

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

I.1 History

The first signs of people living in what is today the Czech Republic are as old as 1.6 - 1.7 million years and were found near Beroun in Central Bohemia. The first Slavonic people came in the 5th and 6th centuries. The first written references to the Czechs, Prague, and regions of Bohemia appeared in the 8th and 9th centuries. In about the year 870, the Czech prince Borivoj was mentioned for the first time. He came from Prague and belonged to the House of Premysl, which later became the royal dynasty of Bohemia. This dynasty governed the Czech kingdom until 1306. During the reign of the House of Luxembourg (1310-1436), Bohemia was the center of the so-called Holy West Roman Empire of German People and Prague became one of the cultural centers of Europe. A short period of elected kings ended in 1526, when the Czech Kingdom (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) became a part of Austria, later the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

In 1918, after World War I, Czechoslovakia emerged from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as a modern democratic state. Czechoslovakia consisted of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia and Carpatho-Russia (today part of Ukraine). In 1939, Slovakia separated from Czechoslovakia and the Czech part of the country was occupied by the German

army and incorporated as a special autonomous state into the German Empire. In 1945, Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Soviet and American armies. The Czechoslovak state was restored without Carpatho-Russia which joined the Soviet Union.

In February 1948, the Communist party gained power (in a formal constitutional way), and Czechoslovakia was under Soviet influence until 1989. After the „Velvet Revolution“ in 1989, the democratic regime was restored.

In response to the Slovak desire for greater self determination, a federal constitution was introduced in 1968. Completely controlled by the Communist Party, the Czechoslovak Federation had not satisfied the legitimate aspirations of the Slovak people. From 1990 on, Czech and Slovak political parties negotiated on the future form of the federation. After two years of unsuccessful negotiation and following the 1992 parliament elections, the division of the country began. On January 1, 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic were peacefully separated and established as independent states.

Milestones of the 20th Century history of the Czech Lands

- 1918** After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the first Czechoslovak Republic as a common state of Czechs and Slovaks was established.
- 1920** A democratic constitution was adopted.
- 1938** The Munich Agreement, occupation of part of Czechoslovakia by Germany and Hungary; the so-called Second Republic, Czecho-Slovakia with extended Slovak autonomy was established.
- 1939** The rest of the Czech part was occupied by Germany, as an independent Slovak State was established.
- 1945** Liberation, the Czechoslovak Republic was restored.
- 1948** Communists took over the country, the beginning of 40 years of a totalitarian regime.
- 1968** Prague Spring, the invasion of Warsaw Pact armies, a federal constitution adopted.
- 1989** The Velvet Revolution, end of totalitarian regime.
- 1990** The first democratic parliamentary election after 42 years.
- 1992** The separation of Czechoslovakia, establishment of the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1993.

I.2 Geography



In terms of its area (76,866 square kilometres) the Czech Republic ranks among the smaller European countries.

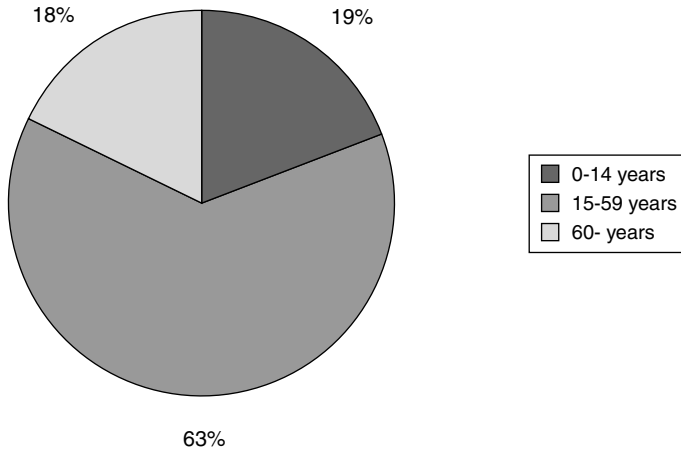
The Czech Republic has borders with Germany, Austria, the Slovak Republic and Poland. It has special relations with the Slovak Republic based on the Custom Union Treaty of 1992. The Czech Republic is a member of CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement), an associated member of the EU, and since 1995 a member of the OECD. It is a founding member of the UN, a member of the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the Council of Europe. The Czech Republic

submitted its application for EU full membership in 1996. The CR joined the Partnership for Peace with NATO and is one of the candidates to be included in the extension of NATO.

The Czech Republic has no unresolved territorial disputes with neighbouring countries. With the exception of the Principality of Liechtenstein, which has made property claims dating before the communist regime, the Czech Republic enjoys good diplomatic relations with all European countries.

