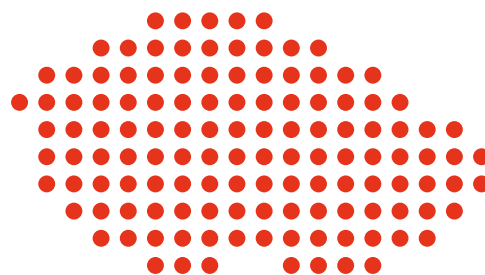


# Social Rights Monitor

# 2021

## Country Monitor: Czechia



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Living and working conditions in Czechia have improved a lot during recent years, according to SOLIDAR's National Strategy Group (NSG) – led by Multikulturní Centrum Praha – and national statistics, such as those published by the Czech Statistical Office CZSO.<sup>1</sup> Czechia is a high performer in the domains of, education, and social connections, but it ranks below average in housing, income, civic engagement, and environmental quality.<sup>2</sup> The gap between the richest and poorest quintiles of the population is increasing: the top 20% earns four times as much as the bottom 20%. And the gender pay gap is still among the highest in Europe. One of the main challenges for the country will be to improve housing conditions, by making housing more accessible and affordable, as too large a share of households' budgets is dedicated to housing expenses. Lastly, the National Strategy Group is concerned by the extremely low salaries for low-skilled jobs and calls for further training, as well as the recognition of more courses and nonformal education certificates.

1 CZSO: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/home>

2 OECD (2021) Better Life Index – Czech Republic. <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/czech-republic/>

|  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020        | EU-27 2020   |
|--|-------|-------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>GINI index<sup>3</sup></b>                  | 24.0  | 24.0  | 24.2        | 30.2 (2019)  |
| <b>Unemployment<sup>4</sup></b>                | 2.2%  | 2.0%  | 2.6%        | 7.1%         |
| <b>Gender Equality Index<sup>5</sup></b>       | 55.7  | 55.2  | 56.7 (2021) | 67.9         |
| <b>In-work poverty<sup>6</sup></b>             | 3.5%  | 3.5%  | 3.7%        | 9.2% (2019)  |
| <b>Housing Overcrowding<sup>7</sup></b>        | 15.7% | 15.4% | 15.2%       | 17.1% (2019) |
| <b>CIVICUS Civic Space Monitor<sup>8</sup></b> | OPEN  | OPEN  | OPEN        | N/A          |

#### Selected indicators on the state of social rights in Europe

Missing data for 2020 are not available at the time of publication of the Social Rights Monitor 2021.

# Equal opportunities and fair working conditions

As throughout Europe and beyond, the pandemic had particularly negative consequences on the Czech economy, and real GDP fell 5.8% in 2020.<sup>9</sup> This posed difficult challenges for the welfare system, which nevertheless provided increased support to social services and healthcare – for example, increasing the number of healthcare workers.<sup>10</sup> Other measures were undertaken to support society and the economy during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the main objective being to support and maintain employment rates by contributing some of the cost of wages and supporting

entrepreneurs in the worst-hit sectors.<sup>11</sup> One year later, **labour taxation remains among the highest of European<sup>12</sup> and OECD countries,<sup>13</sup> and no exemption is foreseen for people on low incomes.** Against the overall trend in the EU, the tax wedge has increased since 2009, reaching 41.6% in 2020, and it puts single parents and one-earner households at a particular disadvantage.

Nevertheless, the employment rate is among the highest in the EU, and unemployment among the lowest. Therefore, Czechia

3 Eurostat (2021). Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income: [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?lang=en&-dataset=ilc\\_di12](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?lang=en&-dataset=ilc_di12)

4 Eurostat (2021). Unemployment by sex and age: annual data: [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une\\_rt\\_a&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en)

5 European Institute for Gender Equality (2021). Gender Equality Index: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/CZ>

6 Eurostat (2021). In-work at-risk-of-poverty-rate: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm070/default/table?lang=en>

7 Eurostat (2021). Overcrowding rate by age, sex and poverty status – total population: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_lvho05a/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvho05a/default/table?lang=en)

8 CIVICUS (2021). Civic Space Monitor - Czechia: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/czech-republic/>

9 Eurostat (2021). Real GDP growth – volume <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00115/default/table?lang=en>

