### Czech Republic at glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>10,201,707 (July 2010 est.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age structure</strong></td>
<td>0-14 years: 13.6%</td>
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<td>15-64 years: 71%</td>
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<td>65 years and over: 15.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total fertility rate</strong></td>
<td>1.25 children born/woman (2010 est.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:</strong></td>
<td>less than 0.1% (2001 est.)</td>
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<td>population comparison to the world: 216</td>
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<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
<td>total population: 99% (2003 est.)</td>
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<td><strong>School life expectancy</strong></td>
<td>15 years (2006)</td>
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<td><strong>GDP - per capita (PPP)</strong></td>
<td>$25,600 (2010 est.) country comparison to the world: 53</td>
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<td>Note: data are in 2010 US dollars</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment rate</strong></td>
<td>9.3% (2010 est.) country comparison to the world: 102</td>
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<td><strong>Population below poverty line:</strong></td>
<td>NA%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education expenditures</strong></td>
<td>4.6% of GDP (2006) country comparison to the world: 88</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health expenditures</strong></td>
<td>7.01% of GDP (2008)</td>
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The social-law protection of children in the Czech Republic is divided between the competencies of five ministries:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA)
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS)
- Ministry of Health (MH)
- Ministry of the Interior (MI)
- Ministry of Justice (MJ)

Any important decision concerning children in alternative care has to be approved by the court

- Specialized courts for children only on municipal level
  - Very often young, less experienced judges
  - No specialized courts on higher level

Children taken out from their families of origin quite often because of socio-economic reasons
• New unifying opinion (Cpjn 202/2010) of the Czech Supreme Court issued in January 2011
  • family's poverty and poor housing circumstances cannot be the sole basis for removing children from the home and placing them in state care

• In 2010, also the Czech Constitutional Court ruled against the unnecessary breakup of families in cases where it is not absolutely necessary (II.ÚS 485/2010)

• General legislation governing the issue of family relations is Act No. 94/1963 Coll., on the family, as amended
  • The Family Act sets forth also the general rules of alternative family care for children and adolescents in its individual forms (adoption, guardianship and foster care)

• Work with endangered children and families and different forms of alternative care for children are governed by various special legislation
Work with endangered children and families

- Act No. 359/1999 Coll., on social and legal protection of children, as amended
  - Support for the family of origin included
  - Social-law protection bodies are obliged to provide help to the parents after their child’s placement in an institutional care facility or in a facility for children requiring immediate help
    - the aim is to enable the child’s return to the family
    - solution of the family situation, including social/financial aspects

- The court is required to review every 6 months the reasons and circumstances that led to the child’s placement
Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, as amended

- Family strengthening programmes = social activization services for families with children
  - field or ambulatory services provided to families with children whose development is at risk
  - Activities of the social activization services for families with children:
    - education and activation activities,
    - mediation of contact with social environments,
    - social therapeutic activities,
    - assistance in asserting rights, interests and in attending to personal matters

Existing problems / problems in the field of social services

- Lack of social workers working with children and families at risk

- High number of cases / social worker (approx 300 – 400, max up to 1000 cases)

- Work with family after taking children out of the family of origin is not a priority

- Almost no support to reintegration of the families of origin

- Problematic accessibility of social services in some regions, especially out of bigger cities
Possibilities for support of endangered families in practice

- Social-law protection bodies,
- Social services providers (mostly NGOs),
- Facilities for sheltered housing,
- Psychological and pedagogical-psychological counselling centres,
- Other institutions & professionals – doctors, teachers etc.

