

Information Booklet for Foreign Nationals Czech Republic

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1. INTRODUCTION

This „Information Booklet for Foreign Nationals in the Czech Republic“ has been created by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in collaboration with other selected Ministries and non-governmental and non-profit organizations as part of the „Concept for the Integration of Foreign Nationals Living in the Czech Republic“. This publication is primarily intended for foreign nationals from so-called third countries (i.e. countries that are not members of the European Union), whose legal status is different in many aspects from EU nationals.

The objective of this publication is not to provide a detailed and exhaustive source of all information, which might be required by a person who intends to live in the Czech Republic. This would not be possible with respect to the intended size of this booklet. Rather, the purpose of this publication is to provide a **comprehensive overview of basic information about the Czech Republic and to help you to handle everyday situations**, which you may encounter as part of your integration into Czech society. In addition to general information about the Czech Republic as a country, this booklet also discusses the structure and the functioning of our country’s government offices, the handling of emergency situations, the school, healthcare and social care system in this country, issues related to employment, housing and transportation among other topics. Part of this publication is also a list of selected non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NNO) that are active in the area of foreigners resident in the Czech Republic.

This publication is available in both a printed and electronic format. The electronic version can be found at <http://www.cizinci.cz> (the „Informační materiály“ /*Information Materials*/ section). In addition to its Czech version, we are also planning to publish this booklet other languages (English, Ukrainian, Russian and Vietnamese). This publication will hopefully serve as an easy-to-understand and practical guide, which will direct the reader to more detailed sources of information – if the reader is seeking more detailed information on a particular topic. As part of the Czech Republic’s effort to move towards a 21st century information-based society, it has become increasingly common for the individual institutions and public offices to provide web-based services, in addition to the use of the traditional information channels (printed materials, mail and telephone). On these websites, you will find more detailed information on specific topics and issues. A large amount of valuable information can also be found on the main website for accessing Czech government offices:

<http://portal.gov.cz>

Whenever it is possible to obtain further information on a specific topic that is discussed in this publication, you will see the following symbol:



Additional links within a specific website are indicated with this symbol „►“.

We are aware of the fact that not everyone has easy access to the internet and the information that it has available. However, we recommend considering the use of the internet because its role as a source of essential information and as a tool for the expedient processing of personal and official matters is continuing to increase. If you don't have any prior experience with the use of the internet and would like to learn how to use it, many NNOs dealing with the integration of foreign nationals can provide assistance (see Chapter 15). Many of these organizations currently offer their clients free internet access as well as assistance with its use (some of them even offer free computer courses). Free internet access can also be found at many public libraries across the Czech Republic and affordable paid internet access (prices usually range from CZK 40 – 100 per hour) is available at internet cafes.

With respect to the constantly changing social conditions and the creation of new legal regulations, you should keep in mind that the internet links and the **information contained in this publication was valid as of January 1, 2006** (should a different date apply, it will be noted in the text). This publication therefore doesn't reflect any changes that may have occurred after the above date.

Due to the nature and purpose of this booklet, we have had to make certain adjustments in order to **simplify and generalize** the information that is being published. We have also not been able to include all of the legislation involved due to limitations on size. This publication should therefore not be regarded as a substitute for the laws and you should remember that only the most current version of the law can be used as the official source of regulatory information. Should you need additional information or a further explanation of any of the issues covered in this publication, please contact the respective government office. It will assist you in the matter. You can also consider using the network of non-governmental organizations that are active in the area of the integration of foreign nationals. These **NNOs provide their services for free** and they will be glad to assist you with the solving of any problem that you might encounter while in the Czech Republic.

We are aware of the fact that the process of integrating into Czech society, which has become your new home – whether temporarily or permanently – is a difficult task, requiring you to obtain and become familiar with new information. Learning the Czech language will make it much easier to handle basic everyday situations and to communicate with government offices and authorities and the people around you. We hope that this booklet will serve you as a useful and practical guide in your efforts to integrate into Czech society. We wish you success!

2. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CZECH REPUBLIC

- **Official Name:** Czech Republic (abbreviation: 'CR', international code: 'CZE')
- **Official Language:** Czech
- **Population:** approximately 10 million
Religions: The majority of the population is unaffiliated (approximately 60%) and approximately 30% affiliate themselves with a religion or a religious group. Christianity is considered to be the traditional religion and the majority of people with a religious affiliation are Roman Catholic.

Almost 95% of the population is of Czech nationality and among the other nationalities are Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, German, Polish, Roma, Ruthenian, Russian, Greek, Slovakian, Serbian and Ukrainian.

- **Form of Government:** parliamentary democracy
The executive power belongs to the President and the government, the legislative power belongs to the double chamber of the Czech Republic (comprised of Chamber of Deputies and the Senate).
- **Currency:** Czech crown (Kč, CZK)
One crown (CZK 1) is equal to 100 cents („halíř“). Currency denominated coins include 50 cents, 1 CZK, 2 CZK, 5 CZK, 10 CZK, 20 CZK and 50 CZK; banknotes include CZK 20, CZK 50, CZK 100, CZK 200, CZK 500, CZK 1,000, CZK 2,000, CZK 5,000.
Exchange rate – CZK/EUR 29.784, CZK/USD 23.947 (2005 averages)
- **Geography:** The Czech Republic is located in Central Europe and the country consists of 3 historic territories – Bohemia (in the west), Moravia (in the east) and Silesia (in the northeast). The country shares borders with 4 countries: Germany (western border), Poland (northern border), Slovakia (eastern border) and Austria (southern border).

The Česká Vysočina mountain range extends through the central and the western parts of Bohemia and the Western Carpathian Mountains extend into the eastern part of the country. The main watercourses are the Labe and Vltava Rivers (Bohemia), the Morava and Dyje Rivers (Moravia) and the Odra and Opava Rivers (Silesia).

- **Administrative Structure:** 14 regions and multiple municipalities (includes towns, municipalities with municipal councils and municipalities with extended powers).
- **Capital City:** Prague (the largest Czech city with a population of approximately 1 million)

Prague is located in the central part of Bohemia on the Vltava River. The historic center of the city is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- **Other Major Cities:** Brno (second largest city in the Czech Republic and the historical capital of Moravia; Brno is the home of many government institutions such as the Constitutional Court), Ostrava, Pilsen and Olomouc.
- **Time Zone:** UTC (coordinated universal time) + 1 hour (in summer + 2 hours); also CET (Central European Time)
- **Public Holidays and Other Holidays:**
Public and other holidays are considered as the time of rest (work can only be ordered under exceptional circumstances on these days).

Public Holidays:

January 1st – Restoration of Czech Independence Day
 May 8th – Liberation Day
 July 5th – Saints Cyril and Methodius Day
 July 6th – Jan Hus Day
 September 28th – Czech Statehood Day
 October 28th – Independent Czechoslovak State Day
 November 17th – Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

Other Holidays:

January 1st – New Year’s Day
 Easter Monday (date varies)
 May 1st – Labor Day
 December 24th – Christmas Eve
 December 25th – Christmas Day
 December 26th – St. Stephen’s Day

- **Brief History:**

The oldest historically verified ethnic group residing in the country’s geographic location was the Celts, who started appearing in the area in the 4th century BC. In the 6th century AD, the area began to be populated by Slavic peoples, who created the so-called ‘Samo Empire’. After the year 820, the first recorded state system – the Great Moravia - was established in the territory occupied by today’s Czech Republic. Great Moravia is associated with the arrival in the area of Christianity. After the disappearance of Great Moravia, the next state to emerge in the area was located in Bohemia in the early 10th century. The Bohemian or Czech state emerged in the 995 AD when it was unified by the Přemyslid Dynasty.

From the middle of the 12th century on, the area witnessed economic and cultural growth supported by, among other factors, an influx of Germanic settlers. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Czech state stabilized in terms of its internal organization, the economy strengthened and the state achieved the largest territorial expansion in its history. The educational sphere was supported by the establishment of a university in Prague in 1348 by King Charles IV (today’s Charles University).

The deep crisis in the society within Europe and the Czech state at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries witnessed the development of the Hussite Movement and the initial efforts at religious reforms escalated into violent upheavals known as the Hussite Wars. Since the middle ages, the borders of the main historic territories have not changed to any great degree. Other territories have always become

a part of the Czech state on a temporary basis. As of 1526, the Czech lands came under the rule of the Habsburg Monarchy. After the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I, the historic Czech territories of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were united with parts of the former Hungarian Empire (Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Russia) in 1918 to establish Czechoslovakia as one of the new countries succeeding the Austro-Hungarian Empire (this period is closely associated with the first Czechoslovak President, T. G. Masaryk).

After the signing of the Munich Accords on September 29, 1938, Nazi Germany invaded the western parts of Bohemia (this occupation was assisted by the traitorous attitude of the majority of the German minority living in Bohemia). Subsequently (March 15, 1939), the Germans invaded the rest of the country and established the so-called 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia'. Slovakia was declared an independent Slovak state, which became a satellite of Nazi Germany. After the end of World War II in 1945, Czechoslovakia was restored as an independent country once again - this time, however, without Sub-Carpathian Russia. This was also the time when the German minority living in Bohemia, with a population of 3 million, was forcibly evicted from the country.

In February 1948, the Communist Party took power and established a totalitarian government in the country. In the 1960's, the communist totalitarian regime loosened its grip to a certain extent; however, this trend was brought to a halt in 1968 when military forces from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries intervened.

The fall of the Communist regime in November 1989 (known as the 'velvet revolution') paved the way for the restoration of a pluralistic democracy. In December 1989, Václav Havel, one of the founders of the well-known Charta 77 dissident movement was elected to become the first non-communist president since 1948. In subsequent years, the Soviet occupation forces were systematically removed from the country's territory and the country has undergone a series of democratic reforms.

At the end of 1992, the Czechs and the Slovaks reached an agreement to split the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic into two independent countries. On January 1, 1993, the Czech Republic was established as a consequence of the breakup of the existing federation. On May 1, 2004, the Czech Republic became a member of the European Union.



Useful Links

- Czech Statistical Office (the institution which collects, processes and provides a variety of statistical information about social economic and environmental developments in the Czech Republic) – <http://www.czso.cz>.
- Towns and municipalities in the Czech Republic – <http://mesta.obce.cz/>.
- City of Prague – <http://www.praha-mesto.cz>.
- Main government website (detailed and up-to-date links to government agencies, institutions and local governments in the Czech Republic, legal information, housing matters, online filing, information for foreigners): <http://portal.gov.cz/> (► Cizinec /Foreigners/).

3. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING **OF THE LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE** **AND JUDICIAL POWERS:** **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

„The power of the State may be asserted only in cases and only within the limits set by the law and in a manner as determined by the law“. (Article 2, Paragraph 2 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms)

3. 1. Parliament of the Czech Republic

Legislative power or the authority to adopt new laws in the Czech Republic belongs to the Parliament, which is composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The sessions of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate are usually open to the public. The laws passed by the Parliament are published in the ‘Collection of Laws’ (Coll.).

> Chamber of Deputies (lower chamber)

The Chamber of Deputies passes the laws, which are then forwarded to the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies also makes decisions regarding a ‘vote of confidence’ with respect to the ‘Government’. It has 200 members who are elected for a 4-year term. The elections are in the form of anonymous votes on the basis of general, equal and direct voting rights.

As of January 1, 2006, the following political parties were represented in the Chamber of Deputies – the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak Peoples Party (KDU-ČSL), the Union of Freedom (US) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM).

> Senate (upper chamber)

The Senate reviews the laws passed on to it by the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has 81 senators who are elected for 6-year terms (with a third of the senators being elected every two years). The elections are in the form of anonymous votes on the basis of general, equal and direct voting rights.

3. 2. Executive Power

> President

The President of the Czech Republic acts as the Head of State. The President is elected by the Parliament and serves a 5-year term. Among the President’s powers are the authority to sign laws, the power to negotiate and ratify treaties and the power to grant pardons and amnesties.

> Government

Collectively, the ‘Government’ is the top body exercising executive powers. The Government is composed of the Chairperson (Prime Minister), Vice-Chairpersons

(Deputy Prime Ministers) and Ministers who are appointed by the President. As an executive body, the Government has the primarily responsibility for the running of the State and for the creation of its legislation, the management of the apparatus of the State, the implementation of laws and the issuance of orders that are in accordance with these laws. The Government reports to the Chamber of Deputies, which can express its lack of confidence in the Government as a body.

