

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

OF THE CZECH
REPUBLIC



THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy. The head of state is the President, elected by direct suffrage. The President and the Government exercise executive powers, whilst the Parliament consisting of two Chambers is the supreme legislative body. The territorial administration has two levels: municipalities that are basic self-government units, and regions – higher territorial self-government units. The State is denominationally neutral, the freedom of religion is granted.

The basic principles governing the provision of education are contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is a part of the Constitution. In agreement with the documents, everybody is entitled to education.

Three acts are fundamental for the Czech education system: the Education Act, which regulates pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary professional education; the Act on Education Staff dealing with the teaching profession at mentioned levels; and the Higher Education Act covering higher education.

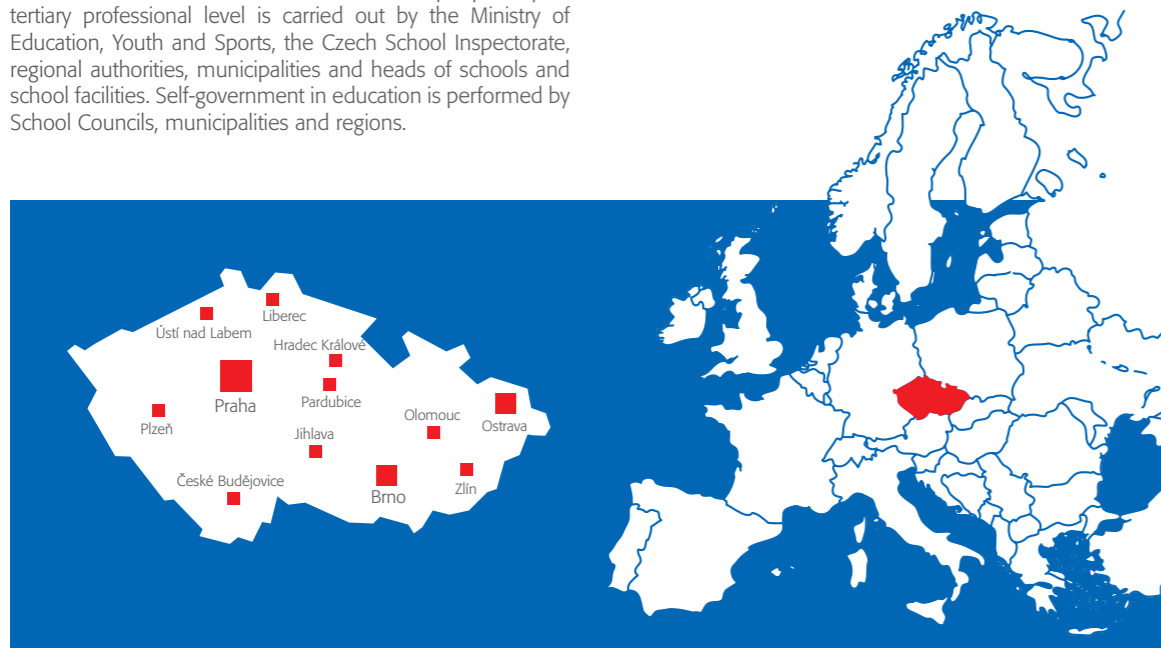
The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports preserves the integrated national educational policy by formulating the long-term policy objectives. Above all, it is responsible for the concept, state and development of the education system, including the area of science, youth and sports, and for the state's education financing policy – for producing the education budget and determining the principles for its allocation.

The state administration of education from pre-primary to tertiary professional level is carried out by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Czech School Inspectorate, regional authorities, municipalities and heads of schools and school facilities. Self-government in education is performed by School Councils, municipalities and regions.

Higher education institutions enjoy a high level of autonomy. They also exercise the state administration under the control of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In addition to the state administration, the Ministry carries out supervisory functions and allocates funding.

The schools from pre-primary to upper secondary level teach according to their own school education programmes, which are based on legally binding documents – the Framework Education Programmes.