More professionals/institutions usually intervene in solving the situation of endangered families and children

- multidisciplinary cooperation and networking as key factors for effective support
  - not sufficiently disseminated in the Czech practice

The Standards for Quality in Social Services (Standards)

- The Standards specify the duties of providers and the rights of users in general
  - Each social services provider is obliged to create, on the basis of the obligatory criteria, its own document consisting of the standards applied to the social services provided by it to the particular target group
  - Each social services provider is also obliged to acquaint the users with the Standards
- The quality in social services is monitored through the inspection of social services.
Alternative Care for children

Existing types of alternative care for children and adolescents in the Czech Republic:

- institutional care
  - infants’ homes
  - children’s homes for children up to the age of 3
  - diagnostic institutions
  - children’s homes
  - children’s homes with schools
  - educational care facilities
  - facilities for children requiring immediate assistance

- family-based care
  - adoption
  - guardianship
  - foster care
- Act No. 20/1966 Coll., on the care of public health, as amended (hereinafter “Public Health Care Act”)
  - in the competency of the Ministry of Health
  - article 38 mentions existence of infants’ homes

- Methodological decree No. 24039/2005 of the Ministry of health on activities of infants’ homes and children’s homes for children up to the age of 3
  - only recommendations, not a binding law

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- Act No. 109/2002 Coll., on the execution of institutional care or juvenile correction in educational facilities and preventative educational care in educational facilities and changes to other Acts, as amended (hereinafter “Institutional Care or Juvenile Correction in Educational Facilities Act”).
  - in the competency of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
  - governs the activities of diagnostic institutions, children’s homes, children’s homes with schools and correctional facilities
Act No. 359/1999 Coll., on social-law protection of children, as amended (hereinafter the “Social-law Child Protection Act”)
- in the competency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- as well as social-law child protection activities, it also governs the activities of foster care facilities and facilities for children requiring immediate assistance

Coming of children into care
- Children often taken out because of socio-economical reasons
- Lack of involvement of the family of origin and children / young people in a decision making process
- Separation of siblings groups still possible
- Best interest of the child still not taken as the absolute priority
Care process

- Czech Republic criticised for a very high number of children living in institutional care
  - in total, approx. 21 000 children
  - main reasons
    - insufficient competency of the family of origin
    - incompleteness of families and/or social handicaps as poverty, social exclusion etc.

- High number of Roma children

- no unified and reasonable conception of social housing in the Czech Republic up to now
  - very much linked to the risk of social exclusion

Children often placed a long way from their parents

- They are not able to exercise their right to visit the child

Restriction of visits or telephone contact with parents is usually used as a punishment.

- Contact with the parents is sometimes subject to the condition of good behaviour in the institution

Conditions and care in certain institutions are not provided in such a way as to ensure the maximum development of the child

- Lack of individual approach to the children
- Minimal participation of the children and youth
• no unified conception and methodology of work with endangered children and families in place so far
  ▪ in case of a crises situation in a family (e.g. social fall, poverty etc.), it is often solved (and resolved) by taking children out from the „unsatisfactory“ environment

• responsible social welfare authorities face to lack of financial resources, personnel and their insufficient education
  ▪ up-to-date trends in this field often brought by NGOs
    ▪ Low capacity, financial insecurity, accessible mostly in bigger cities

• Leaving the care
  ▪ young people in alternative care facilities are often not being prepared to leave the care in a systematic and long-term manner
    ▪ social unpreparedness
    ▪ economic dependence
    ▪ lack of emotional support
  ▪ No continuous support of young people after leaving the care
    ▪ Lack of after care services
  ▪ No state / regional policy regarding housing, programmes for employment of youngsters leaving care
Responsibility of the government

- Developing policies and methodology
  - Concerned ministries are responsible
  - Ministry of labour and social affairs should be a central coordination authority
- Finances
  - Ensuring enough financial resources
  - Transferring money to regional authorities, institutional facilities and NGOs

Responsibility of regional authorities

- Registration of NGOs working with children and families at risk
- Transferring money to foster care facilities and facilities for children requiring immediate assistance
- Organizing trainings for future foster parents

Responsibility of local authorities (municipalities with extended powers)

- Providing concrete social-law protection of children
- Direct contact with foster parents
- Responsibility of NGOs
  - Providing high-quality services
  - Advocacy for rights of children / beneficiaries within the target group
  - Raising awareness of existing problems, obstacles and needs bringing possible solutions

- At the moment, no care quality standards for alternative care for children in place
  - International documents (Q4C, UN Guidelines etc.) taken into consideration by responsible authorities only as an inspiration
    - Not implemented in the law
    - Important role of NGOs in promoting these documents