10 Ministry of Labour and social affairs (2020) Social benefits and allowances. <https://www.mpsv.cz/web/cz/davky-a-prispevky>

11 Government of the Czech Republic, (2021), Measures to support the economy. <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/epidemie-koronaviru/dulezite-informace/podpora-a-ulevy-pro-podnikatele-a-zamestnance-180601/>

12 Eurostat (2021) Tax rate on low wage earners: Tax wedge on labour costs [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/EARN\\_NT\\_TAXWEDGE](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/EARN_NT_TAXWEDGE)

13 OECD (2021) Taxing Wages – The Czech Republic <https://www.oecd.org/ctp/tax-policy/taxing-wages-czech-republic.pdf>

continues to perform well on the Social Scoreboard that supports the European Pillar of Social Rights and its recent Action Plan for implementation. But the labour market needs to become more accessible for groups in vulnerable situations, LGBTQI+ people, and women; the gender pay gap remains one of the highest in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the teaching profession's limited attractiveness and low social status, combined with low investment and wide socio-economic inequalities in education, mean that educational outcomes are decreasing, as is access to higher education.<sup>15</sup>

Geographical challenges also affect living conditions in the country. While housing prices keep increasing in the richer regions, the poorest areas suffer from social exclusion: they need significant investment in transport, the energy transition, and digitalisation.<sup>16</sup>

## GENDER EQUALITY

The National Strategy Group denounces the lack of improvement in gender equality over the past few years. Since 2010, the country's ranking in the European Gender Equality Institute's index has increased only 0.6 points. The European Index for Gender Equality (EIGE) classifies Czechia as the country with the third highest gender gap, behind only Hungary and Greece, so policies and structural reforms are

needed to promote equality in and accessibility to the labour market. Women earn 18.9% less than men,<sup>17</sup> and the gender pay gap is the highest among women aged 35 to 44, when women are often busy as mothers.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the National Strategy Groups welcomes the recent introduction of the LOGIB tool by the Czech government. This analytical tool allows public and private companies and employers to conduct research and assessments into the equality and fairness of salaries.<sup>19</sup>

In Czechia, parental leave is called *Rodicovska dovolena*. It lasts for up to 36 months and carries a benefit not higher than CZK 300,000 (€11,685)<sup>20</sup> for a single child,<sup>21</sup> for the entire leave period. Gender equality is far from a reality, as women make up more than 67% of the people taking care of elderly and disabled people and children.<sup>22</sup> This data reflects the fact the rate of full-time equivalent (FTE) employment is higher among men (66.7%) and that there are relatively few women in positions of power: more than 80% of government ministers are men, as are 79.1% of members of the Czech parliament and 79.2% of members of the regional assemblies.<sup>23</sup> There are also few women on the boards of the largest quoted companies, and there are no women on the board of the Czech Central Bank.<sup>24</sup>

There is widespread discrimination against Roma people, and women are often the target of mistreatment. Some positive developments took place during the year, as the government said it was willing to implement a mechanism

14 European Commission (2020) Country Report Czechia 2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2020-european\\_semiester\\_country-report-czech-republic\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2020-european_semiester_country-report-czech-republic_en.pdf)

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Eurostat (2021) Gender Pay Gap: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:GPG\\_2019\\_data.PNG](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:GPG_2019_data.PNG)

18 Eurostat (2021) Gender Pay Gap Statistics: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics#Part-time\\_versus\\_full-time\\_employment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Part-time_versus_full-time_employment)

19 LOGIB Software: <https://www.rovnaodmena.cz/rovne-odmenovani/logib>

20 Consulted in November 2021.

21 Czech Ministry of labour and Social Affairs (2021) Parental Allowance: <https://www.mpsv.cz/-/rodicovsky-prispevek>

22 EIGE (2021) Gender Equality Index 2020: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/CZ>

23 EIGE (2021) Gender Statistics Database: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/domain/power/CZ>

24 Ibid.

to provide compensation to Roma women who were victims of forced sterilisation.<sup>25</sup>

**The Czech NGO “Coalition Against Violence” reports that more than 160,000 women are victims of gender violence every year, but the parliament has still not ratified the Istanbul Convention on violence against women.** This number is likely to have increased during the pandemic due to the restrictions put in place. Therefore, the Czech government should take immediate action to develop an ad-hoc strategy.

## INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS

Czechia is a destination country with an increasing number of migrants every year. They represent slightly more than 3% of the population, and around half hold a permanent residence permit, while the other half has some kind of short- or medium-term residence permit.<sup>26</sup> The highest number of migrants are those with permits to stay in the country for educational purposes. They are followed by those who have come for family reasons and those in the country for work.<sup>27</sup> Since the country joined the European Union in 2004, over 41,000 people with a migration background have acquired Czech citizenship.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the country has developed integration programmes for the beneficiaries of international protection. These now include support for finding accommodation, education, and healthcare, as well as guidance to apply for social benefits and language and civic education courses.

### GOOD PRACTICE CSOs’ representatives on the Committee on the Rights of Foreigners

Civil society organisations play an important role in the inclusion of migrant people. They manage three out of 13 Regional Integration Centres, and their representative are members of the Czech Committee on the Rights of Foreigners,<sup>29</sup> which is part of the Government Council for Human Rights. This role is primarily meant to provide policy advice and to monitor the implementation of current strategies for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX),<sup>30</sup> Czechia is increasingly developing policies to address its main weaknesses regarding the inclusion of migrant people. These include political participation and access to nationality, followed by access to healthcare and to permanent residence permits. In the last five years, the country has improved its education policies, allowing newcomers and locals to build stronger networks and interact together. In particular, the introduction of ad-hoc language courses and teacher training to reflect diversity has helped Czechia to support immigrant children and their teachers, resulting in a better learning environment.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the National Strategy Group agrees with the findings of the MIPEX report that Czech integration policies create as many opportunities as obstacles. The NSG believes that the country should

25 Amnesty International, (2021), Annual Report 2020 – Czech Republic: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/czech-republic/report-czech-republic/>

26 Czech Statistical Office (2021) Foreigners statistics. <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/cizinci-pocet-cizincu>

27 European Commission (2020) Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/czech-republic>

28 Ibid.

29 Government of the Czech Republic, Committee on the Rights of Foreigners. <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rlp/vybory/pro-prava-cizincu/uvod-55935/>

30 MIPEX (2020) Migrant integration policy index – Czechia. <https://mipex.eu/czech-republic>

31 Ibid.

make it easier for newcomers to access civic and political rights, as well as to obtain long-term residency permits. **Despite scoring average among European countries on integration policies, Czechia is a leader in Eastern Europe, with more advanced policies than most of its neighbouring countries.**

## WORKING CONDITIONS

As in the rest of Europe and beyond, working conditions in Czechia have been altered by the introduction of new regulations to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Some changes are probably here to stay and will become a common part of working life in Czechia. It will likely continue in the long term to be possible to work from home and abroad and to work more-flexible hours. The digitalisation of everyday activities, too, is expected to remain.<sup>32</sup>

The amendment act to the Czech Labour Code passed on 10 June 2020<sup>33</sup> contains a regulatory framework for the introduction of a new form of “shared workplace”. This will allow employees to work from home or in the office according to their needs and without the intervention of their employer. This is considered a positive step forward in work-life balance and will be useful in coming years for regulating telework and making life easier for people with caring duties, a large majority of whom are women.

Despite the unfavourable situation created by the pandemic, average wages increased slightly in 2020 from 2019. **The minimum wage rose by 4%, and bigger increases came in education, health, and social care.**<sup>34</sup> **Nevertheless, the growth is expected to cease eventually as a consequence of the long-term impact of the pandemic.**<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in order to maintain the living conditions and purchasing power of the population, the government should introduce measures such as care allowances to mitigate future losses of income.

