserve the fundamental democratic values that are given to us by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. The Charter does not directly specify the right to security, but it clearly follows from the provisions of the right to life, the inviolability of the person, personal liberty and others that the right to security is recognised. Social prevention programmes promote the social inclusion of marginalised groups and facilitate their reintegration. Some programmes help victims or other vulnerable groups, which is another aspect of social inclusion.

In the Czech Republic, crime prevention is organised at three levels:<sup>207</sup>

- At the inter-departmental level – the focus of cooperation across the governmental departments lies in creating the Government's preventive policy in relation to traditional (general) crime and coordinating the preventive activities of individual departments represented in the Republican Committee for Crime Prevention and encouraging new activities. Situational crime prevention falls under the responsibility of the Advisory Board for Situational Crime Prevention.
- At the departmental level – crime prevention programmes are based on the substantive competence of individual ministries; they enrich their regular activities with new elements and approaches and influence the creation of relevant legislation.
- At the local level – involvement of public authorities, the Police, NGOs and other institutions which carry out activities at the municipal level. The system of crime prevention at the local level is based on the optimal distribution of competence in the areas of social and situational prevention with regard to the local situation, needs and possibilities.

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<sup>207</sup> Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. Crime Prevention. [online]. [qtd. 9 March 2019]. Available at: <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/web-o-nas-prevence-prevence-kriminality.aspx?q=Y2hudW09NA%3D%3D>

## **Persons released from prison and persons serving an alternative sentence or measure, including persons from socially excluded localities**

One of the basic conditions for integration of a person into society after being released from prison is to arrange housing, restore/create supportive ties to the family, resolve indebtedness and addictions and find employment, i.e. ensure legal income to meet basic needs. In doing so, low skills and motivation, indebtedness, prejudice of society or requiring a clean criminal record present are among the obstacles to finding a job. The prevention of these problems is addressed through “treatment programmes”<sup>208</sup> in which prisoners already participate while in prison. These treatment programmes are individually prepared after commencing the sentence on the basis of the educational, psychological and social characteristics of each prisoner. It aims, inter alia, to prepare the convict for independent life after returning from prison. The effectiveness of measures taken to prepare prisoners for release and to support the success of their integration into their free life is limited by existing personnel and material resources both in prisons and in the performance of social work in post-penitentiary care and parole supervision. Currently, with the support of Norwegian funds, the first probation house project operated by Probation and Mediation Service (provision of accommodation with a resocialisation programme) is being prepared. However, it will not be a social service provided under the Social Services Act, but a court-imposed measure in the context of conditional release under criminal law. Likewise, other social services, specifically focused on the issue of integrating persons registered in the Criminal Register into everyday life, do not correspond to the size of demand on the part of potential users. Persons released from prison can also take advantage of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship programmes focus on increasing the competencies of convicts and other vulnerable groups in finding job opportunities through a temporary job in a social enterprise and the gradual acquisition of working habits, and possibly also through continuous work before and after release. However, the offering of these programmes is insufficient, their implementation within a comprehensive system is not ensured and, as a rule, it does not sufficiently respond to the accumulation of social disadvantage that is characteristic of socially excluded persons. A burning problem is the lack of continuity in working with people in prison and after release, which is reflected in a number of factors, most notably in the absence of affordable housing and employment, which could be used immediately after leaving prison and which would prevent the deepening of social exclusion and reduce the risk of repeated crime.

Prison Service Concept until 2025, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No 79 of 3 February 2016, contains a number of specific measures aimed at reducing the recurrence of criminal behaviour and more effective reintegration of those released from prison into society. The main objective of the prison service reform is an inter-departmental and multidisciplinary approach, which should result in the successful integration of convicts back into society and effective protection against recidivism.