3. 3. Courts, State Prosecutor Authorities

„Anybody who claims that his or her rights have been violated by a decision of a public administrative organ may turn to a court for a review of the legality of such decision, unless the law provides differently. However, a review of decisions affecting the fundamental rights and freedoms listed in the Charter may not be excluded from the jurisdiction of the courts.“ (Article 36, Paragraph 2 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms)

➤ **Courts**

The courts represent the most important guarantee of the protection of an individual's rights. Courts of general jurisdiction deal with the practice of civil law (which also includes business, family and probate law), criminal law and administrative law. Only courts can make decisions regarding guilt for a crime and its punishment.

The key attribute of our judicial system is its independence from the State. The judiciary is administered by the Ministry of Justice, which however may not intervene with the decisions made by the courts in any way. This gives the courts the authority to rule on matters in which one of the parties is the State (e.g. administrative law).

A ruling issued by a court can usually be appealed to a court of a higher level. The general court system of the Czech Republic is composed of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Administrative Court, the high courts, regional courts and district courts. Most legal filings are first heard before district courts.

Judges are appointed by the President of the State for an indefinite term.

➤ **Constitutional Court**

The Constitutional Court acts outside of the general court system and it has the roll of a judicial body charged with the responsibility of protecting the Constitution. The court makes decisions regarding proposals for the revocation of legal regulations (or a part of a regulation), constitutional complaints, which may be filed after exhausting all other remedial possibilities, by anyone who feels deprived of their rights, as established under the Constitution, under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and under other constitutional laws of the Czech Republic (the plaintiff must be represented by legal counsel in such proceedings).

➤ **State Prosecutors**

The State Prosecutors' Offices have the following responsibilities in representing the State in the protection of the public interest:

- The filing of criminal charges against individuals accused of committing a crime with the court on behalf of the State and to prosecute this individual as a representative of the public before the court.
- To supervise the work of the police authorities and criminal investigators in the investigation of criminal activity.
- To supervise correctional facilities (prisons, other correctional institutions, etc.).

The State Prosecuting Authority is not an independent body and it reports to the Ministry of Justice. The seats and the districts of the individual State Prosecutors' Offices correspond to the seats and districts of the courts.

3. 4. Public Administration

Public administration is a system for the management of matters of public interest through governmental or other public bodies. The state maintains its authority over the administration of selected public issues by delegating this authority to its executive bodies (this is then referred to as '**government administration**'). The control over other specific matters of public interest has been delegated by the state to local authorities (this is then referred to as '**local administration**').

> Government Administration

The ministries represent the central bodies of government administration. Localized governmental administrative bodies include labor offices, revenue authorities, etc. Government administration is also handled by the **regions** (through regional authorities), municipalities with extended powers, municipalities with municipal councils and **townships** (through local councils).

> Local Administration

Municipalities

Municipalities represent the basic territorial, self-governing communities of citizens. A municipality is composed of the following bodies:

- Municipal Assembly (the highest ranking municipal body, which exercises the key powers as part of the structure of local government)
- Municipal Council (executive body)
- Mayor (represents the municipality in its external relationships and acts as the head of the municipal authority)
- Municipal Authority

Regions

The Czech Republic has 14 regions.

Region	Regional Center	Region	Regional Center
Hlavní město Praha <i>/Capital City of Prague/</i>		Olomouc	Olomouc
Jihočeský <i>/South Bohemia/</i>	České Budějovice	Pardubice	Pardubice
Jihomoravský <i>/South Moravia/</i>	Brno	Plzeňský <i>/Pilsen/</i>	Plzeň <i>/Pilsen/</i>
Karlovy Vary	Karlovy Vary	Středočeský <i>/Central Bohemia/</i>	Praha <i>/Prague/</i>
Hradec Králové	Hradec Králové	Ústí nad Labem	Ústí nad Labem
Liberec	Liberec	Vysočina	Jihlava
Moravskoslezský <i>/Moravia-Silesia/</i>	Ostrava	Zlín	Zlín



A region is composed of the following bodies:

- Regional Assembly (the highest ranking regional body, which exercises the key powers as part of the structure of regional government)
- Regional Council (executive body)
- President (represents the region in its external relationships)
- Regional Authority

3. 5. Official Language of Public Offices

The official language at all public and government offices in the Czech Republic is Czech. All documents and written materials in other languages must be submitted in the original version, accompanied by a 'notarized' translation into Czech. If you believe that you will not be able to fully understand when communicating with public or governmental authorities, you have the right to receive the assistance of an interpreter who is registered with the registry of translators and interpreters. With rare exceptions, the fees for the interpreter will be your responsibility. In accordance with the Code of Administrative Procedures, the individuals participating in the proceedings may also communicate and submit written documents in Slovak.



Useful Links

- Detailed information on the activities of the Chamber of Deputies, its members, documents published by the Chamber of Deputies (including laws, etc.) can be found on the website of the Czech Parliament: <http://www.psp.cz>.
- The list of political parties and movements, which are registered in the Czech Republic, can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Politické strany, hnutí a občanská sdružení /Political Parties, Movements and Civic Associations/ ►Seznam politických strany a hnutí /List of Political Parties and Movements/).

- Detailed information about the Senate, its bodies, activities, documents, the individual senators, etc. can be found on the Senate's website: <http://www.senat.cz>.
- Detailed information about the President of the Czech Republic can be found on the website of the Office of the Czech President: <http://www.hrad.cz>.
- Detailed information about the activities of the Czech government and links to the websites of the different ministries can be found on the government's website: <http://www.vlada.cz>.
- The text of the individual laws and international treaties of the Czech Republic can be found at: <http://portal.gov.cz> (► *Zákony /Laws/*).
- Detailed links to the individual courts can be found at the website of the Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.cz> (► *Soudy /Courts/*).
- Detailed information about the Constitutional Court and its activities can be found at: <http://www.concourt.cz>.
- Detailed links to the individual State Prosecutors' offices can be found at the website of the Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.cz> (► *Státní zastupitelství /State Prosecutors' Offices/*).
- The list of municipalities (towns) with extended powers can be found on the following website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Rady a služby /Advice and Services /* ► *Adresy v České republice (evidence) /Addresses in the Czech Republic (Directory)/* ► *Obce s rozšířenou působností podle kraje /Municipalities with Extended Powers – by Region/*).
- If you are looking for a specific town or municipality, look at: <http://města.obce.cz>.
- Information about individual regions can be found at: <http://www.kr-urady.cz>.
- A registry of interpreters as maintained by the regional courts can be found at the website of the Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.cz> (► *Evidence znalců, tlumočnicků a ústavů /Directory of Experts, Interpreters and Institutions/*).
- A detailed list of the individual public offices and authorities – based on location and their field of activity – can be found on the public administration website: <http://portal.gov.cz> (► *Adresář /Directory/*); or, at the website: <http://www.statnisprava.cz>.

4. FOREIGNERS RESIDING

IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, CITIZENSHIP

4. 1. Basic Information on Residing in the Czech Republic as a Foreigner

The conditions for residing in the Czech Republic as a Foreigner are established under Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on the residence of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic (as amended) (hereinafter as „Alien Act“). This law separates foreign nationals into two categories:

- **EU Citizens (and their family members)**
- **Foreign Nationals from Non-EU Countries (so-called ‘Third-Country Nationals’)** – Due to the purpose of this publication, this chapter contains information on the residence of third-country nationals.

4. 2. Temporary Stay

- **Foreign Nationals Staying in the Czech Republic without a Visa**

Besides other exceptions, which are specified under Section 18 of the Alien Act, a stay in the Czech Republic without a visa is permitted for third-country nationals, whose country (in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No. 539/2001) is listed on the so-called ‘white list’ and exempt from the visa requirement when staying for less than 3 months. Under the visa waiver program or under an order issued by the government, the visa-free stay of the foreign nationals listed on the ‘white list’ does however not apply to those situations in which the individual wishes to stay and ‘work’ in the Czech Republic.

- **Foreign Nationals Staying in the Czech Republic on a Short-Term Visa**

1. **Transit Visa** (Section 22 of the Alien Act) – This type of visa allows a foreign national to pass through the territory of the Czech Republic when traveling from one country to another country.
2. The nationals of certain countries are required to possess an **Airport Visa** if staying during a flight delay and waiting for the next flight in the terminal of an international airport located in the Czech Republic (Section 24 of the Alien Act).
3. **Visa for a Stay of Less than 90 Days** (Section 26 of the Alien Act) – This type of visa allows a foreign national to stay in the Czech Republic for the period of time that is specified in the visa, wherein the duration of the stay may not exceed 3 months. An application for this type of visa will be processed by a Czech consulate within 30 days after the filing of the application (Section 170, Subsection 3 of the Alien Act).

- **Visa for a Stay of More than 90 Days** (Section 30 of the Alien Act)

This type of visa is issued by the Foreign Police (of the Czech Republic) at the request of a foreign national who plans to stay in the Czech Republic for longer than 3 months. The purpose for such an extended stay could be for example – employment, business or studying. The application is filed with a Czech consulate (Section 53 of the Alien Act); and, it may only be filed from within the Czech Republic under exceptional circumstances, which are specified under the law (Section 33 of the Alien Act). The

application is generally processed within 120 days from the date of its filing (Section 170, Subsection 6 of the Alien Act) and within 60 days of its filing in selected cases (e.g. students). The applicant must provide the following as part of his or her application:

- Passport
- Document verifying the purpose of the stay.
- Proof of financial resources for the stay (Section 13 of the Alien Act).
- Document verifying the applicant has accommodation arrangements for the duration of his or her stay.
- Abstract from the Registry of Criminal Records of the Czech Republic.
- 2 photographs.

Before the visa is extended for a stay of longer than 90 days, the individual must provide a document verifying the possession of travel insurance coverage for the duration of his or her individual stay in the Czech Republic (for exemptions from this requirement see Section 6, Subsection 9 of the Alien Act). Information on the extent of coverage and minimum coverage limits can be found under Section 5 (a)(4) of the Alien Act.

If the purpose of the stay remains the same and is still in effect, the visa can be repeatedly extended; however, the maximum period of time for which a foreign national can stay in the Czech Republic under the same visa is one (1) year. If applying for the extended visa for a stay of more than 90 days, the purpose of the stay cannot be changed when applying for an extension from within the Czech Republic; and, if the purpose of the stay has changed, the applicant must leave the Czech Republic and file a new application. If a foreign national plans to temporarily reside in the Czech Republic for a period longer than one (1) year, he or she may file an application for permanent residence from within the Czech Republic.

There is no legal entitlement to the issuance of a visa!

➤ **Extended Stay Permit** (Section 42 of the Alien Act)

An extended stay permit can normally be applied for by a foreign national who meets all of the following criteria:

- The individual is staying in the Czech Republic on an extended visa, which permits a stay of longer than 90 days.
- The individual plans to temporarily reside in the Czech Republic for a period longer than one (1) year.

The purpose of the individual's stay remains the same.

An application for an extended stay permit can be filed at a Foreign Police office, which corresponds to the location where the individual is registered to be residing. Along with the application, the applicant must provide the same documents as those required when applying for the extended visa for a stay of more than 90 days. If staying for business purposes, the applicant must provide additional documents – e.g. a document verifying that there are no outstanding tax liabilities (Section 46, Subsection 7 of the Alien Act). The maximum application processing time is 60 days (Section 169, Subsection 2e of the Alien Act) and the permit can be repeatedly renewed. When staying in the Czech Republic under an extended stay permit, the purpose of the stay may be changed from within the Czech Republic. In such a case, the police will issue a new permit.

Under conditions that are specified in the law, a foreign national may also apply for an extended stay permit through a Czech consulate in a foreign country. This can apply

for example to family reunions (Section 42a, Section 42b of the Alien Act) or student stays (Section 42d of the Alien Act).

➤ **Exit Order** (Section 50 of the Alien Act)

An ‘exit order’ is issued by the Foreign Police (and, in special situations, also by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) if the foreign national’s legal stay in the Czech Republic has ended – e.g. in the event of a visa or residence permit cancellation, visa expiration, etc. The ‘exit order’ allows the individual to remain in the country for a period of time that is required to make the necessary arrangements and to leave the country (a maximum of 60 days).