I.3 Population

Age structure of Population in 1995



With a population of 10.331 millions (1995), the Czech Republic is similar in size to Austria, Belgium or Hungary. Its ethnically homogeneous population with an overwhelming majority of Czechs (94.8%), a Slovak minority (3.1%) and small Polish (0.6%) and German (0.5%) minorities minimizes the possibility of ethnic conflicts. The Czech language is a part of the family of west Slavic languages (together with Polish and Slovak).

The eastern part of the state is Moravia. It is one of the historical „Czech Lands“ that used to have considerable autonomy within the former Czech Kingdom. The last remnants of this autonomy were lost in

1949 when the Moravio-Silezian Land was abolished (together with the Czech Land) as a political and administrative unit and was replaced with several administrative regions. After 1989, several political groupings demanded regional autonomy for Moravia. The background of the claim was regional, not ethnic, as the inhabitants of Moravia had never been considered a separate nationality. However, when in the 1991 population census respondents were given a possibility to opt for whichever nationality they preferred, 13.2% of the total population of the country chose Moravian nationality.

The working age population (15-59 years) accounts for 63.5 % of the total (1995). The population tends to be ageing slowly as life expectancy, which is still far behind that in West European countries, increases. The proportion of men is approximately 48.6% (1995), 105.8 wo-

men per 100 men, but among those under 45 years of age there are about 98 women per 100 men. The prognoses of demographical development suggest a slow decrease in the population from 10.333 mil. in 1995 to 10.289 mil. in 2000.

Descriptive Statistics for Population

	1993	1994	1995
Population (in 1000 persons, average)			
total	10331	10336	10331
women	5309	5315	5311
Age structure of population (in %)			
0-14	20.00	19.50	18.80
15-59	62.00	62.50	63.20
60-	18.00	18.00	18.00
average age	36.60	36.80	37.00
median age	35.90	36.00	36.20
life expectancy at birth			
men	69.28	69.53	
women	76.35	76.55	
men at age 60	75.67	75.86	
women at age 60	79.79	79.90	

Source: *Populační vývoj České Republiky 1995*, Katedra demografie a geodemografie, PF UK, Praha 1996

I.4 Electoral System

The Parliament of the Czech Republic has two chambers: the Lower House (Poslanecká sněmovna) and the Upper House (Senát). The president is elected by both Houses of the Parliament for a five-year term and has mostly representative responsibilities. The Lower House of Parliament has 200 members who are elected for a four-year term. For election to the Lower House of Parliament, a proportional electoral system is used which discriminates against small parties and political formations: to enter the parliament a party has to attain at least 5% of the total number of valid votes on the national level. A coalition of two parties has to attain at least 7% of valid votes, a coalition of three parties has to attain 9% of valid votes, and a coalition of more than three

parties has to attain at least 11% of valid votes in order to enter Parliament.

The country is divided into 8 voting districts with multi-candidate lists presented by different parties for the election to the Lower House of Parliament. Within each political party the candidates receive the seats allocated to the party according to the order printed on the ballot. However, if at least one tenth of the total voters casting a valid vote for the respective party in the electoral district use the right to a preference vote, the candidates who receive a preference vote from at least 10% of those voters are moved to the top of the list (in order given by the number of preferential votes). The voter is allowed to express his/her preference for candidates by indicating a maximum of four candidates listed on the ballot. This is an application of approval voting, since the personal votes are of equal weight and not truly preferential. The majority system (plurality run-off) in single member constituencies is used for the election of 81 members of the Upper House of Parliament. The Upper House members are elected for six years, with one third of its members re-elected every two years.

The first parliament of the Czech Republic was elected June 5th and 6th, 1992. This was the last general parliamentary election in federal Czechoslovakia, when the national parliaments of the Czech Republic (Czech National Council) and the Slovak Republic (Slovak National Council)

State Representatives

President: Václav Havel (1936), dramatist, leader of the dissident movement in the 1970's and the 1980's, founder of the Civic Forum in 1989 (a broad democratic coalition of political movements and parties), president of federal Czechoslovakia from 1990 to 1992, first president of the Czech Republic from 1993, with no party affiliation.

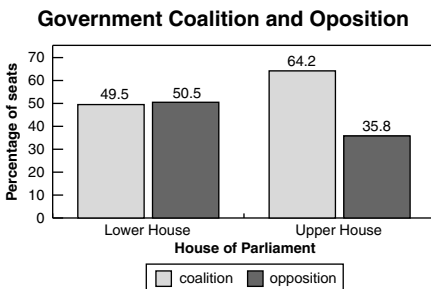
Prime Minister: Václav Klaus (1941), economist, founder and chairman of Civic Democratic Party, minister of finance of the federal government (1990-1992), first prime minister of the Czech government from 1992.

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were elected. Afterwards, they transformed into the parliaments of the newly created states on January 1, 1993 (the federal parliament as a supreme parliamentary representative of the federal state had been dissolved in December 1992).