Higher education as well as tertiary professional education are organised in accordance with the accredited study programmes. The National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education awards the institutional accreditation or accreditation of the programmes. The programmes of tertiary professional education are subject to the accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, based on a recommendation of the Accreditation Commission for Tertiary Professional Education.



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PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Nursery schools (*mateřská škola*) provide pre-primary education for children usually from 3 to 6 years. Municipalities guarantee places for children from the age of 4. From the age of 5, the pre-primary education is compulsory and free of charge. Otherwise, the fees in public and state schools are considerably regulated.

Children are entitled to pre-primary education from September following their fourth birthday. Similarly, the compulsory pre-primary education lasts from the school year after the child's fifth birthday until the commencement of the compulsory school attendance. Children usually fulfil this obligation at nursery schools, but other options are also possible, including individual (home) education (when meeting legal conditions set by the Education Act). 6-year-old children with the

postponement of compulsory school attendance may attend preparatory classes of the basic schools.

The care for young children under 3 years of age is generally provided outside the education system. Nevertheless, certain number of 2-year-old children are admitted into nursery schools.

Institution	Ages	Levels
Nursery school	(2)3–6	ISCED 020

PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The school attendance is compulsory for nine years, usually from the age of 6 to 15. The education is provided mainly by basic schools (*základní škola*).

The compulsory school attendance starts at the beginning of the school year following the child's sixth birthday, unless he/she is granted a postponement. Pupils start their compulsory school attendance in the nine-year basic school consisting of two stages which correspond to primary (grades 1–5) and lower secondary (grades 6–9) levels of education. Almost 13% of pupils leave a basic school at the end of the fifth year or the seventh year to enter multi-year general secondary schools (*gymnázium*). Small number of pupils start attending eight-year conservatoires (*konzervatoř*) after completing the fifth year of the basic school.

The school year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year, the summer holidays are in July and August. Results of the continuous assessment are summarised in a report at the end of each semester. After the successful completion of the ninth year of basic education, pupils receive a certificate on having attained the required level of basic education (*základní vzdělání*) – ISCED 244.

Institution	Ages	Achieved levels
Basic school		
– first stage	6–10	ISCED 100
– second stage	11–15	ISCED 244, EQF 1
Multi-year general secondary school (lower stage)	11/13–15	ISCED 244, EQF 1
Eight-year conservatoire (first 4 years)	11–15	ISCED 244, EQF 1

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Upper secondary schools (*střední škola*) provide mainly upper secondary education which may be general or vocational (with a higher or lower share of general component), whereas vocational programmes prevail. The participation rate of the 15–19 year-old pupils is about 90%. The minimum entrance requirement to enter this level is attainment of basic education. The admission procedure may include the entrance examination. In four-year and multi-year general programmes, the applicants pass the obligatory common admission examination.

At upper secondary level, pupils can acquire two main levels of qualification:

- Upper secondary education with Maturita examination (*střední vzdělání s maturitní zkouškou*), which entitles graduates to enter a tertiary level of education. It is provided through four-year general or vocational programmes, or multi-year general secondary programmes. The education is completed with the Maturita examination (*maturitní zkouška*) consisting of the common (state) part and the profile (school) part. The leavers are awarded the Maturita examination certificate (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce*).
- Upper secondary education with VET¹ certificate (*střední vzdělání s výučním listem*) attained after 2–3 years of study. The education is completed with the VET final examination (*závěrečná zkouška*) arranged by the school according to the common unified assignments. The leavers are awarded the VET final examination certificate (*vysvědčení o závěrečné zkoušce*) and the VET certificate (*výuční list*). A small number of pupils attend 1–2 year study programme completed with VET final examination only.

In the 2016/17 school year, 68% of pupils started their first grade of the upper secondary programme leading to Maturita examination (22% in general programmes and 46% in vocational programmes), 32% of pupils entered the vocational fields completed with the VET final examination.

Leavers of three-year vocational programmes can acquire upper secondary education with Maturita examination in a two-year follow-up study (*nástavbové studium*). It entitles them to enter a tertiary level of education. There are also two variants of shortened studies (*zkrácené studium*) in which leavers of both general or vocational upper secondary school programmes can extend their qualification.