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<sup>208</sup> Prague Pankrác Remand Prison, Prison Service, Treatment Programmes. [online]. [qtd. 09/03/2019]. Available at: <https://www.vscr.cz/vazebni-veznice-praha-pankrac/o-nas/vykon-vezenstvi/programy-zachazeni/>

**Risks and barriers:**

1. Higher levels of vulnerability to certain types of crime, where people living in social exclusion become victims, often repeatedly;
2. Increased tolerance for certain types of crime, such as domestic violence;
3. An increase in social tension between the majority and the minority in connection with complaints about administrative offences in the field of public order and civil coexistence and the trivialisation of problems in socially excluded localities;
4. High latency of crime in socially excluded localities, caused for example by low trust in institutions;
5. A significant share of persons living in socially excluded localities released from prison, as well as the share of persons living in these localities who are serving an alternative sentence or measure;
6. Higher levels of prejudice by the majority and the threat of hate crimes.

**Objective: Promoting preventive approaches to ensuring security and public order**

The implementation of the objective will be aimed at integrating preventive activities into local policies and planning processes. The measures will focus on supporting and coordinating the cooperation of key stakeholders in the approach to solving security problems in municipalities where socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion (including persons from socially excluded localities serving an alternative sentence or measure) are located. Emphasis will be placed on further education, communication, participation, reducing social tensions and creating a safe environment in the community, as well as reducing the manifestations of anti-Gypsyism. Measures will focus on improving the prevention of domestic violence and combating biases related to domestic violence.

**Objective: Support for the preparation of prisoners for leaving prison and their subsequent integration into society**

The objective will be to support the personnel and spatial capacities of prisons so that treatment programmes for prisoners can be effectively implemented in connection with the Government-approved conceptual materials of the Ministry of Justice.<sup>209</sup> Change the focus of activities so that they prepare convicts for free life; this should include much more than just leisure activities. Establish specific programmes for the treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners and ensure their sufficient capacity. Establish more residential facilities so that their number and capacity correspond to the need for the support for people released from prison. Support the expansion of social services specifically focused on the issue of integrating persons registered in the Criminal Register into everyday life so that they correspond to the size of demand and the needs of potential users.

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<sup>209</sup> See the Concept of Prison Service until 2025, the Concept of Development of Probation and Mediation until 2025 and their related action plans.

#### 4.10. Prevention of and protection against addictive substances and addictive behaviour

Substance abuse and other addictive behaviours (e.g. gambling) together with other adverse socio-economic factors can dramatically affect life expectancy and also contribute to social exclusion. Different addictive substances have different levels of harmfulness and contribute to the overall burden to varying degrees, with legal addictive substances (tobacco and alcohol) being the most severe contributors due to their prevalence and relatively easy availability. The impact of substance abuse, other forms of risky behaviour and socio-economic determinants of health (poverty, unemployment, loss of social cohesion, low access to health care) combine, overlap and reinforce each other.

Globally, substance abuse is one of the most important risk factors for overall mortality and morbidity. In the latest study of the global health burden conducted by the WHO in 2016, tobacco ranked fourth and alcohol together with illicit drugs ranked eighth out of a total of 84 monitored preventable risk factors and their groups. In 2016, substance abuse accounted for 28.5% of the global health burden as measured by DALYs (*Disability-Adjusted Life Years*), i.e. years of life lost due to morbidity and mortality explained by monitored risk factors, and 12.9% of DALYs in total.<sup>210</sup> In developed countries, substance abuse is at the forefront of the ranking of risk factors, e.g. tobacco is the most important risk factor in the most developed countries.

Individuals in lower socio-economic status groups report a lower overall rate of alcohol consumption than individuals in higher status groups, but the morbidity, mortality and social impacts are higher in socio-economically disadvantaged groups. This phenomenon is referred to as the “alcohol damage paradox”. Possible explanations include riskier patterns of use (higher presence of binge drinking) and coexistence with other risk factors such as smoking, excess weight and the associated inappropriate diet.<sup>211, 212</sup> In addition to opioid analgesic abuse, the current “opioid crisis” in the US is also caused by excessive alcohol consumption and rising mortality from alcohol-related illnesses, an increased number of suicides related to the unfavourable socio-economic situation following the 2008 economic crisis, unemployment, declining real incomes and loss of social cohesion, as well as the low availability of health care for a significant part of the population, including the low availability of specialised addictology programmes.<sup>213, 214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> GAKIDOU, E., AFSHIN, A., ABAJOBIR, A. A., ABATE et al. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*, 390, 1345–1422.