4. 3. Permanent Residence in the Czech Republic

With respect to most aspects of everyday life, a foreign national with permanent residence in the Czech Republic has the same status as a Czech citizen.

➤ **Permanent Residence on the Grounds of a Direct Relationship to a Czech Citizen.**

A **foreign national (EU country or third-country citizen)** may apply for a permanent residence permit, if he or she is in a family relationship with a Czech citizen who is related as follows:

- a) *Spouse*
- b) *Parent (applies to EU citizens under 21 years of age)*
- c) *Child under 21 years of age; or, a child (under 21 years of age) of a spouse of an EU citizen.*
- d) *Unprovided for direct relative in an ascending or descending line; or, such a relative of a spouse of an EU citizen.*

Such a foreign national may apply this permit with the police or with a Czech consulate. The application processing time is within 180 days (or within 60 days, if the application is made from within the Czech Republic). For these reasons, an individual is legally entitled to the issuance of a permanent residence permit and the police may only reject such an application for reasons that are specifically defined under the law. The issuance of the permanent residence permit is exempt from any administrative fees.

➤ **Permanent Residence without a Prior Uninterrupted Stay in the Czech Republic** (Section 66 of the Alien Act)

Under certain conditions, a foreign national may apply for a permanent residence permit without having previously stayed in the Czech Republic for an extended period of time. In such cases however, there is no legal entitlement to the granting of the permanent residence permit.

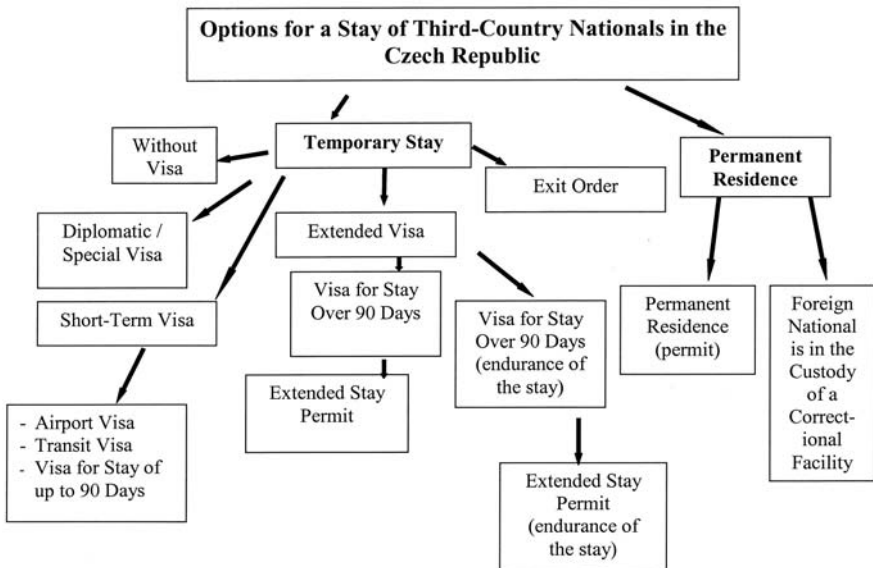
➤ **Permanent Residence Subject to a Prior Uninterrupted Stay in the Czech Republic** (Section 68 of the Alien Act)

After five (5) years of an uninterrupted stay in the Czech Republic under a long-term visa (visa for a stay over 90 days) or under an extended stay permit, a foreign national may apply for a permanent residence permit. (Further details regarding the treatment of the duration of the foreigner’s stay outside of the Czech Republic are discussed under Section 68, Subsection 2a and Subsection 3 of the Alien Act. If the purpose of the stay was for studying, only half of the duration of the stay counts.)

When an application for an extended stay and a permanent residence permit is filed, it is initially reviewed by the **Foreign Police** (department corresponding to the location of the individual’s stay) with the exception of situations, as specified under the law, in which the review process is handled by the Central Headquarters for the Foreign and Border Police Services (Section 163(g)(4) of the Alien Act) or by the Ministry of the Interior (Section 165(c) of the Alien Act). A decision by any of the above authorities can be appealed within fifteen (15) days. If the appeal is also rejected, a complaint can be filed with the Municipal Court in Prague within two (2) months after the receipt of the rejection notice.

When filing an application for a temporary or permanent residence permit:

- *With the exception of the passport, the registry office documents and the photographs, none of the documents may be older than 180 days.*
- *If there is a reasonable suspicion that the applicant suffers from a serious illness, he or she may be asked to provide a medical report.*
- *All documents written in a foreign language must be accompanied by a ‘notarized’ translation into Czech – unless the respective authority indicates that they do not require such a translation.*



4. 4. Other Practical Information

> Travel Health Insurance

Under Section 5 of Act No. 326/1999 Coll. on foreign nationals in the Czech Republic, a foreign national entering the Czech Republic (border check) must provide,

if requested to do so by the police, proof of the possession of an existing travel health insurance policy. Such a policy must show coverage of the costs of medical treatment after an injury or in the event of a sudden illness while in the Czech Republic, including the coverage of the costs for the relocation of the individual traveler to their home country. The minimum level of coverage is EUR 30,000. On the date of his or her entry into the Czech Republic, the foreign national must provide proof of this travel health insurance coverage even if he or she does not possess any insurance coverage provided under a special legal regulation, in their own country (for example, see Act No. 48/1997 Coll. on public health insurance). Section 29 of Act No. 326/1999 Coll. mentions a document verifying the existence of travel health insurance coverage or a similar type of insurance as one of the requirements for an extension of a visa for a stay in excess of 90 days.

➤ **Reporting the Location of Stay** (Section 93 of the Alien Act)

Under the Alien Act, **a foreign national is required to report where he or she is staying in the Czech Republic to the police within three (3) business days after entering the country.** This does not apply to foreign nationals under the age of 15, employees of a consular office or of an international government organization that is accredited in the Czech Republic (including their family members who are registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or foreign nationals whose stay in the Czech Republic has been arranged by the Czech Ministry of the Interior or foreign nationals who met this requirement by registering with the accommodation provider (e.g. a hotel). A foreign national who is permitted to stay in the country on a temporary basis without a visa must register with the police in the Czech Republic within thirty (30) days after the start of his or her stay if the individual plans to stay for longer than thirty (30) days. An individual must also provide the police with information about the start date and the planned duration of the temporary stay in the Czech Republic (this applies until the Czech Republic becomes a member of the Schengen Treaty).

When changing their address in the Czech Republic, foreign nationals who have been issued a permanent residence permit are required to report this change to the police within thirty (30) business days after the change takes place, provided the change of address is expected to last for longer than 180 days. Foreign nationals who are staying in the Czech Republic under an extended visa, permitting a stay in excess of 90 days, or under an extended stay permit, must report a change of address to the police within thirty (30) days after the change takes place, provided the change of address is expected to last for longer than 30 days. Foreign nationals who are permitted to stay in the Czech Republic without a visa, must report a change of address of their stay within thirty (30) days after the change takes place, provided the change of address is expected to last for longer than 90 days.

➤ **Validation of Official Documents**

All documents written in a foreign language and supplied as part of an application for a visa or for a residence permit must be treated using one of the following options:

- **Super-Legalized** – i.e. provided with a ‘legalization endorsement’ issued by a Czech consulate in the respective foreign country. This endorsement verifies that the document has been issued or certified by an authorized party (or the

respective authority) and it also verifies the authenticity of the signatures, official stamps and seals that are part of the document that is being submitted. This treatment is not required if it is so established under an international treaty of which the Czech Republic is a party.

- Provided with an **apostille** certification clause (an official certification attached to the document) – In this case, the document does not have to be verified by a Czech consulate in the respective foreign country; instead, the final certification is done in the country where the document is issued (by a so-called ‘apostille body’). Such a certification verifies that the document was issued by the proper authority and that it is authentic. Apostille certificates are issued by countries that are parties to the Convention Abolishing the Requirement for the Legalization of Foreign Public Documents (signed at The Hague, October 5, 1961).
- **Exempt from the special certification requirements** – if so established under an existing international treaty.

The information as to whether or not it is necessary to have a document ‘super-legalized’ or certified with an ‘apostille’ certification or whether the document is exempt from any special certification requirements can be obtained by calling a Czech consulate.

➤ **Abstract from the Registry of Criminal Records**

By providing an abstract from the Registry of Criminal Records of the Czech Republic, an individual verifies their non-criminal status. The submission of this document is required when applying for a visa for a stay longer than 90 days, for an extended stay or permanent residence permit, for citizenship and in many other situations. The abstract may be applied for using any of the following methods:

- At the offices of the Registry of Criminal Records (address: Soudní 1, Prague 4 – close to the ‘Pražského Povstání’ station located on the ‘C’ subway line). Applications are processed immediately.
- At every District State Prosecutor’s Office or any local/municipal office. The abstracts are mailed to the applicant’s address within 2-3 weeks.
- At any Czech consulate in a foreign country.

The above authorities will provide an application form. When filing the application for the abstract from the Registry of Criminal Records, the applicant’s identity and the accuracy of the data entered into the application are verified (the applicant’s identity is verified through a valid original picture ID. The application fee is CZK 50 and it is paid in the form of a government revenue stamp.

!!! IMPORTANT !!!

As part of the Czech Republic’s entry into the EU and the synchronizing of the laws regarding foreign nationals with EU legislation, the Alien Act is being amended on a fairly regular basis. We therefore recommend that you enquire about the latest updates by contacting the nearest department of the foreign police (Chapter 16.1.) or by contacting a non-governmental, non-profit organization specialized in providing assistance to foreign nationals (Chapter 15.) You can also contact the information line of the Foreign and Border Police Services (tel.: 974 841 356, 974 841 357; email: infoscpp@mvr.cz).

4. 5. Czech Citizenship

The two basic way in which to obtain Czech citizenship are either by birth (a child automatically becomes a Czech citizen if at least one of the parents has Czech citizenship; or, if the child was born in the Czech Republic and the parents do not have a citizenship and at least one of them is a permanent resident of the Czech Republic) or through it being awarded.

Czech citizenship can be awarded by the Ministry of the Interior at the request of a foreign national who meets **all of** the following criteria:

- The individual has been a **permanent resident in the Czech Republic for at least 5 years** (the individual must spend the majority of their time in the Czech Republic during this period). In exceptional cases, the Ministry of the Interior can waive the above requirement.
- By acquiring Czech citizenship, the person **must surrender his or her existing citizenship**; or, the person must prove that the existing citizenship has been surrendered. The foreign national does not submit a document verifying the surrendering of his or her citizenship with the application. Rather, this document must only be submitted after the person has been issued the so-called ‘pledge for the granting of Czech citizenship’. In certain cases, the requirement for the proof of the surrendering of one’s existing citizenship can be waived.
- **In the last 5 years, the individual has not been sentenced for an intentional crime in the Czech Republic.** This requirement can be waived under certain circumstances.
- **The individual has verified their knowledge of the Czech language.** This requirement can be waived by the Ministry of the Interior under circumstances that are worthy of special consideration – e.g. due to the applicant’s health status.
- **The individual has met the requirements established under the Alien Act and the requirements related to health and social insurance, taxes, fees and contributions.** (E.g. the applicant does not have any outstanding health or social insurance debts and the applicant has been paying taxes in a proper and a timely manner and meeting the requirements related to notification duties.) This requirement can be waived by the Ministry of the Interior under circumstances that are worthy of special consideration.

Detailed requirements regarding the application for citizenship are specified in the ‘Act on the Acquisition and Relinquishment of Czech Citizenship’. An application for Czech citizenship, addressed to the Ministry of the Interior, must be filed with the regional authority in the location of the applicant’s permanent residence. (In Prague, the applications are filed with the District Offices of the city districts of Prague 1 through 22; in Brno and Ostrava, the applications are filed with the respective City Halls; and, in Pilsen, the applications are filed with the District Office for Pilsen 3). A married couple may file a joint application and include children under the age of 18.

