

# Czechia

*Each year, the ESN European Semester Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with EU Member States known as the European Semester and produces a report based on a questionnaire completed by public social services authorities on the social situation in European countries with a particular focus on social services. This country profile identifies the most important common challenges facing social services as reported by ESN members in Austria, related to three principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and makes recommendations for the 2023 European Semester. The full report, with cross-country analysis of all the participating countries is available [here](#).*

## 1. Children's services

### 1.1. Key issues

Though children in the Czech Republic are less often exposed to extreme poverty than their EU peers, respondents pointed out that this is not the case for children raised far away from major cities and Roma children. Furthermore, the number of children placed in institutional care has been rising<sup>1</sup> - an issue not picked up by the EC national report. Although overall progress can be seen, there has also been a backward trend in recent years and the number of children placed in institutions has increased again. This is influenced by several reasons, including a fragmented system of child support and unclear responsibilities between the various ministries and public agencies working with children at different government levels, which leads to not providing timely and comprehensive support to children in families. This compartmentalisation translates also into different ways of management, different approaches to the rights and needs of the child, differences in methodological guidance and financing of alternative care solutions. The requirement that a child at risk is placed in care as a last resort is not always met.

Respondents highlighted that the importance of a child's stable relationships with their family and loved ones is underestimated across the system.

### 1.2 Recommendations

In 2020, the Czech Government approved the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021-2030, with an accompanying action plan. It is now crucial to ensure objective monitoring of progress in implementing both documents. In particular, the respondents highlight the need to set up a network of preventive and professional care services for vulnerable children and families to ensure they can remain in their homes and communities (objective B1.2 of the Action plan).

## 2. Long-term care

### 2.1. Key issue

Respondents underlined that the fragmentation of care services, acknowledged by the European Commission in previous country reports, is still a significant problem in the Czech Republic. However, there has been growing awareness of the need for integration

<sup>1</sup> MOLSA National Strategy for the Protection of children 2021 -2029. Although the number of children in institutional care fell from 10,407 to 8,208 between 2011 and 2018, it rose again to 8,329 in 2019.

of services, which has been reflected in current reform plans, which include the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services 2016-2025. The strategy underlines the necessary link between services, including close cooperation between health and social services. Despite these positive developments, respondents stressed that the adoption of policy documents does not follow through to appropriate changes in the law, hence policy objectives have not been implemented.

## 2.2. Recommendation

The Czech Government should implement the current national strategy for the development of social services, including through legislative reforms, to improve the quality of long-term care. This should be also followed by monitoring the implementation of the Czech National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), which includes long-term care reforms among its objectives.

## 3. Support for homeless people

### 3.1. Key issues

Respondents noted that around 10% of the Czech population has problems finding accommodation. This percentage includes a significant number of homeless people, of whom an alarmingly high number of 37,000 are children. A further 440,000 people were at risk of housing exclusion and another 450,000 experienced excessive housing cost burden<sup>2</sup>. Though the problem is pervasive, respondents highlighted that the Czech NRRP does not contain sufficient reforms in this field. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) remains one of the main sources of funding for implementing social housing policies in the Czech Republic. However, the current co-financing rules exclude many potential stakeholders. In particular, NGOs and faith-based organisations do not have the resources to cover their own

contribution to develop housing projects.

### 3.2. Recommendations

While 40% of past beneficiaries and 35% of municipalities plan to submit ERDF projects in the current programming period, this percentage would grow to 98% and 80% respectively if there were no project co-financing requirements. This would increase the absorption capacity of EU funds in this field from €205 million to €430 million. Therefore, respondents recommend that the threshold for co-funding is set at 5% for national and local governments and 0% for NGOs and faith-based organisations.



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<sup>2</sup> [https://socialnibydleni.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Socialni-bydleni-v-CR\\_final.pdf](https://socialnibydleni.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Socialni-bydleni-v-CR_final.pdf).