The National Strategy Group expresses its concern over the government tax package that was approved in December 2020. This will reduce the tax rate on gross wages from 20.1% to 15%,<sup>36</sup> increasing employees’ net salaries. However, neither employers’ organisations nor trade unions are positive about the package. Employers are afraid that the lost public revenues will increase the tax burden on companies,<sup>37</sup> while trade unions believe that it will slow down the growth in nominal wages, as well as increasing households’ expenses, if the state provides fewer public services.<sup>38</sup>

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

During the last few years, the country has registered progress in reducing early school leaving, lowering the rate below the European average. The majority of pupils – 71.3% of students – in upper secondary education are

32 Lehmann, S., Veverková, S., (2021). Czechia: Working life in the Covid-19 pandemic 2020, Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA)

33 Amendment act No. 262/2006 to the Czech Labour Code, June 2020: <https://aplikace.mvcr.cz/sbirka-zakonu/ViewFile.aspx?-type=c&id=38891>

34 Lehmann, S., Veverková, S., (2021). Czechia: Working life in the Covid-19 pandemic 2020, Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA)

35 Aktuálně.cz (2020). Krize nekrize, mzdy v Česku dál rostou. Polovina lidí však bere méně než 31 tisíc. 4.12. 2020.

36 Lehmann, S., Veverková, S., (2021). Czechia: Working life in the Covid-19 pandemic 2020, Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA)

37 Čížek, B., Štípek, V. (2020). Daňový balíček schválen. SP ČR

38 ČMKOS (2020). Předpoklady pro ekonomický vývoj v roce 2021

enrolled in vocational training rather than other kinds of schools.<sup>39</sup> As vocational education and training is very popular in Czechia, the National Strategy Group believes that it requires additional attention and strengthened recognition in order to ensure the employability of its graduates.

The National Strategy Group reports that there are still important differences between education systems across the country, as education administration is decentralised to municipalities. This makes it fragmented and, often, unequal. The NSG denounces some municipalities' lack of experience or resources to develop high-quality public education, especially in the poorest areas of the country. This results in differences in the performances of students and learners. The NSG believes that immediate targeted support is needed to provide assistance to disadvantaged students, and this should continue beyond the pandemic.

**In 2020, the Czech government adopted a new Strategy for Education Policy for 2030 and beyond,<sup>40</sup> which sets the main priorities for education and training over the next 10 years.** The primary issue highlighted in the strategy is the need to modernise non-formal education and lifelong learning through two main objectives: adapting learning to long-term trends such as climate change and digitalisation; and reducing inequalities, through individual teaching and teaching methods aimed at diverse groups. The objectives set out in the strategy are supposed to be achieved through stable, increased funding for education, aimed particularly at reducing the number of students per teacher.

In response to the pandemic, an amendment to the Education Act adopted in August 2020 made distance education an equivalent form of education. Nevertheless, according to the Czech School Inspectorate, more than 12% of primary school pupils did not have access to online learning during the first phase of the pandemic.<sup>41</sup>

39 Eurydice (2020) Czech Republic Overview, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/czech-republic\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/czech-republic_en)

40 MŠMT - Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, (2020) Strategie vzdělávací politiky ČR do roku 2030+ / Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+. <https://www.msmt.cz/file/54104/>

41 Amnesty International, (2021), Annual Report 2020 – Czech Republic: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/czech-republic/report-czech-republic/>

# Social protection and inclusion

The National Strategy Group reports its concerns over poverty in the country: **10% of the population lives in poverty, and the share is 19% among children up to 17 years old. Homelessness is increasing at a steady pace, and about 33% of households with one parent are at risk of poverty.<sup>42</sup> In general, 17.6% of Czech households find it difficult to make ends meet.** The problem is mainly encountered by women and single mothers, highlighting the gender pay gap and the gap in employment rates.<sup>43</sup>

The category of people most at permanent risk of poverty is those with low-income jobs and no assets, and they make up 20% of the Czech population. Poverty has particularly heavy consequences for the personal and career development of vulnerable groups such as women, minorities, migrants, and people with disabilities or chronic illness. For these people, unexpected expenses or illness could land them in extreme poverty. They are at high risk of falling into devastating debt if they need healthcare, with migrants particularly vulnerable. Indeed, Czechia is the only European country that restricts access to public healthcare for children of employed third-country nationals<sup>44</sup> whose healthcare is covered by an employment contract in their home country. Therefore, third-country nationals who are pregnant, who have premature babies, or who are living with disabilities are in a dangerous situation.

## GOOD PRACTICE

### Open letter to the Czech government

A group of migrant workers in Czechia launched a petition<sup>45</sup> calling on the government to grant access to healthcare and insurance for children with employed migrant parents. The letter strongly demands that the prime minister end discrimination against migrant children. The main argument is that these families pay the same level of taxes in Czechia as other households, so they should receive the same treatment.

## ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The NSG is concerned over rapidly growing housing costs, as a result of which many Czech households struggle to access affordable housing, especially in the main cities. House prices have increased faster than household incomes, making it harder for newcomers and young people to find decent and affordable housing.<sup>46</sup> **Nearly 10% of the population spends more than 40% of their net income on housing,<sup>47</sup> but homes are often located in old, unsafe buildings that need improvements in energy, heating, and insulation.**

42 EAPN (2021) Poverty Watch Report 2020 – Czech Republic: <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EAPN-PW-2020-Czech-Republic-ENG-4746.pdf>

43 Ibid.

44 European Website on Integration (2020) Czech Republic: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/czech-republic-new-initiative-demands-access-to-public-health-insurance-for-children-of-employed-migrants>

45 The petition is available online at the following website: [https://www.petice.com/petice\\_za\\_vstup\\_dti\\_vech\\_pracujicich\\_v\\_r\\_do\\_systemu\\_zdravotniho\\_pojitni](https://www.petice.com/petice_za_vstup_dti_vech_pracujicich_v_r_do_systemu_zdravotniho_pojitni)

46 OECD (2021) Housing Affordability in Cities in the Czech Republic: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bcddcf4a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/bcddcf4a-en>

47 EAPN (2021) Poverty Watch Report 2020 – Czech Republic: <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EAPN-PW-2020-Czech-Republic-ENG-4746.pdf>

The National Strategy Group denounces the lack of adaptation of social housing to the needs of low-income and vulnerable groups and underlines that there is not enough supply to meet the demand from all the low-income households that apply.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Czech households in need of social housing are often obliged to turn to private housing with bad living conditions such as dormitories.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the number of both young and elderly homeless people is growing. The majority – around 11,600 people – sleep outside or in occasional night shelters.<sup>50</sup>

The NSG therefore calls for the fast adoption of a comprehensive national regulation on affordable housing to tackle this emergency. This should clearly define the duties and responsibilities of municipalities, regions, and the government in addressing and tackling homelessness and social inclusion.

## TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY

According to the European Commission, Czechia generates 3.5% of EU greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The country has acted slowly on GHG reduction for more than 15 years, and the National Strategy Groups denounces its lack of effective measures for a just and radical climate transition. The country has an energy-intensive industrial

economy, which accounts for 60% of its total emissions.<sup>51</sup> Currently, Czechia's plans for reducing GHG emissions mainly focus on eliminating coal and lignite from energy production by 2038,<sup>52</sup> but the National Strategy Group finds this choice highly concerning. The regions producing energy through coal are indeed those with the country's highest rates of unemployment, poverty, and early school leaving. To ensure social justice, the NSG therefore suggests introducing a support mechanism for local communities and the more than 21,000 employees who are currently dependent on coal mining at the same time as GHG reduction strategies. The steepest increase in emissions in recent years has come in the transport sector.

Although the country doubled its share of renewable energies from 9.9% in 2009 to 16.2% in 2019, its aim of increasing this share to 22% by 2030<sup>53</sup> was described as unambitious by a European Parliament report on Czechia's climate action. **The National Strategy Group, together with various journalists,<sup>54</sup> denounces a lack of prioritisation for sustainability in the investment of available national sources of funding, as well as a lack of penalisation for projects using fossil fuels.** Indeed, it is likely that a large part of what Czechia receives from the EU Just Transition Fund will go to chemical plants, and that research funds will continue to prioritise activities related to fossil fuels.

