

NECE – Networking European Citizenship Education

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Country Profile I. Czech Republic

Some data about the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic was established on January 1, 1993 after the division of the CSFR into two independent and sovereign states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. The CR became a member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. As a member of EU and according to its own Constitution (Law No. 1/1993 Coll.) the CR has the duty to care for full respect for human rights and development of democratic citizenship. (*The Constitution of the CR establishes the primacy of promulgated international treaties, the ratification of which has been approved by the Parliament and which are binding on the CR.*)

The overriding principle of the Czech policy is **the respect for human rights**. Since the end of the year 1998 the Council for Human Rights of the Czech Government has been created which is responsible for preparation of governmental decisions and proposes of issues of human rights. (The Section for human rights education used to be part of this Council up to the year 2004).

Population size of the CR is about 10 million inhabitants. The official language is Czech which is mother tongue of about 95% of all of them. The main national minority Slovaks (about 3%) use Slovak language without any problems, 2.1% of population (Poles, Roma, German and others) speak Czech language or English, German and French which are the most favoured second languages.

The adult literacy is relatively high. Aspects of human rights, education for democracy, rule of law, indirectly or directly incorporating international human rights, are included in school curricula of primary and secondary schools (particularly those which prepare children for further studies). **The civics (civic education)** is the school subject in which this topic uses incorporated. There are 16 universities in the Czech Republic. Human rights laws are taught as a compulsory part of the international law at all Faculties of Law. Democratic Citizenship, international human rights treaties, human rights as the ethical norms are taught at the Faculties of Pedagogy (particularly for student-teachers of civic education), Faculties of Social Sciences and at Human Rights Education Centre of Charles University in Prague.

There remain problem with safeguarding *equal rights to education* for members of minorities, i.e. the possibility to fulfil Haag recommendation concerning the education in mother tongue in the primary schools is sometimes limited inter alia due to not quite clear legal norms. E. g. - number of minority members: citizens of the CR can declare as their nationality whatever they want. This fact affected negatively e.g. outcomes of the Census 2001 which stated only 12 thousand members of Roma population – while realistic estimation speaks about 200 000, or

- number of migrants. In our legal order there is not quite clear how to define migration, e.g. anybody living outside his/her country of origin for more than a year becomes an international migrant? or he/she may be a student, a tourist? As a result we recognize migrants and foreigners and sometimes there is no border between these two groups. Just the same is with the number of migrants - there is a lack of reliable data (from the Foreign Police), and the available data is often incomparable

The EYCE opened in the CR not only the issue of education for democracy which is more or less covered within the curricula by the subject civics (or social science in higher schools – as mentioned above) but primarily preparedness of the Czech schools for education students (or adults) from different ethnics (cultures, national minorities). It is without any

doubt that education is playing a crucial role in human behaviour, mutual understanding and interpersonal relations which effect stability of multicultural societies, CR among them.

*In formal education in the CR, EYCE started **the middle-term programme of in-service-teachers training in the field of human rights, tolerance and democratic citizenship.***

In non formal education mostly regional conferences and seminars were organized with the focus on actual issues as European identity, improvement of educational level of NGOs, tolerance in the multicultural society.

Let us now look closer on some educational activities of the Human Rights Education Centre (HREC) during the EYCE.

1. Analysis of the situation

HREC analysed **obstacles** which limit implementation of *equal rights* (necessary for equal citizenship) into the educational systems in the CR **for migrants and refugees** as:

- sometimes unknown culture of migrants and foreigners,
- poor knowledge of their mother tongue – lack of native speakers as interpreters,
- limited preparedness of national teachers for education in multicultural classrooms.

The ways how to reduce these obstacles can be seen e. g. in

- general preparation of teachers for education in multicultural classes,
- preparation of assistants to teachers for migrant – children,
- preparation of educational affirmative actions for migrant - children.

2. What we can do and how – theoretical background for educational activities of HREC

Equality in a multicultural society. Although democratic society has a duty to treat all its citizens equally, its ability to do so, is necessarily limited. . Equality involves equal freedom or opportunity to be different, and treating human being equally requires to take into account both their similarities and differences. Taking cultural differences into account, as the general rule how we can for them ensure equal rights, seems that different treatments of individuals or groups are equal if they represent different ways of realizing the same right, opportunity or whatever other respect. The multicultural perspective is composed mainly of the safeguarding of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Last but not least. A multicultural society cannot be stable and last long without developing the common sense of belonging among its citizens. **The sense of belonging** cannot be ethnic or based on shared cultural, ethnic or other characteristics (which is for the multicultural society too diverse), but political in nature and **based on the shared commitment to the political community**. In this light the European Year of Citizenship through education may be one of the keys opening the door to the European identity.

3. Practical educational activities of HREC

Preparation of student - teachers for their activities in multicultural classes:

In the school year 2001/2002 HREC introduced into the pre-service studies for students-teachers at Charles University in Prague the subject **Principles of multicultural tolerance**. From the year 2004, the subject is taught also at the South Bohemian University in České Budějovice and at the University of Ostrava. Its contents was in the academic year 2004/2005 widen by the aspects of “mass medial” literacy.(changing role of “the watching dog “, changing role of teachers, European citizenship).

The subject links together the issue of multicultural education, education for tolerance, human rights and democracy, European citizenship, the innovative changes of studies, the contents of educational programmes and training of communicative and methodological abilities. Thus, it creates prerequisite for visible progress in teacher’s studies particularly in multicultural society.

Preparation of assistants to teachers for children from national minorities

HREC established and guarantees the training courses for the preparation of Roma auxiliary educators – teacher's assistants, whose role can fulfil people of Roma origin. He/she is a person, who works as an assistant of the teacher, generally at preschool facilities and primary schools. This person can above all help the children get accustomed to basic hygienic habits and basic school rules. Main activities in the course focus on improvement of communication skills, particularly in the Czech language – including literacy skills of reading and writing, education for tolerance and children rights. Creation of the atmosphere of mutual confidence between learners and lecturers as well as feeling of security was the precondition for successful training process. Main purpose of this activity: overcoming of the lack of interest for education among Roma communities; raising educational level of Roma citizens as a background for their higher employability.

Co-organization and participation in several national seminars and conferences organized during the EYCE and edition of the textbook Chapters from the multicultural tolerance (ISBN 80-902345-1-8) which mainly includes information concerning European citizenship.