Conservatoires (*konzervatoř*) provide art education in six-year programmes (upper secondary and tertiary level of education) or in eight-year programmes (from lower-secondary to tertiary level of education). Graduates usually acquire the tertiary professional education at a conservatoire (*vyšší odborné vzdělání v konzervatoři*) and/or upper secondary education with Maturita examination.

Institution	Type of education	Length (years)	Ages	Achieved levels
Upper secondary school	Upper secondary education with Maturita examination (general)	4	15–19	ISCED 344, EQF 4
	Upper secondary education with Maturita examination (vocational)	4	15–19	ISCED 354, EQF 4
	Upper secondary education with VET certificate	2–3	15–17/18	ISCED 353, EQF 2/3
	Upper secondary education	1–2	15–16/17	ISCED 253/353, EQF 2
	Follow-up and shortened studies	1–2	–	ISCED 353/354, EQF 3/4
Eight-year conservatoire	Lower and upper secondary and tertiary art education	8	11–19	ISCED 554, EQF 6
Six-year conservatoire	Upper secondary and tertiary art education	6	15–21	ISCED 554, EQF 6

¹ Vocational Education and Training

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education is provided by higher education institutions (*vysoká škola*), tertiary professional schools (*vyšší odborná škola*) and conservatoires (*konzervatoř*). The minimum entrance requirement to enter the tertiary level of education is the Maturita examination certificate (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce*) gained at upper secondary level.

Higher education

Higher education institutions (*vysoká škola*) are supreme centres of education, independent knowledge and creative activity. The general goal of higher education is to provide students with adequate professional qualification, prepare them for engagement in research and participating in life-long learning, make them contribute to the development of civic society and international, particularly European cooperation. They attain this goal by linking instruction with scholarly, research, developmental, artistic and other creative activities.

Considerable autonomy of higher education institutions is manifested in the area of education (implementation of study programmes, admission requirements/procedures, etc.), science and research, and to some extent in managing the funds allocated.

Higher education consists of the three cycles:

- Bachelor's degree programmes, lasting 3–4 years;
- Master's degree programmes, lasting 1–3 years, or 4–6 years in case of programmes not following Bachelor's degree programmes (non-structured programmes);
- Doctoral degree programmes, lasting 3–4 years.

Higher education institutions are public, state and private. They are either of a university type, providing all three cycles of study, or a non-university type, providing the Bachelor's and possibly Master's studies. Upper secondary education completed with Maturita examination is the fundamental requirement for entering a Bachelor's degree programme (with possible exception in fine arts degrees). For entering Master's degree programmes, there is also the prerequisite of successful completion of Bachelor's, Master's (including the non-structured one) or a Doctoral degree programme. An applicant for a Doctoral degree programme must complete the Master's degree programme before launching the Ph.D. studies. Other admission criteria and the content of possible entrance examinations are determined by the institutions.

There are no tuition fees at public higher education institutions. Nevertheless, students have to pay fees in the following cases: for the admission procedures, for exceeding the standard length of study and for study in a foreign language. In comparison with fees at public higher education institutions, those at private institutions are not limited.

Based on excellence in studies, research, artistic and other activities, merit-based scholarships are granted by all public higher education institutions. Social scholarships are also available for students in difficult economic situation.

Higher education can take forms of on-site programmes, distance-learning programmes or a combination of both. The academic year lasts 12 months; the beginning is set by the Rector (*rektor*) usually for September or October. Studies are split into semesters, years or teaching blocks covering periods of teaching activity, examinations and holidays. Most commonly, the academic year is split into semesters of 14 weeks of teaching activity, followed by a period of examinations. The summer holidays are in July and August, usually followed by an extended period of examinations. Study outcomes at higher education institutions are assessed mainly by a system of credits. All public higher education institutions and most private higher education institutions have implemented the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) or a system compatible with ECTS.