- National Action Plan for Transformation and Unification of the System of Care for Children at Risk
  - Approved by the government in 2009
  - Presented for the period 2009 - 2011
  - Defines key activities required for improvement of the quality of work with children and families at risk
Targets in the sphere of transformation of the system of work with children and families at risk

- improvement of the quality of work and accessibility of services for children and families at risk
- unification of procedures applied by workers upon addressing a particular situation of a child at risk
- reduction of numbers of children placed in any type of long-term institutional care
- improvement of life chances of children, support to development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities within the widest extent possible and preservation of living standards required for the physical, mental, moral and social development of children

Following areas shall be transformed:

- prevention of threats to children and families, constituted especially by risky behaviour,
- identification of children and families at risk,
- work with families at risk with attention paid to preserving the natural environment of the child,
- work with children in alternative family care (the alternative family shall not be treated as a family at risk but as a family requiring support),
- work with children in institutional care,
- support to entry of children into independent life.
Implementation of the National Action Plan depends very much on inter-ministerial cooperation

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in charge of the implementation and coordination of the transformation process

Till now, this cooperation has not worked well

- Implementation of the National action plan has been almost stopped

After last election in 2010, there is a clear development at the Ministry of labour and social affairs

- Concrete steps are taken (e.g. necessary amendments of the law on social-legal protection of children)
- Intensive dialogue with experts and NGOs working in the field has been set up
There are still many problems, obstacles and challenges

- Responsibilities for social-law protection of children divided or/and shared by many state bodies (5 ministries, 14 regional authorities, 205 municipalities with extended powers)
- The best interest of a child is not always followed by responsible authorities (e.g. children taken out from family of origin because of unsatisfactory housing of the family of origin)
- Problems in inter-ministerial cooperation
- Strong lobby of institutional facilities
- Lack of finances

I matter campaign
I matter campaign

- The project runs from 2009 to 2011
- geographical focus on Europe and Central Asia
- objectives of the project
  - knowledge-sharing on leaving care
  - youth empowerment
  - improvement of legislation and practice on leaving care
- Young people with experience in growing up in alternative care actively take part in the project
  - contribution to shaping legislation and practice on leaving care

countries participating in the project:
- Albania
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Kyrgyzstan
- Poland
- Russia
- Uzbekistan
Campaign focused on
  • Raising awareness on leaving care issues
    ▪ Long-term support
    ▪ Well prepared preparation for leaving the care
    ▪ Support of the family of origin as an integral part of work with children at risk
  • Information materials on rights of children leaving the care
  • Creating proposals on improving the system of leaving care and after care services
  • Sharing experiences and knowledge among countries involved within the project

International project
„Rights of children in alternative care, from theory to practice: filling the gaps through peer research“
Peer research project

- Project focused on rights of children out of parental care
  - Realized in four countries (Albania, Czech Republic, Finland, Poland)

- Aims of the project
  - To create informational materials on rights of children and young people in alternative care
  - To analyze through the peer research concrete problems that complicate young people in the Czech Republic preparation for leaving the care
  - To gather concrete recommendations from young people with personal experience from alternative care on how to improve existing system of preparation for leaving the care
  - To raise awareness about examples of good practise on preparation for leaving the care from the daily praxis of respective authorities and care providers on

- Recommendations and selected examples of good practise confronted with existing policies and praxis including concrete methods of providing care
  - Final report will published on national level and European level as well
    - The aim is to reach the highest possible impact on existing systems of alternative care in Europe

- Project supported by the European commission
Peer research project

- Project led by project coordinator working within the SOS Kinderdorf International
  - On the national level, partner organizations responsible for realizing the project
    - In the Czech Republic, the partner organization is SOS children’s villages, Czech Republic

- Expertise support provided by National care advisory service (UK)

- On the national level, project led by national coordinator
  - Responsible also for sharing information and coordination within the international frame

- On the national level, national coordination team has overall responsibility for realizing all project activities
  - National coordinator
  - 2 experts in the field of alternative care (researches)
  - 2 young people with personal experiences from alternative care
Thank you for your attention

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