<sup>211</sup> BELLIS, M. A., HUGHES, K., NICHOLLS, J., SHERON, N., GILMORE, I. & JONES, L. 2016. The alcohol harm paradox: using a national survey to explore how alcohol may disproportionately impact health in deprived individuals. *BMC Public Health*, 16, 111.

<sup>212</sup> LEWER, D., MEIER, P., BEARD, E., BONIFACE, S. & KANER, E. 2016. Unravelling the alcohol harm paradox: a population-based study of social gradients across very heavy drinking thresholds. *BMC Public Health*, 16, 599.

<sup>213</sup> KOLODNY, A., COURTWRIGHT, D. T., HWANG, C. S., KREINER, P., et al. 2015. The prescription opioid and heroin crisis: a public health approach to an epidemic of addiction. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 36, 559–74.

<sup>214</sup> REHM, J., ANDERSON, P., FISCHER, B., GUAL, A. & ROOM, R. 2016. Policy implications of marked reversals of population life expectancy caused by substance use. *BMC Medicine*, 14, 42.

The co-occurrence of substance abuse, risky behaviour, health disorders and negative impacts and factors in the social field has a synergistic character, i.e. the character of mutually influencing and potentiating phenomena and processes increasing the vulnerability of people.<sup>215</sup> The Czech Republic is one of the countries with the highest rate of alcohol use in the world and its rate of tobacco smoking is approximately average in the European context, but the rate of compliance with the recommended measures in the field of alcohol and tobacco is assessed as average to insufficient.<sup>216, 217</sup> In addition, for example, the rate of illicit drug use by injection in the Czech Republic is one of the highest in Europe<sup>218</sup> and the rate of substance abuse in socially excluded localities is higher than in the general population, with specific problems such as early onset of substance use or abuse, multigenerational use and the production and sale of illegal drugs.<sup>219</sup>

Gambling also contributes to the further deepening of social inequalities.<sup>220, 221</sup> The gambling “supply” tends to move to socio-economically disadvantaged regions and localities. The incidence of problematic gambling in socio-economically disadvantaged groups results in relatively higher damage, as people with lower incomes spend a relatively higher proportion of their income on gambling, which further exacerbates their disadvantaged social situation (and thus gambling acts as a regressive tax as it burdens people with lower incomes more).<sup>222</sup> This phenomenon is also present in socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic.<sup>223</sup>

### Legislative regulation of the topic

Act No 65/2017, on the protection of health from the harmful effects of addictive substances, as amended, which is effective from 31 May 2017, newly obliged the Government to approve a national drug policy strategy at least once every 10 years. At present, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Reduction of Damage Associated with Addictive Behaviour is valid for the period 2019–2027.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>215</sup> SINGER, M., BULLED, N. & OSTRACH, B. 2012. Syndemics and human health: implications for prevention and intervention. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 36, 205–211.

<sup>216</sup> WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION 2018. *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018*, Geneva, WHO. Feliu et al., 2018

<sup>217</sup> FELIU, A., FILIPPIDIS, F. T., JOOSSENS, L., FONG, G. T., 2018. *Impact of Tobacco Control Policies on Smoking Prevalence and Quit Ratios in 27 European Union Countries from 2006 to 2014*. Tobacco Control.

<sup>218</sup> EUROPEAN MONITORING CENTRE FOR DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION 2017. *European Drug Report 2017. Trends and Development*.

<sup>219</sup> MRAVČÍK, V., CHOMYNOVÁ, P., GROHMANNOVÁ, K., JANÍKOVÁ, B., ČERNÍKOVÁ, T., ROUS, Z., TION LEŠTINOVÁ, Z., KIŠŠOVÁ, L., NECHANSKÁ, B., VLACH, T., FIDESOVÁ, H. & VOPRAVIL, J. 2018. *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the Czech Republic in 2017*. Prague: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

<sup>220</sup> ABDEL-GHANY, M. & SHARPE, D. L. 2001. Lottery expenditures in Canada: Regional analysis of probability of purchase, amount of purchase, and incidence. *Family & Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 30, 64–78. Beckert and Lutter, 2009

<sup>221</sup> BECKERT, J. & LUTTER, M. 2009. The inequality of fair play: Lottery gambling and social stratification in Germany. *European Sociological Review*, 25, 475–488.