The respective regional authority will fill out a questionnaire with the applicant and verify the applicant’s (Czech) language skills through an interview. The citizenship application, along with the opinion of the regional authority, the opinion of the local municipal authority (for the location where the applicant resides) and other accompanying documents shall then be forwarded (within 30 days after their filing and through the Foreign Police, which also adds its own opinion) to the Ministry of the Interior, which will then issue a decision on the application.

The Ministry has 90 days in which to review the application and, in the majority of cases, the applicant is invited for a personal interview as part of the review process. If the Ministry **rejects** the citizenship application, the applicant may appeal such a decision within 15 days after the receipt of the rejection notice. The appeal (or an administrative appeal) must be

addressed to the ‘**Minister of the Interior**’. Should the Minister of the Interior also reject the application, the applicant may file an appeal within 2 months with the Prague Municipal Court.

If the application is approved, the applicant takes the citizenship oath in front of the secretary of a municipal authority (of a city with extended powers) and he or she is then presented with a **Certificate of Czech Citizenship**. Only after taking the oath does the foreign national become a Czech citizen. Children under the age of 15 acquire their citizenship automatically with their parents. The **processing fee** for the awarding of the citizenship is CZK 10,000. At the applicant’s request, the Ministry may reduce this amount in special situations that are within the interest of the State.

Useful Links

- Further information on the residing of EU citizens within the Czech Republic can be found on the following website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Service/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR/Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR).
- The list of countries with which the Czech Republic has a visa waiver agreement can be found on the following website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Azyl a migrace /Asylum and Migration/ ►Imigrace /Immigration/).
- Detailed information regarding the issuing of visas can be found on the following website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Azyl a migrace /Asylum and Migration/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území České republiky /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/); and at the Public Administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Životní situace /Everyday Situations/ ►Cizinec /Foreigners/ ►Vstupní formality /Entry Formalities/).
- If you are already residing in the Czech Republic and you would like to invite your relatives to come for a visit, you can find further information at: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Životní situace /Everyday Situations/ ►Cizinec /Foreigners/ ►Vstupní formality /Entry Formalities/ ►Pozvání cizince do České republiky /Inviting Foreign Nationals to the Czech Republic/).
- Detailed information regarding extended visas for stays over 90 days can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/).
- A sample visa application and the instructions for its completion in Czech, English, German and Russian can be found at the following link: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Vstupní formality /Entry Formalities/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/).
- Detailed information on extended stay permits can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> ((►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/).
- The application form for an extended stay permit can be downloaded at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Vzory formulářů /Forms/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/).

- Detailed information on applying for an extended stay permit for family reunion purposes can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/).
- Detailed information on a permanent residence permit can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/).
- Detailed information about the requirements for becoming a permanent resident can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ►Informace pro pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Information on the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/).
- The list of Czech consulates in other countries and the list of foreign embassies in the Czech Republic and their addresses can be found at the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mzv.cz> (►Diplomatické mise a úřady /Diplomatic Missions and Offices/).
- The list of countries that are part of the Convention Abolishing the Requirement for the Legalization of Foreign Public Documents and countries with which the Czech Republic has an existing bilateral legal assistance treaty, specifying the public documents that are exempt from special certification requirements, can be found at: <http://portal.justice.cz> (►Ministerstvo spravedlnosti /Ministry of Justice/ ►Mezinárodní vztahy /International Relations/ ►Informace /Information/ ►Ověřování listin podle Haagské úmluvy /Verification of Documents under the Hague Convention/).
- The list of notaries who can certify a transcript or a copy of an original document can be found at: <http://www.nkcr.cz> (►Kontakty na notáře /Directory of Notaries/).
- Detailed information about the Registry of Criminal Records can be found on the website of the Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.cz> (►Rejstřík trestů /Criminal Records Registry/).
- Detailed information on how to proceed with applying for Czech citizenship can be found at the Public Administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Životní situace /Everyday Situations/ ►Cizinec /Foreigners/ ►Státní občanství /Citizenship/); and, the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ► Státní občanství České Republiky /Czech Citizenship/).

The following useful information can also be found on the website of the Ministry of the Interior (<http://www.mvcr.cz>):

- Forms and applications – ►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Vzory formulářů /Forms/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/.
- Information about the duties of foreign nationals, as established under the Alien Act – ►Rady a služby /Advice and Services/ ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ► Zákony, vyhlášky a nařízení vlády upravující pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Acts, Regulations and Government Decrees Regulating the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/.
- Acts, regulations and government orders that regulate the residing of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic – ►Rady a služby /Advice and Services ►Cizinci /Foreigners/ ► Zákony, vyhlášky a nařízení vlády upravující pobyt cizinců na území ČR /Acts, Regulations and Government Decrees Regulating the Residency of Foreign Nationals in the CR/.

5. WHERE TO SEEK HELP

5. 1. Attorneys

Attorneys can represent their clients in front of courts and other governmental authorities, can act as legal counsel during criminal proceedings and can provide legal advice on all types of legal matters and assist with the preparation of documents such as contracts, etc. Attorneys' provide their legal services for a fee. All attorneys practicing in the Czech Republic are members of the Czech Bar Association, which oversees their practices and serves as a place where a client can lodge a complaint if they are not satisfied with the services that have been provided to them by an attorney.

5. 2. Ombudsman's Office

The Ombudsman's Office is an authority which has the task of protecting the rights of the public and to protect the members of the public in dealing with other government offices and administrative institutions if the practices employed by these authorities or institutions is in violation of the law or otherwise incorrect or improper – i.e. inconsistent with the principles of a democratic society and proper administrative practices. The Ombudsman's Office can also assist the public if the respective government authorities or bodies are not doing their job. **The Ombudsman's Office may not intervene with private legal relationships or disputes** nor with the decision making practices of the courts. The Ombudsman's Office may not act as a place where people can appeal the decisions of a court.

Although the Ombudsman's Office has the right to conduct an independent investigation in particular matters, they may not act as a substitute for government administrative bodies and they are therefore **not permitted to change or cancel any decisions issued by such authorities**. However, if the Ombudsman's Office discovers malfeasance on the part of a government office or authority, it may request a remedy.

5. 3. Consumer Protection, Czech Commercial Inspection

Czech Commercial Inspection (COI) is an agency that monitors adherence to requirements related to the quality and safety of non-food products and services. The agency also monitors the supply of proper information about products and makes sure that consumers are not being misled by false, unsubstantiated or incomplete information about the qualities or features of the products or services that are being offered to them. Consumers can seek **advice and information** at any COI office. Here they can also submit suggestions for an inspection, file a complaint or ask for advice on how to deal with certain situations when purchasing merchandise or services.

Czech Commercial Inspection is only responsible for the monitoring of adherence to proper sales practices when it comes to food products. The monitoring of the food products themselves and the materials used as ingredients is the responsibility of the State Agricultural and Food Inspection Agency.

Other institutions participating in monitoring efforts for the protection of the consumer include public health authorities, veterinary authorities, local trades licensing offices and customs offices (see Section 23 of Act No. 634/1992 Coll. on consumer protection).

Another option is to use the services that are provided by the non-governmental, non-profit organization, which specialize in consumer protection. These organizations provide access to information related to consumers' rights. Specific consumer issues and problems can be discussed in specialized advisory centers and through a number of internet discussion forums.

5. 4. Corruption

Useful advice and information on what to do if you become a witness to a situation involving corruption or corrupt practices can be found at the **anti-corruption website** – <http://www.korupce.cz>. The website contains a number of items of information, laws, documents, suggestions and contacts at the respective authorities specializing in the fight against corruption.

5. 5. Handling Emergency Situations

While you are staying in the Czech Republic, there is the chance that you could become a witness or party to situations in which you will not know what to do and will require assistance. This chapter is a brief guide on how to proceed in such situations and will provide information on which authorities to contact with a request for assistance.

!!! In the event of an emergency, you can always call !!!
112 – Europe-Wide Emergency Number
(calls are toll free and its abuse is illegal)

When contacting the above-noted emergency number, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- What exactly has happened? What is the extent of the event (e.g. who or what is at risk or has been affected, how many victims are there, etc.)?
- The exact location of the event (address: town, street, street number; or, road number, mileage marker, traffic direction; or, closer indication of location in an open environment; etc.).
- Information about yourself (name, phone number and location where you are calling from).

After the end of the call, the hotline may call you back to verify the emergency or to ask for additional information – such as directions.

The Czech Republic also has a series of **national emergency numbers**. However, the operators manning these phone numbers are only able to speak Czech!

➤ **150 – Fire Department**

Besides calling if you discover a fire, call if you discover an emergency or an accident involving the leakage of dangerous substances, etc., which poses a hazard to persons, property or the environment.

➤ **155 – Ambulance**

Call if you encounter a situation during your stay, which poses a risk to you, your loved ones or others and requires immediate medical assistance. Ambulance services are available in situations involving a sudden serious illness or injury where

the patient is unable to get to a doctor or hospital on their own. When prompt medical attention and the transportation of the person to a medical provider are important to prevent the patient's condition from worsening, ambulance services are available.

➤ **158 – Police**

Each of us can encounter a situation in which some type of illegal or criminal activity is taking place. As such, we could find ourselves in a position to be the person reporting the event or we could be the harmed or injured party or we could be a witness to such an event. **Felonies** are the most serious type of illegal conduct and they are discussed under the Penal Act (Act No. 140/1961 Coll.). Individuals over the age of 15 can be held liable for the committing of a crime and the investigation of crimes and the prosecution of their perpetrators is the task of the police and the state prosecutor.

Less serious violations of the law, which do not qualify as a felony, are **misdemeanors**. The investigation of misdemeanors is also the task of the police and misdemeanors are usually heard before municipal authorities.

If you have become the witness to or victim of a felony or misdemeanor crime, encountered a situation that puts you or your loved ones at risk, contact any police officer or the nearest police station to your location (where you live or where you are staying) for assistance. Alternatively, you may call the above-provided phone number. The police are required to take your report and make a record of it. If you are not satisfied with the treatment you have received from the police, you can file a complaint with the Control and Complaint Department of any administrative branch of the Czech Police. If you believe that a police officer has acted illegally with respect to you or your loved ones, you can contact the Inspection Office of the Minister of the Interior for assistance.

156 – Municipal (City) Police

The municipal police are a municipal authority that specializes in the maintaining of public order in the local municipality. Anyone may turn to the officers who are members of the municipal police force for assistance. The officers are required to assist you within the scope of their respective authority. The municipal police force works closely with the Czech Police. If you are not satisfied with the treatment that you have been accorded by the municipal police, you can file a complaint with the respective local municipal authority.

5. 6. Handling Other Crisis Situations

Besides the above-discussed situations, you may also have to deal with other negative situations in your stay in the Czech Republic – such as domestic violence (especially against children or women), drug addiction, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, an acute housing crisis or serious personal or family problems.



Should you encounter any of the above types of situations, you can look to the following specialized organizations for assistance:

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT	ASSISTANCE INTENDED FOR
CRISIS INTERVENTION CENTER HOTLINE	284 016 666	All Persons
RIAPS	Chelčického 39, 130 00 Prague 3 222 580 697 www.mcssp.cz/riaps.php	Hotline and Crisis Center
SAFETY HOTLINE	800 155 555 www.linkabezpeci.cz	Children and Teenagers
SPONDEA CHILD CRISIS CENTER	Sýpka 25, 613 00 Brno krizovapomoc@spondea.cz 541 235 511 www.spondea.cz	Abused Children and Victims of Domestic Violence (Brno)
CHILD CRISIS CENTER	241 484 149 www.dkc.cz	Abused Children (Prague)
DIAKONIE CRISIS HOTLINE	Diakonie ČCE – Středisko křesťanské pomoci v Praze, Belgická 22, 120 00 Prague 2 222 514 040 linka.duvery@diakoniecce.cz http://skp.diakoniecce.cz/	Persons in a Crisis Situation
HELPING HANDS ASSOCIATION	Francouzská 36, 602 00 Brno 545 247 535 www.podaneruce.cz	Persons Vulnerable to Drug Abuse (Moravia)
K-CENTRUM HOTLINE	283 872 186	Persons Vulnerable to Drug Abuse (Bohemia)
AIDS PREVENTION HOTLINE	800 144 444	HIV, AIDS
BÍLÝ KRUH BEZPEČÍ	257 317 110 (Prague) www.bkb.cz	Victims of a Crime or of Domestic Violence
LA STRADA – SOS HOTLINE	222 717 171 www.strada.cz	Prevention of the Trafficking of Women
ELEKTRA	283 872 410 www.centrumelektra.cz	Women Abused in Childhood
ROSA	Podolská 25, 147 00 Prague 4 241 432 466, 602 246 102 www.rosa-os.cz	Center for Victims of Domestic Violence
CZECH CATHOLIC CHARITY	MAGDALA Hotline 737 234 078 www.charita.cz	Victims of Human Trafficking, Foreigners in Distress

‘Public counseling centers’ are another place where people can turn for assistance and advice in dealing with crisis situations. These centers offer free counseling services in the areas of social issues, family and human relationships, human rights, labor law issues, housing, property ownership matters, insurance, financial problems, healthcare, consumer protection, etc.