The Czech Parliament served for a full four-year term with the same constituents elected in 1992. The first parliamentary election of the Lower House of Parliament in the Czech Republic took place May 31 - June 1, 1996. The Upper House, introduced by the Constitution of the Czech Republic in December 1992, was established in 1996. The first election of the Upper House took place in November 1996.

Since 1992 the government coalition has consisted of three right centre parties: the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA). After the 1996 parliamentary election, these three parties formed a minority government, controlling 99 out of 200 seats in the Lower House and 52 out of 81 seats in the Upper House.



Political Parties in Today's Parliament

Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS) - right-centre conservative party; driving force of the economic and political transition during 1992-1996; founded in April 1991; currently has 22,000 members.

Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD) - left centrist pro-reform party; successor of the former Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party which was founded in 1878 and forced to merge with the Communist party in 1948; restored in March 1990; currently has 13,000 members.

Czech and Moravian Communist Party (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM) - extreme leftist unreformed post-communist party founded in March 1990; successor of the former Communist party of Czechoslovakia which was founded in 1921; currently has 200,000 members.

Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie - Československá strana lidová, KDU-ČSL) - pro-reform centrist party of christian-democratic orientation; supporter of a social market economy; reformed successor of the former Czechoslovak People's Party which was founded in 1918; member of the National Front (communist dominated

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government formation) during the communist regime; currently has 80,000 members.

Association for Republic - Czechoslovak Republican Party (Sdružení pro republiku - Republikánská strana Československá, SPR-RSČ) - extreme right populist party; founded in December 1989; currently has 55,000 members.

Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA) - right conservative party; member of the 1992-1996 government coalition; founded in December 1989; currently has 2,500 members.

Composition of Lower House

Party	votes	%	seats	%
KSČM	626136	10.33	22	11.00
ČSSD	1602250	26.44	61	30.50
KDU-ČSL	489349	8.08	18	9.00
ODS	1794560	29.62	68	34.00
ODA	385369	6.36	13	6.50
SPR-RSČ	485072	8.01	18	9.00
other	676479	11.16	0	0
total number of valid votes	6059215	88.84	200	100
eligible voters	7990770			
participation	6096404			
not valid votes	37189			

Composition of Upper House

Party	% votes	% votes	seats	%
	1. round	2. round		
KSČM	14.3	1.9	2	2.47
ČSSD	20.3	31.8	25	30.86
KDU-ČSL	9.9	10.7	13	16.05
ODS	36.5	49.1	32	39.51
ODA	8.1	5.1	7	8.64
others	10.9	1.4	2	2.47

Source: Czech Statistical Office

1.6 Regional Administration

The intermediate administrative level is the district (okres). The country is divided into 76 districts plus the capital Prague. A district has on average about 120 thousand inhabitants and covers about 1,000 square kilometres. Districts perform state administration, they have no role in self-government. The district office is an appellate body for administrative decisions of municipal authorities and it supervises the activities of the municipal offices. The head of district office is appointed by the government. District assemblies are elected by municipal councils in the respective district to oversee the activities of the district offices, to approve their annual budgets and also to decide about the distribution of state grants among municipalities. Municipalities are represented in the assembly proportionately to the size of their population. District assemblies

cannot be considered as organs of self-government, but rather as provisional institutions until genuine regional self-government is in effect. The establishment of regional (provincial or land) authorities as the highest tier of territorial government and administration was planned by the 1993 Constitution of the Czech Republic but has not been enacted so far.

Below the district level there are 6,196 rural and urban municipalities, some 6% of which have the status of towns or cities. Thirteen major cities have the administrative status of „statutory cities“. The extraordinary position of Prague is reflected in the fact that internal territorial organization and administration of the capital is regulated by a separate act. Municipality councils are elected in local elections by a proportional system (the last election took place in 1994).

Self-administrated Cities in the Czech Republic with population exceeding 100,000:

	Population	Population
Praha	1,209,855	Č. Budějovice 99,708
Brno	388,899	Ústí n. Labem 97,164
Ostrava	324,813	Pardubice 93,777
Plzeň	171,249	Havířov 87,863
Olomouc	104,845	Zlín 83,026
Liberec	100,604	Opava 62,468
Hr. Králové	100,528	

Municipalities by Population Size in 1993

Population size	Number	%
0 - 499	3700	59.70
500 - 1999	1889	30.40
2000 - 4999	345	5.60
5000 - 9999	129	2.10
10000 - 19000	68	1.10
20000 - 49999	41	0.70
50000 - 99999	17	0.30
100000 and more	7	0.10
Total	6196	100.00

Source: M. Illner, „Local and Regional Government in the Czech Republic,“ Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of ČR, Praha 1996