<sup>222</sup> ABBOTT, M., BINDE, P., HODGINS, D., KORN, D., PEREIRA, A., VOLBERG, R. & WILLIAMS, R. 2013. *Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling: An International Collaboration*. Guelph, Ontario, Canada.: The Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC).

<sup>223</sup> MRAVČÍK, V., ROUS, Z., CHOMYNOVÁ, P., TION LEŠTINOVÁ, Z., GROHMANNOVÁ, K., JANÍKOVÁ, B., KOZÁK, J., VLACH, T. & KIŠŠOVÁ, L. 2018. *Annual Report on Gambling in the Czech Republic in 2017*. Prague: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

<sup>224</sup> *Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in the Czech Republic in 2017*, National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addictions (NMS) [online]. 2017 [qtd. 9 March 2019]. Available at: [https://www.drogyinfo.cz/data/obj\\_files/32962/837/VZdrogy2017\\_web181207.pdf](https://www.drogyinfo.cz/data/obj_files/32962/837/VZdrogy2017_web181207.pdf)

## **Inclusive services for people who are addicted or at risk of addiction**

Substance abuse, pathological gambling and other addictions are factors which are directly involved in the social exclusion of individuals or entire specific groups affected by complex living situations. It must be said that drug use has its social context and, just as social exclusion encourages the use of addictive substances, there is also a significant barrier between substance users and society. The social context of substance abuse thus includes, for example, unemployment, an unstable or missing family background of an individual, mental health problems, poor and unstable housing and homelessness, and other factors; these often occur in combinations.

Services intended for the target group of addicted persons or those at risk of addiction specifically help to eliminate or prevent such social exclusion. Their approach is comprehensive and focuses on the protection of public health or on minimising the risks associated with the use of addictive substances. In terms of social services in the Czech Republic, there are mainly field programmes and contact centres for the target group of people addicted to non-alcoholic drugs, as well as homes with special regimes and aftercare services. Some of these services include therapeutic support, and there are specialised therapeutic communities for addicts. It is important that all types of programmes and services for all forms of addiction work for people with addictions and people at increased risk, with prevention and social services both in the inpatient or outreach form, as well as residential (such as wet houses). However, these services can provide comprehensive support to the target group only in functional cooperation with the health sector and health services that provide treatment for addiction-related disorders in a relatively wide range, from harm reduction programmes, through outpatient and residential addiction treatment such as psychiatric hospitals, to substitution treatment. The principle of case management is key in the case of interdisciplinary cooperation. The availability of standard housing with the professional support of social workers, psychiatrists and other professionals is essential for the target group of people suffering from alcohol-related or non-alcoholic drug addiction; for this reason, it is necessary to strengthen the development of the concept of social housing in the Czech Republic, especially the Housing First model, which will enable the target group to receive housing and psychosocial support. Equally important are other socially innovative elements that will be able to respond to the changing structure of the population threatened by various forms of addiction and changing patterns of addictive behaviour in society (e.g. addictions related to modern technologies).

Preventive, educational and information activities are also necessary. The ongoing evaluation of the Action Plan on Illegal Drugs in 2018 noted shortcomings in the systemic provision of prevention in schools, low availability of primary prevention programmes in the field of addiction, including low availability of specific selective and indicated prevention programmes, and low availability of addictology services, including outpatient health care and social reintegration programmes for substance users.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the Czech Republic in 2017*, National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addictions (NMS) [online]. 2017 [qtd. 2019-03-09]. Available at: [https://www.drogy-info.cz/data/obj\\_files/32962/837/VZdrogy2017\\_web181207.pdf](https://www.drogy-info.cz/data/obj_files/32962/837/VZdrogy2017_web181207.pdf)