More information on the availability of social services can be found in Chapter 10.5.

Useful Links

- List of all licensed attorneys, based on their location, specialization and language skills, can be found on the website of the Czech Bar Association: <http://www.cak.cz> (► *Seznam advokátů /Directory of Attorneys/*).
- For more information about local and municipal police forces can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Dokumenty /Documents/* ► *Obecní policie /Municipal Police/*).
- Detailed information about the Czech Police can be found on the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Policie /Police/*).
- Detailed information on how to proceed when filing a complaint about police treatment can be found at: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Rady a služby /Advice and Services/* ► *Občan na úřadě /Dealing with Government Offices/* ► *Podání stížnosti /Filing of Complaints/*).
- Detailed information on how to proceed in situations requiring immediate medical assistance can be found at: <http://www.zzshmp.cz> (► *Pomoc v ústí /Emergency Assistance/*).
- Detailed information on Czech Fire Rescue and other information on emergency and crisis situations can be found on the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Hasiči, záchranáři /Fire Department, Emergency Rescue/*), or (► *Mimořádné události /Emergency Situations/*).
- Contact information for organizations specializing in assistance to victims of domestic violence, drug addiction, people in crisis situations, etc. can be found at the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz>; or, at other specialized websites – see Chapter 5. 6.
- Further information about the Ombudsman Office can be found at <http://www.ochrance.cz/>
- For more information about public counseling centers, contact the Association of Public Counseling Centers: <http://www.obcanske-poradny.cz>
- Detailed information about the Czech Commercial Inspection agency can be found at: <http://www.coi.cz>
- Further information about the issue of consumer protection can be found in the publication „Consumer Protection in the Czech Republic“, published by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and available in Czech, English, German, French, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Chinese and Vietnamese. The publication is available upon request at Trades Licensing offices, European Consumer Centers, selected non-governmental non-profit organizations and from the Ministry of Industry and Trade or it can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.mpo.cz> (► *Ochrana spotřebitele /Consumer Protection/*).
- Other useful information about consumer protection issues can be found at: <http://www.mpo.cz> (► *Ochrana spotřebitele /Consumer Protection/* ► *Informace pro spotřebitele /Information for Consumers/*).
- Consumers should contact the respective inspection authorities and consumer organizations directly when reporting specific problems, filing complaints or requiring assistance with the interpretation of legislative regulations. A list of these authorities and organizations and their contact information can be found at the website of the Ministry of Industry and Trade: <http://www.mpo.cz> (► *Ochrana spotřebitele /Consumer Protection/* ► *Kontakty /Contacts/*).

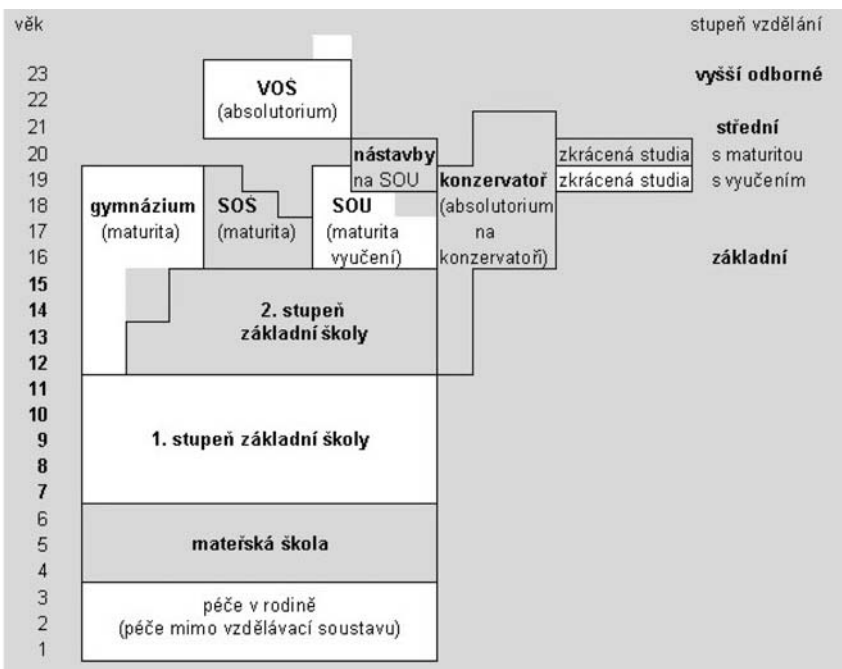
6. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM **AND THE RECOGNITION** **OF NON-CZECH EDUCATION**

„It is everyone’s right to have access to educational opportunities. School enrollment is mandatory for the period of time required under the law.“

(Article 33, Subsection 1 Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms)

The basic legislative regulations governing education issues are the School Act and the Higher Education Act. The current versions of Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool, elementary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (School Act) and Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on higher education, along with other important regulations can be found, for example, on the following websites: <http://www.msmt.cz> (►Dokumenty /Documents/ ►Přehled školských předpisů /Overview of School Regulations/ ►Seznam platných předpisů v resortu školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy /List of Current Regulations in the Area of Education, Youth and Sports/); <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Sbírka zákonů /Collection of Laws/).

Education is based on equal opportunity without any discrimination, on the ability to reflect the an individual’s educational needs and requirements, on respect, tolerance and solidarity and dignity for all of those participating in the educational system, on free access to elementary and secondary education for Czech citizens and the citizens of other EU countries in schools operated by the State, region, municipality or a group of towns. The educational system gives everyone the opportunity to enroll in a lifelong learning process. The educational system includes education leading towards specific educational degrees, non-degree types of education (arts, languages, other areas of interest and other areas of learning) and school services. The system also offers educational opportunities to individuals with particular educational needs and provides institutionalized education, education under custody-type situations and preventative care.



LEGEND

vek = Age

VOS (absolutorium) = Higher-Level Professional School (certification)

nástavby na SOU = Follow-Up Programs for Secondary Vocational Schools

gymnasium (maturita) = Gymnasium (graduation)

SOS (maturita) = Secondary Professional School (graduation)

SOU (maturita vyučení) = Secondary Vocational School (graduation, vocational certificate)

2. stupeň základní školy = Elementary School (2nd level)

1. stupeň základní školy = Elementary School (1st level)

mateřská škola = Kindergarten

péče v rodině (péče mimo vzdělávací soustavu) = Family Care (not part of the educational system)

konzervatoř (absolutorium na konzervatoři) = Conservatory (certification)

zkrácená studia = Abridged Studies

stupeň vzdělání = Level of Education

vyšší = Higher Professional

střední = Secondary

maturitou = Graduations

vyučením = Vocational Certificate

základní = Elementary

The School Act separates the educational system into the following **educational levels**: Elementary education, secondary education, secondary education with a vocational certificate, secondary education with a graduation exam, higher-level professional education and higher-level professional education at a conservatory.

Types of schools: Kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school (gymnasium, secondary professional school, secondary vocational school), conservatory, higher-level professional school, elementary arts school and language school with the option of a state language exam.

Types of school facilities: These include school facilities offering additional educational programs for teachers, school counseling facilities, school facilities serving areas of special interest and offering other educational and training programs, school facilities with a special purpose, training and accommodation facilities (housing), school cafeterias and school facilities for institutionalized care, care in correctional custody and preventative care.

The educational system operates around a structure of **school years**, which begin on September 1 and end on August 31 of the following year. Each school year is broken down into ‘school time’ and ‘school break time’. The time spent in school is broken down into two semesters. School breaks include the fall break, the Christmas break, the end-of-semester break, spring break, Easter break and summer break. Schools operate on the basis of a five-day teaching week.

Specific issues regarding the education of foreign nationals are discussed under Section 20 of the School Act. Non-Czech citizens who are legally residing in the Czech Republic have the same access to elementary, secondary and higher-level professional educations as if they were Czech citizens. This includes education provided to those in institutional or correctional custody. The enrollment of a foreign national in the respective schools is subject to the criteria established in the School Act. The law requires that all applicants verify to the principal of the school that they are legally residing in the Czech Republic. They must do this prior to their enrollment. Citizens of other EU countries are not required to provide proof of residence in the Czech Republic. If an enrollment exam includes the requirement to take an exam verifying knowledge of the Czech language, this requirement can be waived for applicants who are non-Czech citizens and who acquired their prior education in a foreign school, should the applicant request such a waiver. Czech language skills, which are necessary for studying in the given program, are verified by the school through an interview.

6. 1. Pre-School Education

Pre-school educational programs are optional and they are offered in **kindergartens** operated by the majority of Czech towns and municipalities. Pre-school educational programs are offered to children ages 3-6 (and to children of other ages on an exception basis). The enrollment of a child in a kindergarten must be applied for by the child’s parents (or legal guardian). Information about the location and deadline for the submission of an application for the enrollment of a child in a pre-school educational program for the upcoming school year is issued by operator of the kindergarten and its principal, who also makes decisions about the acceptance of the child (and sometimes the decision about the length of a ‘trial’ enrollment, which however may not exceed 3 months). Children enrolling in a pre-school educational program for the year preceding the first mandatory year of school attendance (elementary school) are given a preference in the acceptance process. Children may also be enrolled in a kindergarten during the course of the school year.

Pre-school educational programs support the healthy emotional, intellectual and physical development of the child and to the child’s ability to master the basic rules for behavior and to learn about the basic values and ways in which to relate to others. Pre-school education sets out the basic prerequisites for the child’s future educational efforts. Enrollment in these programs also helps to balance out any disparities in the child’s development before starting elementary school. Parts of these programs include the option to arrange for care for children with special educational needs.

Further details about enrolling in a pre-school program, the requirements regarding the operation of such facilities and related to the supply of meals, health and safety and the tuition fees are specified in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Regulation No. 14/2005 Coll., on pre-school education (as amended by Regulation No. 43/2006 Coll.).

6. 2. Mandatory and Elementary Education

Free access to education at elementary and secondary schools is declared in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. Private schools provide their educational services for a fee. School attendance is mandatory for 9 years and applies to children starting with the age of 6, unless they have been approved for a postponement of enrollment. Mandatory school attendance usually leads to the obtaining of a basic education. The mandatory school attendance requirement also applies to EU citizens and their family members who are residing in the Czech Republic under a special residency permit, foreign nationals with a permanent residence in the Czech Republic, foreign nationals staying in the Czech Republic on an extended visa (over 90 days) and under an extended stay permit and to refugees and asylum seekers.

A child is enrolled in a school by their parents or legal guardian. The registration for the first year of elementary school is open from January 15 through February 15. The individual elementary schools announce their exact registration dates in advance. The requirements for the mandatory school enrollment of children with a permanent address in the respective town or municipality are set by that municipality, which either has its own elementary school or which makes arrangements for its children to attend an elementary school in a nearby town. Municipalities, municipal districts or territories made up of multiple municipalities are divided into school districts. The municipality guarantees an elementary education to all children residing in the given school district. The existence of a local school district does not imply that the child cannot be enrolled in a different school than the one servicing that particular district.

Elementary schools are divided into a first and second level. The **first level** lasts for 5 years (grades 1-5) and the **second level** lasts for 4 years (grades 6-9). After the successful completion of the first elementary school level, the student can continue his or her education by enrolling in the lower level of a gymnasium.

A person is considered to have completed an **elementary education** after he or she has successfully completed the basic educational program in an elementary school (grades 1-9), the lower level of a 6- or 8-year gymnasium or the corresponding number of years in an 8-year program at a conservatory. A person is also considered to have completed their basic education (on a remedial basis) after having successfully completed a course for the completion of a basic education taken at an elementary or a secondary school.