48 EAPN (2021) Poverty Watch Report 2020 – Czech Republic: <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EAPN-PW-2020-Czech-Republic-ENG-4746.pdf>

49 Ibid

50 FEANTSA (2021) Country Profile Czech Republic - 2020: [https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Resources/country\\_profiles/CZ\\_Country\\_Profile\\_2020.pdf](https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Resources/country_profiles/CZ_Country_Profile_2020.pdf)

51 European Parliament (2020), Report: Climate Action in Czechia: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689329/EPFS\\_BRI\(2021\)689329\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689329/EPFS_BRI(2021)689329_EN.pdf)

52 Czech Government, Coal Commission (2019): <https://www.mpo.cz/cz/energetika/uhelna-komise/uhelna-komise--248771/>

53 Czech Republic (2019) National Energy and Climate Plan of the Czech Republic: [https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/cs\\_final\\_necp\\_main\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/cs_final_necp_main_en.pdf) (p.29)

54 See: Plevák, O., (2020) Babi's conflict of interest debacle, a never-ending story: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/babis-conflict-of-interest-debacle-a-never-ending-story/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/babis-conflict-of-interest-debacle-a-never-ending-story/), or: Zachová, A., (2020) Green EU funds to Czechia's big players: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/green-eu-funds-to-czechias-big-players/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/green-eu-funds-to-czechias-big-players/)



# Civic space

Civic space in Czechia remains open, as indicated by CIVICUS's Civic Space Monitor.<sup>55</sup> Overall, the National Strategy Group (NSG) considers that freedom of civic space is sufficiently respected and protected. The only legal modifications during the year aimed to minimise the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, most of the provisions remained in force even after the state of emergency was lifted on 12 April 2021. Restrictions still in place include a limit on public gatherings, which defines a maximum number of participants depending on the epidemiological situation. However, freedom of peaceful assembly remains protected: organisers are obliged to declare upcoming events to the public authorities, but no formal authorisation is required.

The National Strategy Group reports some concerns in the domain of freedom of speech because of the private influence in Czech television and radio, which represent a big portion of the country's media coverage. According to the International Press Institute, there have been various attempts to remove specific people from the councils that govern both Czech radio and television, because the people were considered responsible for broadcasting news critical of the government. Interference in the independence of public media is therefore increasing. Moreover, as Reporters Without Borders reports,<sup>56</sup> Czech journalists are facing increasing threats and unrestrained verbal attacks from government officials, which are spreading a climate of mistrust in journalists and the press.

55 CIVICUS (2021) Czech Republic: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/czech-republic/>

56 RSF (2021) Czech Republic report: <https://rsf.org/en/czech-republic>

# Civil dialogue on national recovery and resilience plans

The NSG reports that social dialogue in Czechia, known also as the Tripartita (Tripartite),<sup>57</sup> is carried out by three main types of entity: employers' organisations, the government, and trade unions. CSOs do not generally take part in social dialogue procedures, particularly at high levels. Rather, they play a consultative role on different advisory bodies for specific issues – such as the environment, gender issues, housing, Roma rights, and employment – where most cooperation takes place at the regional level. However, they need more time to review policy, legislation and programme proposals, and their lack of stable funding often limits CSOs' capacity to have a real influence at national level.

In addition, **the National Strategy Group denounces the way the drafting of the Czech**

**Recovery and Resilience Plan has largely been going on behind closed doors.** Civil society organisations were not invited to participate in the process, and there has not been any attempt to inform the public about the most current version of the plan, which includes changes up to the end of March 2021.

Despite this lack of respect for the partnership principle, the NSG reports that the final version of the Czech Recovery and Resilience Plan has undergone several major positive modifications since the first draft was published in October 2020 due to pressure from CSOs and the European Commission. Harmful projects erased from the plan include investment in highways, re-financialisation of newly legislated tax reforms, and investments in liquefied or natural gas (LNG/CNG) vehicles.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Czechia -Tripartita: <https://www.tripartita.cz/social-dialogue/>

<sup>58</sup> Bankwatch, (2021) Report on the Czech Recovery Plan: <https://bankwatch.org/blog/czech-recovery-plan-a-few-steps-away-from-being-on-the-right-path>

**SOLIDAR's Social Rights Monitor 2021** has been developed in the framework of the **Together for Social Europe** programme co-funded by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). It provides an insight into the state of social rights in 16 European countries. The Monitor assesses the state of social Europe in terms of equality of opportunities, fair working conditions, social protection, inclusion and civic space based on the observations of Civil Society Organisations working on the ground in combination with statistical data and scientific findings. This information is provided by National Strategy Groups that are set up in each of the 16 countries by a SOLIDAR member or partner. The 2021 Monitor also analyses to which extent civil society and social partners have been involved in the design of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, integrated in the 2021 European Semester cycle.

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