**Risks and barriers:**

1. Use and abuse of legal and illegal drugs, which are often intergenerational;
2. Unavailability of addictology services in socially excluded localities, absence of psychological help for at-risk persons;
3. High availability of legal addictive substances in terms of location, time and price;
4. Disproportionately higher rates of substance abuse and gambling in socially excluded localities;
5. Production and sale of narcotics and psychotropic substances in socially excluded localities;
6. Low level of implementation and availability of preventive, curative and reintegration measures in general and for socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion in particular;
7. Lack of a social housing system for the target group (e.g. missing wet houses, i.e. shelters for people with addictions);
8. The need to respond to changes in the addictive behaviour of the at-risk population and in patterns of addictive behaviour.

**Objective: Reduce the use of addictive substances in the population and especially in people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion**

Support the implementation of proven informative, preventive, treatment and reintegration addictology programmes, including those targeted at socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion; at the same time, support the creation and evaluation of new types of services or measures that respond to the changing structure and needs of people at risk of various forms of addiction and changing patterns of addictive behaviour in the population (e.g. wet houses or Housing First programmes in social housing). Support programmes to reduce the risks connected to the use of legal and illegal addictive substances and other forms of addictive behaviour. Strengthen the cooperation of social services, the health care system and other assisting services towards a synergistic solution to the issue of addicts or persons at risk of addiction, both at the level of the actual implementation of programmes and at the level of systemic measures. The activities will be in line with the National Strategy for the Prevention and Reduction of Damage Associated with Addictive Behaviour 2019–2027 and its Action Plans.

## **5. Implementation and monitoring of the Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030**

The Committee for Social Inclusion, established as a permanent advisory and coordinating body of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the field of social policy with a view to combating poverty and social exclusion, regularly monitors the implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures set out in the Strategy's Action Plan; its members are entities that are important in terms of protecting the interests of people facing poverty and social exclusion. Just as the Committee has been involved in the preparation of the Strategy, it is expected to be involved in drawing up the Strategy's Action Plans.

From the point of view of future implementation of the Strategy, social dialogue is a very important tool which helps to align the interests of employees and employers in order to develop business and ensure social harmony. This dialogue is supported, among other things, by the meetings of the Committee for Social Inclusion, where possible changes in the field of social inclusion are discussed. Not only representatives of the State administration meet here, but also representatives of local governments, non-profit and academic areas and trade unions and employers' organisations, which guarantees greater pluralism of opinion. We also cannot exclude other possible partners who are actively involved both in working groups at the level of ministries (at the national level) and at the regional level – non-profit and voluntary organisations, local action groups, and projects aimed at, for example, inclusive education.

During the implementation of the entire Strategy, an Action Plan will be compiled for a period of three years as a tool for strategic management, which will contain a set of measures, the implementation of which will lead to the fulfilment of the Strategy's objectives. Based on the Action Plans, the managers of all areas, which are elaborated in individual chapters of the Strategy, will also be specifically identified. At the same time, the Action Plans for the Strategy will clearly set the indicators of the implementation of individual measures, using the SMART method (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).



## List of Abbreviations

Agency	Department for Social Inclusion (Social Inclusion Agency)
CR	Czech Republic
CZSO	Czech Statistical Office
Commission	European Commission
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EU-SILC	Living Conditions
HDI	Human Development Index
GDP	Gross domestic product
MID	Mild intellectual disability
MID	Mild intellectual disability
LAG	Local action group
MoRD	Ministry of Regional Development
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MH	Ministry of Health
FC	Substitute family care (foster care)
NTUS 2	Nomenclature of territorial statistics units (cohesion regions)
MEP	Municipal authority of a municipality with extended powers
UN	United Nations
ASLPC	Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children
MADP	Municipal authority with delegated powers
FEP PE MMD	Framework education programme for primary education of pupils with mild mental disabilities

FEP PE AO	Adjusted outputs of the Framework education programme for primary education
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
LO CR	Labour Office of the Czech Republic
OG CR	Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
RILSA	Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs
WHO	World Health Organization