6. 3. Secondary Education

After completing elementary school, a student can continue their education by enrolling in a **secondary school** (a **gymnasium**, **secondary professional school** or a **secondary vocational school**) or a **conservatory**.

A secondary school or conservatory enroll applicants into their programs under a license and based on a registration in the registry of schools. Secondary education is offered in a day school, distance learning, evening school and combined forms. Decisions regarding the acceptance of students for enrollment into a secondary school are made by the school's director as part of the acceptance and enrollment process. The **conditions applicable to the acceptance process** for enrollment into secondary schools and conservatories are established under applicable legal regulations.

Students applying for enrollment in the first grade of a secondary school, after their completion of the 9th grade of elementary school, generally submit an enrollment application through the school where they are finishing their mandatory years of school attendance (9 years). In other cases, the application for enrollment is submitted directly to the director of the respective secondary school. The application must be submitted using a standardized form and by the deadline specified under the applicable administrative regulation.

Students who are completing their mandatory number of school years in a school outside of the Czech Republic must submit a document verifying the status of their completed prior education from the school they attended. Such a student must also submit a certificate (as appropriate) verifying the recognition of a foreign academic transcript as issued by the respective foreign school; or, a validation of a foreign academic transcript, if the prior completion of a certain level of education is required in order to be enrolled.

The **curriculum of a gymnasium** is of a general academic character and it is designed to prepare the student to go on to a college or university. Secondary professional schools and secondary vocational schools have curriculums that educate their students in **specific professional disciplines**. By completing a two-year program, the student will have completed their secondary level of education; and, by completing a three-year program, the student will have completed their secondary level of education with a **vocational certificate**; and, by completing a four-year program, the student will have completed their secondary level of education with a **graduation exam**.

A secondary school may offer **follow-up programs** to applicants who have completed their secondary educations with a vocational certificate in a related discipline in the form of a three-year day-school program. These additional study programs are based on a curriculum designed for the respective educational discipline. The different options for the combining of educational programs for applicants enrolling in follow-up studies are set by the government under a special regulation. The follow-up programs last for 2 years and they are day programs and include a graduation exam.

Secondary schools can also offer **abridged study programs** in which students, who have completed a secondary educational program ending with a graduation exam, can enroll to complete a **secondary education with a vocational certificate**. These ‘abridged’ programs last for 1 – 1.5 years and they are designed in the form of day programs. The lengths of the programs are specified in the structured curriculum for the respective field of study.

Secondary schools can also offer **abridged study programs** in which students can enroll to complete a **secondary education with a graduation exam**. These ‘abridged’ programs last for 1 – 2 years and they are designed in the form of day programs. The lengths of the programs are specified in the structured curriculum for the respective field of study.

Studies at a **conservatory** are designed to develop the student’s knowledge, skills and other talents, acquired during a regular elementary education or during elementary education at a special art school, to provide a general and to prepare the student for

a professional career in the field of art or a teaching career with a specialization in music, dance, singing or acting. Studying at a conservatory also prepares the student for a fully-fledged out personal and public life, the pursuit of a further education and a future career. In order to be accepted into the first year of a 6-year conservatory program, the applicant must have completed the mandatory number of school years or must have successfully completed their basic education before (without) completing the mandatory number of school years. In order to be accepted into the first year of an 8 year conservatory program, the applicant must have successfully completed the fifth grade of an elementary school and have met the acceptance criteria by demonstrating their skills, knowledge, interests and physical status. The acceptance process for enrollment in a conservatory program is in the form of a talent exam.

Upon the successful completion of a conservatory program, the student will have completed either a program of **secondary education with a graduation exam** or a **higher-level professional education at a conservatory**.

6. 4. Higher-Level Professional Education

Higher-level professional education programs are designed to develop and enhance the skills and knowledge that the students obtained in the course of their secondary education. These programs provide general and profession knowledge along with practical training in the performance of highly professional work. Upon the successful completion of an accredited educational program, the student will have completed their higher-level professional education. The length of higher-level educational programs in the form of day programs is 3 years (including a professional internship). In medical disciplines the programs can be up to 3.5 years in length.

In order to be accepted as a student at a higher-level professional school, the student must have completed their secondary education program with a graduation exam and they must also meet the acceptance criteria by demonstrating their skills, knowledge interests and physical status.

The completion of a higher-level professional educational program ends with the certification of the student (in a particular discipline). A document verifying the completion of such a program consists of a certificate and a diploma for a graduate of a higher-level professional school. In the Czech system, graduates of higher-level professional schools use the title 'DiS' after their name (where the abbreviation stands for a diploma certified specialist).

6. 5. Recognition of Education in Non-Czech Schools by Elementary, Secondary and Higher-Level Professional Czech Schools

A document verifying the completion of elementary, secondary or a higher-level professional education in another country can be submitted to the respective regional authority in the Czech Republic when applying for the following:

- A certificate for the recognition of a foreign academic transcript in the Czech Republic.
- The validation of a foreign academic transcript in the Czech Republic.

Certificates for the recognition of a foreign academic transcript in the Czech Republic can be issued by **regional authority** if the Czech Republic is or has an

international agreement on the recognition of documents verifying the completion of educational achievements with the country in which the foreign academic institution, which the applicant has attended, is located and recognized. If the foreign academic transcript does not clearly indicate the curriculum of individual subjects, the applicant must provide (in addition) the framework curriculum for the respective coursework of the applicant. The application, along with an attached translation of the respective documents verifying the education completed in the country of origin, is filed with the school department of the respective regional authority, which also distributes the application forms.

If the Czech Republic and the respective country do not have an agreement on the international agreement on the recognition of documents verifying the completion of educational achievements with the country in which the foreign academic institution, which the applicant has attended, is located and recognized, the validation is performed by the regional authority, based on the submitted foreign academic transcript (original or notarized copy, translated into Czech). If the foreign academic transcript does not clearly indicate the curriculum of individual subjects, the applicant must provide (in addition) the framework curriculum for the respective coursework of the applicant. If the Czech Republic and the respective country do not have an existing mutual assistance treaty, the foreign transcript must be ‘super-legalized’ or certified by an apostille (for more information, see Chapter 4. 4.).

The **regional authority** may reach any of the following decisions:

- If the curriculum at the foreign school does not significantly vary from an equivalent basic educational program in the Czech Republic, the application will be **approved** and a validation endorsement on the recognition of the applicant’s foreign academic transcript within the Czech Republic will be issued.
- If it is discovered during the validation process that the curriculum at the foreign school is significantly different from an equivalent basic educational program in the Czech Republic, the application will be **denied**.
- If it is discovered during the validation process that the curriculum at the foreign school only partially varies from an equivalent basic educational program in the Czech Republic or if the applicant fails to provide a foreign academic transcript or a framework curriculum for the discipline for which the applicant would like to receive credit, the regional authority will request that the applicant take a **validation exam**. By taking this exam, the applicant will be able to prove that his or her knowledge and skills are equivalent to the respective educational program. Part of the exam may also be a practical test. The applicant does not have to take a validation exam verifying their knowledge of the Czech language or of Czech literature. The exam is graded by a panel with at least three members.

Detailed regulatory requirements regarding the recognition of a foreign education can be found under the current version of Section 108 of Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (the School Act) and in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Regulation No. 12/2005 Coll., which contains detailed information about the validation exam and a sample of the certificate on the recognition of a foreign document verifying educational achievements and a sample of the validation endorsement.

If you would like to obtain further information on the recognition of foreign academic records, please contact the school department of your regional authority.

6. 6. Colleges and Universities

There are three types of **colleges and universities** in the Czech Republic – **public, state** (military and police academies) and **private**. An applicant must complete an acceptance process before being enrolled in any of these schools. The basic requirement for acceptance to a college or university is the completion of a general secondary education or a professional secondary education (this requirement does not apply for acceptance to art schools or to an art major at a university). In order to study at a college or university, a foreign national must meet the same criteria as those applicable to a Czech citizen. Public and state schools do not charge any tuition and private schools charge tuition fees of varying amounts. Foreign nationals who wish to study at a public college or university in the Czech Republic in a language other than Czech must cover the costs for their studies on their own. Czech colleges and universities have the following types of programs – day programs (daily attendance based on selected courses), distance learning programs (school is attended only a few days out of the month) and combined programs.

6. 7. Recognition of Foreign Higher Education and Qualifications

A foreign national – a graduate of a foreign college or university – may apply for the recognition of such foreign academic achievements and qualifications in the Czech Republic. The applicant must be in possession of a document verifying their enrollment in the foreign study program or their completion of such a program (transcript). The written application is submitted to:

- The Chancellor's Office of the public university or college offering an accredited program in a similar area.
- The Ministry of Defense – if the academic achievements that are to be recognized are in a military area.
- The Ministry of Interior – if the academic achievements that are to be recognized are in area related to public security enforcement.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – if the academic achievements that are to be recognized were obtained in any of the following countries: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Poland, Georgia, Moldavia, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan.

The applicant must submit a **written application** for the recognition of foreign academic credits and qualifications to the respective above-listed authority. There is no standard form for this procedure and applicants may use the sample applications that are available on the websites of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports or of the respective public schools. Such an application must contain the applicant's date of birth, permanent address, the name and address of the respective foreign school that the applicant attended, the name of the program and the field of study and the dates for the start and the completion of the studies. Each application must be accompanied by a Czech translation of a notarized copy of the applicant's diploma and a list of exams (or equivalent), which the applicant has taken, or a so-called 'diploma supplement'. All supplements must be certified with an apostille or superlegalized (see Chapter 4. 4.).

The application's processing time is thirty (30) days. A rejection of the application can be appealed to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports if the application was

rejected by a public school; or, it may be appealed directly to the Minister of Education, if the contested decision was made by a Ministry.

6. 8. Other Forms of Education, Language Course, Czech Courses and Adult Education

> Language Courses

The current range of types of language course offerings is quite extensive. There are many language schools and agencies, which offer a number of different types of language courses – individualized, group, speed (rapid learning), monthly, bi-annual or annual programs and courses with morning, afternoon and evening programs. The number of different languages that are available to be studied is also quite extensive and includes English, German, Russian, French and Spanish. The fees vary, based on the length and the intensity of the courses (nonetheless, one must budget for an amount, which generally averages in the thousands of crowns).

> Courses in the Czech Language

Czech courses for foreigners are offered by different language schools and language agencies. There are a variety of different courses targeting different levels of students from beginners through those requiring more advanced knowledge (e.g. 'business Czech') and different course lengths and intensity. Some of the courses are concluded with an exam. Selected language schools offer a State exam in the Czech language for foreigners and a preparatory course for this exam. The cost for such a course usually ranges in the thousands of Czech crowns (depending on the type of the course). For college and university students, the majority of schools offer centers for the language preparation of foreigners (some of these centers also have courses open to non-students). The learning of the Czech language by foreign nationals is also supported by central governmental bodies as part of their integration programs for foreign nationals who are residing in the Czech Republic on a legal, long-term basis. This support is provided in the form of financing for projects organized by non-governmental organizations. Detailed information on the availability of **free** courses in the Czech language, designed for foreigners, can also be obtained from non-governmental organizations that are active in the area of helping foreigners integrate into living in the Czech Republic (see Chapter 15).



Useful Links

- Detailed information about the Czech educational system in English is available at the following website: <http://oraprod.eurydice.org/index.shtml> (► Browse by Country ► Czech Republic ► General Descriptions of the Education System – Download pdf: English).
- The text of the legal regulations covering the area of education (including the School Act) can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: <http://www.msmt.cz> (►► Dokumenty /Documents/ ► Přehled školských předpisů /Overview of School Regulations/).