After completing studies in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, students take the final state examination (*státní závěrečná zkouška*), including a defence of a thesis. Graduates of the Bachelor's degree programmes are usually awarded the degree Bc. Graduates of the Master's degree programmes most commonly acquire the title Mgr. or Ing. However, other types of academic titles exist in the Czech Republic. After completing Doctoral studies, students take a doctoral state examination (*státní doktorská zkouška*) and defend a thesis. They are awarded the degree Ph.D. The higher education diploma (*vysokoškolský diplom*) and the supplement to the diploma (*dodatek k diplomu*) are documents confirming completion of studies and the right to use the relevant academic title.

Institution	Type of degrees	Length (years)	Ages	Achieved levels
Higher education institution, university and non-university type	Bachelor's	3–4	19–22/23	ISCED 645, EQF 6
	Master's	1–3	22/23–23/26	ISCED 747, EQF 7
	Master's (non-structured study)	4–6	19–23/25	ISCED 746, EQF 7
Higher education institution, university type	Doctoral	3–4	–	ISCED 844, EQF 8

STUDY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Tertiary professional education

Tertiary professional education develops and promotes knowledge and skills that students acquire in secondary education and provides general education and vocational training for them to perform demanding professional activities. It is perceived as a professional training. Education at this level is provided mainly by tertiary professional schools (*vyšší odborná škola*). However, it can also be attained at conservatoires (*konzervatoř*). Each institution determines its own admission criteria and the content of the entrance examination. All tertiary professional schools levy tuition fees. Currently, the fees for public institutions are between 2 500 CZK and 5 000 CZK a year. The education is organised in on-site, distance or combined forms. The school year starts on

1 September and ends on 31 August, covering the period of instruction and summer holidays. The teaching activity is split into a winter term (1 September to 31 January) and a summer term (1 February to 31 August). Details on organisation of the school year are set by the school head. The programme ends with a graduate examination (*absolutorium*), an examination consisting of a theoretical part in vocational subjects, an exam in a foreign language and a defence of a thesis. Graduates obtain a graduate examination certificate (*vysvědčení o absolutoriu*), a graduate diploma (*diplom absolventa vyšší odborné školy*) and the title specialist with a diploma (*diplomovaný specialista – DiS.*). Most schools issue also the diploma supplement.

Institution	Type of education	Length (years)	Ages	Achieved levels
Tertiary professional school	Tertiary professional education	3–3.5	19–21/22	ISCED 655, EQF 6

ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The nature and scope of adult education and training is determined mainly by socio-cultural, economic and political factors. The existing knowledge base of the population and the needs of the national economy and the labour market play a substantial role.

Legal regulation of this area is covered by a wide range of legal provisions (e.g. Education Act, Higher Education Act, Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, etc.). Different aspects of adult education fall under the responsibility of a number of authorities (mainly the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture, regions and municipalities).

Adult education and training is provided by schools (basic, upper secondary, tertiary professional) and higher education institutions; organisations (enterprises, institutions, state administration bodies); non-profit organisations; organisations from the education sector; professional organisations; foundations; churches; trade unions; political parties; cultural institutions (museums, galleries, libraries, community culture centres); commercial educational institutions.

Adult education is provided in the following areas:

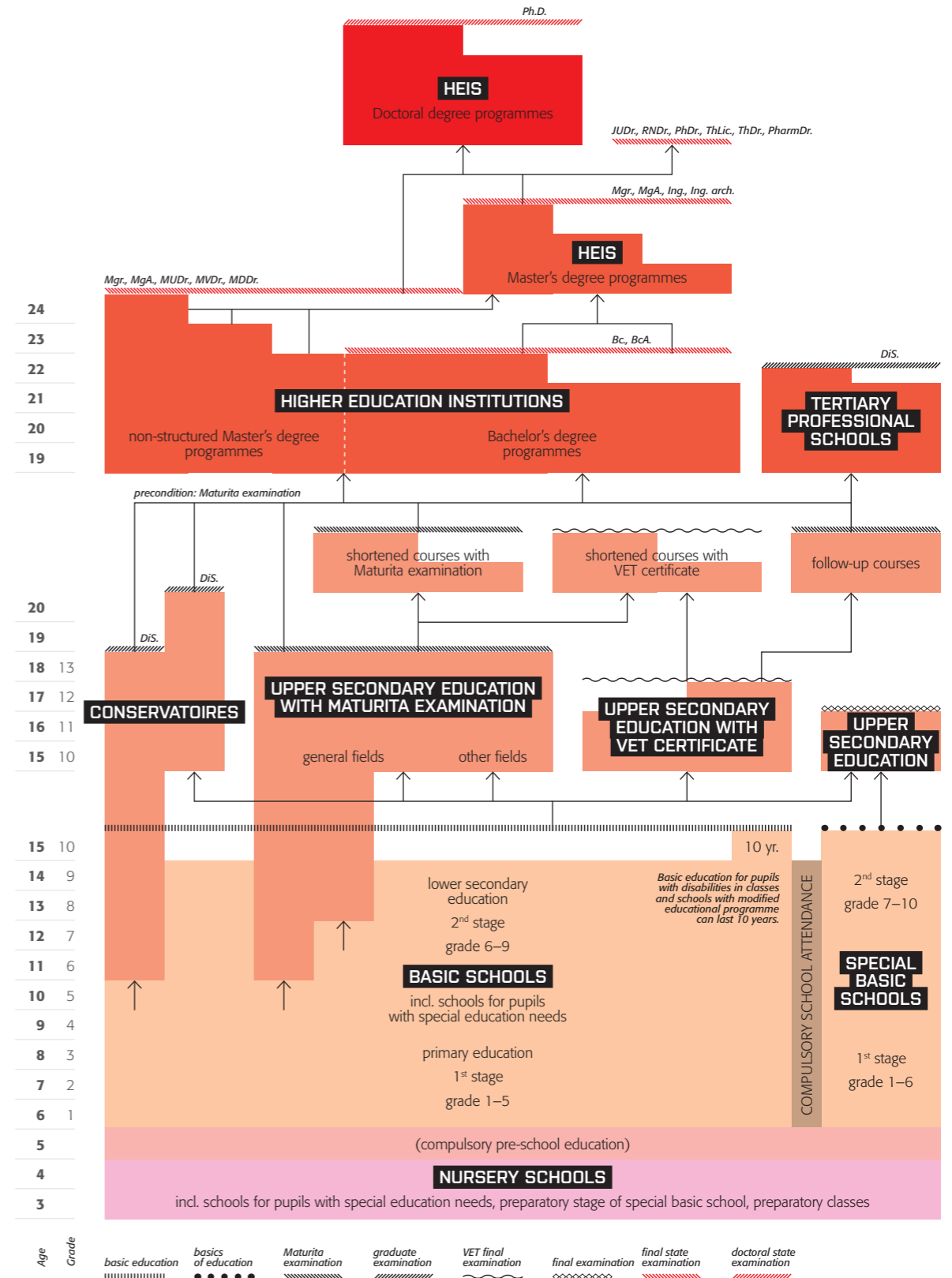
- General education – courses of basic education for those who have not reached the desired level of basic education (about 5% of all school leavers); preparatory courses for entrance examinations to upper secondary schools and to higher education institutions; language education; ICT courses.
- Further education and vocational training – offers the opportunity to acquire, extend or complete qualifications or to retrain. In specified professions (e.g. in medicine and several technical professions), employees are obliged to update their knowledge and skills and, in defined periods, pass exams set by special legal rules.
- Interest-based education – it is not directly connected to the labour market but satisfies people's political, historical and cultural and other similar interests. It also serves for the meaningful use of leisure time.

Retraining is one of the most important components of adult education. It is one of the tools of active employment policy (used mostly in cases of unemployment). The unemployed registered as job seekers can – on certain conditions – attend courses fully funded by the Labour Office; the aim is the employability.

Adults also may take examinations according to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. Thus, they can attain professional qualifications and consequently complete professional qualifications, which certify the attainment of professional skills and substitute previous education.

DIAGRAM OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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