- The directory of Czech kindergartens is available through: <http://www.msmt.cz> ►Předškolní školství /Pre-School Education/ ►Rejstřík škol a školských zařízení /Directory of Schools and Educational Establishments/. The information can also be obtained from the director of a respective kindergarten or at any respective local municipal office.
- A detailed list of elementary schools in the Czech Republic is available through: <http://www.msmt.cz> ►Předškolní školství /Pre-School Education/ ►Rejstřík škol a školských zařízení /Directory of Schools and Educational Establishments/.
- A detailed list of secondary schools in the Czech Republic is available through: <http://www.msmt.cz> ►Předškolní školství /Pre-School Education/ ►Rejstřík škol a školských zařízení /Directory of Schools and Educational Establishments/) and other useful information can also be found on the website of the Institute for Information on Education: <http://www.uiv.cz>.
- Information on the available fields of study can be found on the website of the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education: www.nuov.cz. This includes a database of schools (<http://data.nuov.cz/>) and career counseling (http://www.nuov.cz/index.php?page=c_kar).
- On the public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Životní situace /Everyday Situations/ ►Občan /Citizens/ ►Vzdělání, věda a výzkum /Education, Science and Research/ ►Střední a vyšší školy /Secondary and Upper-Level Schools/). You can find detailed information about what to do in various situations involving the issue of education on this website.
- On the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, you can find, in addition to other useful information, a directory of public and private higher educational institutions and a list of accredited higher education programs: <http://www.msmt.cz> ►Vysoké školství /Tertiary Education/ ►Vysoké školy /Colleges and Universities/) and also a detailed overview of legal regulations covering the area of higher education (►Vysoké školství /Tertiary Education/ ►Vysoké školy /Colleges and Universities/ ►Legislativní normy a související informace /Legislation and Related Information/).
- If you would like to obtain further information on the recognition of foreign academic qualifications, you may contact (in person or by phone) the school department of your regional authority. Contact information for the regional authorities in the Czech Republic can be found on the website of the Czech Ministry of the Interior at <http://www.mvcr.cz/casopisy/s/adresare/kraje2.html> and on the website for Prague City Hall at [http://www.Prague_mesto.cz/\(50fzh3rpmxs4jf453ckkkw45\)/Default.aspx](http://www.Prague_mesto.cz/(50fzh3rpmxs4jf453ckkkw45)/Default.aspx).
- Detailed information on the recognition of foreign higher education can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: <http://www.msmt.cz> and on the website of the Center for Equivalence of Documents about Education – Center for Higher Education Studies: <http://www.csvs.cz>.
- Information on institutions offering language courses can be found for example on the following websites: <http://jazykove-skoly.cz/> or <http://www.jazykovky.cz/>.

7. HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE SYSTEM

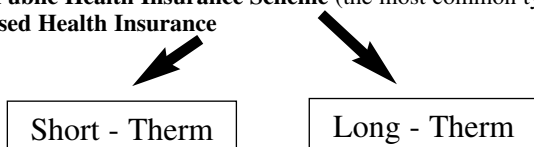
In accordance with Article 31 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, every person has the right to have access to healthcare. Healthcare services are normally covered by a health insurance provider. If the person receiving the respective care does not have health insurance or if the respective healthcare services or procedures are not covered by such insurance, the services are provided for a fee.

Every healthcare worker must immediately assist and provide first aid to anyone whose life or welfare would be at serious risk without such assistance. This includes whenever standard types of assistance are not immediately available and includes the arranging for the providing of further professional medical assistance as necessary (e.g. at a healthcare facility).

Healthcare services are provided in accordance with *Act No. 20/1966 Coll., on public healthcare* (as last amended). This includes both outpatient and institutionalized care – depending on the requirements of the patient’s condition.

Types of Health Insurance

There are two types of health insurance in the Czech Republic:
Mandatory Public Health Insurance Scheme (the most common type)
Contract-Based Health Insurance



7. 1. Public Health Insurance

Under the law, the following individuals have the right to participate in the public health insurance system:

- Foreign nationals with a permanent residence in the Czech Republic.
- Asylum holders.
- Foreign nationals employed by an employer who has a registered address in the Czech Republic (foreigners with an extended visa for a stay over 90 days with a permit for a long-term stay for employment purposes).
- Third-country nationals who are legally residing in an EU member country and who are subject to Regulation (EEC) No. 1408/71 (i.e. individuals who meet the requirement for migration between the member states – e.g. previous employment in another EU member country – see Council Regulation (EC) No. 859/2003, which extends the personal impact of Regulation 1408/71).

The participation in the public health insurance system **terminates** upon:

- The termination of permanent residence in the Czech Republic.
- The termination of employment in the Czech Republic (applies to individuals who are not permanent residents).

Premium Payers

There are several different types of payers among the participants in the public health insurance system:

- Insured Individuals
- Employers
- Government

If the participant in the public health insurance system has the status of an **employee**, the premium payments are split between the individual and the employer.

The employee's premiums are paid by the employer, wherein the portion of the premium that is paid by the employee is deducted by the employer from the employee's salary. The entire premium is paid to respective insurance provider (by the employer). When the employee starts their employment, the employer must notify the respective insurance provider within 8 days. If the employee finds out that their employer has failed to announce the start of employment to the insurance provider, the employee must immediately do so on their own.

For selected individuals participating in the public health insurance system, the premiums are **paid** by the government. These individuals specifically include unprovided for children (up to age 26), senior citizens receiving pensions as part of the Czech pension insurance system, students (up to age 26), mothers on maternity leave or those who are legitimately providing all-day care to at least one (1) child under the age of 7 or two (2) children under the age of 15, job seekers (unemployed individuals registered with the labor office) and others. In order to have the government pay the premiums for the above-listed classes of individuals, the individuals must be participating in the public health insurance system. Since it is clear that the above categories exclude people with an employee status, only foreign nationals with permanent residence are eligible for government paid premiums for their health insurance.

➤ Rights and Obligations of Foreign Nationals Receiving Healthcare in the Czech Republic

A foreign national participating in the **public health insurance** system has the same rights as every other Czech health insurance subscriber, which specifically includes the following **rights**:

- The right to select the health insurance provider (the insurance provider can only be changed once in any 12-month period and the change must always apply as of the first day of a calendar quarter).
- The right to select a doctor and healthcare facility that has an existing contract with the respective insurance provider (the insurance subscriber may assert this right once every three months).
- The right to receive healthcare services without the requirement to directly pay for the services (this excludes services and procedures that are not covered by public health insurance under the law).
- The distribution of pharmaceutical and medical supplies without the requirement to directly pay for such products, provided they are covered under the public health insurance system.

Insured individuals also have certain **obligations**, amongst which are the following:

- The requirement to pay premiums to the respective insurance provider.
- To identify themselves with a valid insurance ID when receiving healthcare services.

- The requirement to notify the insurance provider about any changes in personal information such as one's permanent address (within 30 days), about any loss or damage to the insurance ID card and when starting employment (if the employer fails to provide such notification).

In the event of any doubt as to whether or not any healthcare services are being provided in a proper manner, the insured individual may contact the director of or the owner of the respective healthcare facility. In the event of questions regarding the professional or ethical conduct of a doctor, patients can turn for assistance to the Czech Medical Chamber, to the Czech Dental Chamber or to the Czech Chamber of Pharmaceutical Professionals; or, the individual may look to the respective health insurance provider or the governmental body that has registered the healthcare facility for assistance.

➤ **Extent of Healthcare Services Covered**

Healthcare services covered by public health insurance:

Healthcare services that are fully covered by this type of insurance include outpatient and ward (hospital) care, emergency and rescue services, preventative care, dispensary care, the supply of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and dental products, spa treatments, care that is provided in special pediatric treatment centers and sanatoriums, factory prevention care, the transportation of patients (if the insured individual's condition requires it) and reimbursements for travel expenses, diagnostic opinions (to a limited degree) and post-mortem examinations and autopsies.

The insurance subscribers participate in the **costs for selective procedures or medical products** that are in excess of the legally defined limits. This, for example, would include certain dental procedures, parts of the spa treatment procedures and, most frequently, participation in the cost of selected pharmaceutical products. Some drugs are fully covered by insurance and some require the patient to make a co-payment. Each class of drugs must contain at least one product, which is fully covered by insurance; otherwise, the doctor must notify the patient in advance that there will be a co-payment required when collecting the prescription at the pharmacy. The costs of any pharmaceuticals or medical supplies that are required during a hospital stay are fully covered by insurance. Healthcare services and procedures that are **not covered by the public health insurance system** and which must be **paid for directly** are specifically defined under the law. For example, this would include selected dental procedures and acupuncture.

7. 2. Contract-Based Health Insurance

Foreigner nationals, who do not meet the requirements for participation in the public health insurance scheme, may purchase a health insurance policy on an individual basis – for example, from the *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.* insurance company. These policies can be purchased either from a local branch office of the insurance company or from an insurance broker. Depending on the type of care covered by the policy, the policy is either taken out on a short-term or on a long-term basis.

1. Short-Term Health Insurance Policies (stays of up to 365 days)

This type of insurance policy is useful for short-term stays in the Czech Republic – such as for tourism or business trips. The coverage only includes emergency and

immediate care, including acute dental care. The coverage limits and terms and conditions of the policy are specified in the particular contract for the policy and the policy is purchased for a specific number of days (the minimum coverage period for a policy is three (3) days).

2. Long-Term Health Insurance Policies

This type of insurance policy is designed for individuals who are staying in the Czech Republic on a long-term basis (for at least six (6) months – the minimum policy term). This type of policy can only be purchased from the *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.* insurance company. The coverage is activated through the signing of a contract and on the date specified in the policy. The policy is terminated upon the expiration of the term specified in the contract for the policy (it can also be terminated for other reasons – as discussed in the Act on Insurance Policies). The policy has limited coverage in comparison to the coverage of the public health insurance scheme. The coverage limits and terms and conditions of the policy are specified in the contract for the policy and in the terms and conditions.

Long-term contract-based health insurance is available to individuals up to the age of 70 who must undergo an entry exam at a healthcare facility selected by the insurance company. The policy is purchased for a term ranging from 6-24 months and always for full months. After the expiration of the policy, it can always be renewed for up to an additional 24 months. Premiums are paid in the Czech currency and the payments are made in advance for the entire term of the policy. The terms and conditions for the policy, the extent of coverage, the rights and obligations of the insured party and the insurer and the premium payment methods are specified in the insurance terms and conditions, which are published by the *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.* insurance company, and they must be in conformity with the Insurance Act and the insurance policy.

> Premium Payers

In the case of **contract-based** health insurance policies, the insured individual is usually also the payer of premiums for that policy.

> Rights and Obligations of Foreign Nationals Receiving Healthcare in the Czech Republic

In the event of any doubt as to whether or not any healthcare services are being provided in a proper manner, the insured individual (policy holder) may contact the director of or the owner of the respective healthcare facility. In the event of questions regarding the professional or ethical conduct of a doctor, patients can turn for assistance to the Czech Medical Chamber, to the Czech Dental Chamber or to the Czech Chamber of Pharmaceutical Professions; or, the individual may look to the respective health insurance provider or the governmental body that has registered the healthcare facility for assistance.

> Covered Healthcare Services

Services Covered under a Long-Term Contract-Based Health Insurance Policy

The coverage limits applicable under a long-term contract-based health insurance policy are part of the insurance terms and conditions of the respective provider (e.g. *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.*), which contains a list of procedures and types of care that are not covered by the long-term contract-based health insurance policy.

The services that are covered under this type of contract-based policy usually include diagnostic, treatment, outpatient and hospital care, the costs for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and devices (to the same extent as the coverage for individuals insured under the public health insurance scheme with rare exceptions) and costs related to the transportation of the patient to a healthcare facility.

Services Covered under a Short-Term Contract-Based Health Insurance Policy

The coverage limits applicable under a short-term contract-based health insurance policy are part of the insurance terms and conditions of the *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.* insurance company.

Cost-Free Healthcare Services Covered under International Agreements

Foreign nationals who are temporarily in the Czech Republic also have access to healthcare services. This coverage is not part of the public health insurance system and the services are provided based on the following:

1. **International agreements** that have been signed between the Czech Republic and the individual's home country. These specifically include agreements on the free supply of emergency and urgent medical assistance in the Czech Republic and agreements on a mutual waiver of costs. To receive healthcare services under these international treaties, the foreign national must verify his or her nationality through a passport and provide a reason for being in the Czech Republic. Healthcare services in this manner are paid for by the Czech Ministry of Health.
2. The second type of such an agreement is a social security agreement that would include the supply of healthcare services. Generally speaking, the care provided under this type of an agreement is restricted to emergency and urgent assistance; however, if approved by the respective insurance provider, this type of coverage can be extended. When receiving healthcare services under this type of an agreement, the recipients of such care must verify their identity by supplying the forms issued to them by the respective institution in their country of origin.

!!! IMPORTANT !!!

If your condition requires acute and immediate medical assistance, you have the right to receive medical care at the nearest healthcare facility – even without identifying yourself with an insurance card. In such a case, every doctor is required to provide assistance to you.

7. 3. Mandatory Vaccinations

The mandatory vaccinations program specifically applies to children (with the exception of tetanus shots, which are re-administered every 10-15 years). Your general practitioner should keep a record of your vaccinations and remind you about any necessary re-vaccinations as part of your regular medical checkups. Vaccinations are an essential part of the development of a healthy child and they are fully covered by insurance providers as part of the public health insurance scheme (whether or not any vaccinations are covered under a contract-based health insurance policy depends on the general terms and conditions of each policy).

7. 4. The Healthcare System in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic has both government run and privately run healthcare facilities. The majority of the healthcare providers have an existing contract for the supply of and payment for healthcare services with only specific insurance providers. In such a case, the healthcare providers offer their services without any direct payment being required from patients insured with such a particular insurance provider. However, it is recommended that individuals enquire in advance as to whether or not a particular doctor or facility has a contract with their own individual insurance provider.

➤ **Outpatient Care**

In the event of an illness, the patient normally first seeks assistance from the local, so-called, **primary care** provider. This can be a general practitioner type of doctor, a pediatrician, dentist or a gynecologist. If for any reason, a patient doesn't know any local doctors or healthcare providers, he or she can ask for information at the local municipal office. It is also possible to request assistance from the insurance provider or to find a doctor in the telephone directory (phone book). When choosing a doctor, one must keep in mind that the patient may only receive care from a doctor who has an existing contract for the supply of healthcare services with the patient's insurance provider. If the patient is a part of the public health insurance system, he or she must first register with a primary care provider, where the patient is to receive their basic healthcare services. Through such a registration, the doctor makes a commitment to care for the patient on a continuous basis – i.e. to provide basic care (including house calls) – and, if necessary, to arrange for the supply of specialized care through a specialist or at a hospital. Individuals with a contract-based insurance policy do not have to register with a healthcare provider and they receive their healthcare services from providers or facilities that have contracts with the *Pojišťovna VZP, a.s.* insurance company.

A doctor may only refuse to register a patient if the acceptance of the patient into the doctor's care would pose such an extra burden of work on the doctor that it would impact the doctor's ability to provide quality care to this or to other patients for whom the doctor is already caring. However, the doctor may not refuse to provide assistance in situations requiring urgent medical attention (accidents or a sudden acute illness). If the patient is rejected, it is the patient's right to receive a written confirmation of such a rejection from the doctor. If there is any doubt, the patient can always contact the healthcare department of their local regional authority and request a re-examination of the case.

Should the patient's condition require the attention of a specialist, the primary care provider will recommend a **proper specialized healthcare facility**, which has a contract with the patient's insurance provider, and the primary care provider will issue a written recommendation for the providing of specialized care or a request for a consulting opinion. If the patient's condition requires immediate specialized care, such a referral from a general practitioner is **not** required. After seeing the patient, the specialist provides the referring general practitioner with whom the patient is registered with feedback on their diagnostic findings and recommended treatment procedures. This specialist can also make possible additional treatment recommendations or recommendations regarding the patient's ability to work.

➤ **Institutionalized Care (Hospitalization)**

If the nature of the illness requires it, the primary care provider or an outpatient specialist will recommend that the patient be treated in a hospital or directly arrange the patient's admission to a hospital. After the completion of the examination and treatment at the hospital, the patient is released and the patient's general practitioner is sent a report on the treatment received at the hospital and its results, along with any related further treatment recommendations. In addition to hospitals, inpatient care is also available through a network of specialized treatment institutions.

➤ **Emergency and Rescue Services**

Medical assistance is also provided in situations involving a sudden illness or accident at all hours or if the patient's doctor is absent and also in situations involving a serious illness in which the patient is unable to get to the doctor on their own and when prompt medical assistance and transportation to a healthcare facility is required in order to prevent a further deterioration in the patient's condition or other risks. (Compare with Chapter 5. 5.)

➤ **Pharmacy Services**

These services are available to supply patients with pharmaceutical products and other medical supplies on both a prescription and a non-prescription basis. Pharmacies dispense drugs to patients based on a prescription. They do this either at no cost to the patient (if the drug is fully covered by insurance) or with a co-payment (if the insurance only covers part of the cost of the drug or if the drug is not covered by insurance at all). Prescriptions that are written by an emergency care provider are valid for 24 hours; prescriptions that are written for antibiotics are valid for 5 days; prescriptions for opiates are valid for 3 days; and, other prescriptions are usually good for a week. In addition to drugs, pharmacies also dispense selected medical devices and supplies. Usually however, these products are distributed by specialized facilities that operate under a with the insurance providers and dispense their products on a prescription basis – either at no additional cost to the patient or with a patient co-payment or with the full cost charged to the patient. The health insurance providers themselves may also lend certain medical devices to patients.

7. 5. Protection and Promotion of Public Health

Part of the system for the supply of healthcare services in the Czech Republic is also a system for the protection and promotion of public health.


The rights and obligations of the public in this area are covered under Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on the protection of public health (as last amended). This act and the implementing regulations that are part of the act cover specific issues such as measures for the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases and epidemics, occupational safety and health protection measures, health requirements related to water and its supply sources, etc. Government supervision in this area is handled by public health authorities – amongst which are, based on the above-referenced law, the Ministry of Health, regional health departments, other selected ministries and regional authorities. Besides the above public health authorities, healthcare facilities themselves are also active in the areas of the protection and the promotion of public health. All healthcare institutions provide vaccination services and the majority of such facilities also offer counseling centers for the promotion of public health. These provide assistance and counseling in the areas of healthy nutrition, stopping smoking, obesity, HIV/AIDS, etc.



Useful Links

- The directory of health insurance providers can be found on the website of the Ministry of Health: <http://www.mzcr.cz> (►Pro širokou veřejnost /*For the General Public*/ ►Zdroje informací /*Information Resources*/ ►Zdravotní pojišťovny /*Health Insurance Providers*/).
- The website of the Pojišťovna VZP, a.s. insurance company is: <http://www.pvzp.cz/>. Information can also be obtained by calling 233 006 311; email: asistence@pvzp.cz
- The website of the Všeobecné Zdravotní Pojišťovny public insurance company is: <http://www.vzp.cz>. Information can also be obtained by calling the VZP information center at 844 117 777.
- The website of the Czech Medical Chamber is: <http://www.lkcr.cz>.
- The website of the Czech Chamber of Pharmaceutical Professionals is: <http://www.lekarnici.cz>.
- The list of existing international agreements on cost-free medical assistance and social security agreements can be found at: <http://www.cmu.cz> (►Mezinárodní smlouvy /*International Treaties*/ ►Dohody o poskytování bezplatné péče sjednané před rokem 1989 /*Agreements on the Supply of Free Medical Care, Signed Prior to 1989*/).
- A guide to the Czech healthcare system can be found on the website of the Ministry of Health: <http://www.mzcr.cz> (►Pro širokou veřejnost /*For the General Public*/ ►Informace pro cizince /*Information for Foreign Nationals*/).

8. EMPLOYMENT



All information related the employment of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic can be obtained at your local labor office or on the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs website, which is dedicated to employment related issues - <http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz>.

There are two different ways in which foreigner nationals can work and receive income in the Czech Republic. They can do so either as **employees** or as **entrepreneurs**. For further information on business-related issues, see Chapter 9.

8. 1. Employment of Foreign Nationals - Procedures

The requirements for employment of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic are specifically detailed under Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment (as last amended) (hereinafter as ‘The Employment Act’). Citizens of other EU countries and their family members do not require a work permit in order to work in the Czech Republic.

Third-country nationals may be hired and employed under the following conditions:

- The **individual has a valid work permit** (in Czech: “Povolení k zaměstnání cizince”) and a valid visa issued for work purposes or a long-term residency permit issued for work purposes.
- Before an employer can issue a so-called ‘hiring commitment’ to a foreign national, the employer has to obtain a **permit for the hiring of foreign employees** (in Czech: “Povolení získávat zaměstnance ze zahraničí”).

➤ Work Permit

A foreign national can only be employed in the Czech Republic if the person is in possession of a valid work permit. However, there are **certain exceptions** to this requirement (further specified under Section 97 and Section 98 of the Employment Act). This requirement also does not apply to foreign nationals with a permanent residence permit, to asylum holders or to foreign nationals who are residing in the Czech Republic under a long-term residency permit issued for the purpose of the co-habitation of family with a foreign national who has been granted a permanent residency permit or asylum. A work permit is also not required in the case of foreign nationals who are residing in the Czech Republic under a long-term residency permit issued by another EU member country for work purposes – provided the permit is at least 12 months old.

If a foreign national holds multiple jobs in the Czech Republic at the same time, the foreign national must possess a separate work permit for each job. The performance of the routine tasks handled by a partner, statutory body or a member of the statutory body of a company or of a member of a cooperative or of a member of a statutory or other body of a cooperative is also regarded as employment. A work permit is also required if a foreign national plans to work in the Czech Republic for a foreign employer who hired the foreign national for the position based on a business agreement or other contract with a Czech legal entity or natural person.

Note: A work permit cannot be issued to a foreign national who has just applied for asylum in the Czech Republic. For such an individual, a work permit cannot be issued for a period of 12 months from the date of their application for asylum.

The issuance of a work permit is within the competency of the **Labor Office** in the location where the foreign national is to be employed. When submitting the application for the work permit, the applying foreign national may be represented by the employer (or other representative) under a power-of-attorney. The filing of a work permit application is subject to an administrative fee of CZK 500.

The Labor Office may issue a work permit under the condition that the permit is being issued for employment in a so-called '**reported vacant position**' (this refers to a job opening, the creation or availability of which would have been reported by the employer to the Labor Office). The Labor Office will only issue a work permit after the vacant position has been listed under the available job openings offered by the Labor Office and after the Labor Office has been unable to staff the position with a person who is registered as 'unemployed' with the Labor Office or for which there is a lack of available candidates who can meet the qualification requirements for the job. For certain categories of foreign nationals, the Labor Office will issue a work permit regardless of the current situation in the labor market. This applies in particular to interns (i.e. foreign nationals who will be employed for a limited period of time (1 year maximum) in order to improve their skills or qualifications in the respective profession, teachers or academic staff for higher education institutions, research and development workers at research institutes, etc.). Once issued, the work permit is non-transferable and it can therefore only be used for employment by the employer who is specified in the permit. This also applies to the type of job and the **job location**. A work permit for employment in the Czech Republic is issued for a **specific period of time and for a maximum of one year**. Should any of the information provided change prior to the expiration of their work permit, the holder of the permit is required to apply for the issuance of a new permit with their local Labor Office. If the employment (employment contract or, contract for work) is terminated on an earlier date, **the validity of the residency permit issued for the purposes of employment expires at the same time**. A foreign national who is sent by his or her employment to perform work in a location other than the job location noted in the work permit **for a period longer than 30 calendar days** must apply for the issuance of a new work permit.

Depending on the current situation in the labor market, the Labor Office may **extend a work permit** at the holder's request and such extensions may be applied for on a recurring basis. However, each extension can be for no longer than one-year at a time. The extension of the work permit must be applied for with the respective Labor Office at least 30 days before the expiration of an existing permit. A permit may only be extended for the performance of the same job with the same employer and **at the same employment location**. All requests for the extension of a work permit are subject to the same application requirements as those for an original work permit. The extension request must be accompanied by a statement from the employer that the employer agrees to extend the employment. Once the work permit has been extended, the holder must also report to the local department of the Foreign Police and apply for an extension of the respective residency permit or visa. This could include any residency permit issued for a visa for a stay of over 90 days for employment purposes or the submission

of an application for a long-term residency permit for employment purposes or the request for an extension of such a permit. Such an application must be filed **no sooner than 90 days** prior to **and no later than 14 days** prior to the expiration of the residency permit under a visa for a stay over 90 days or the expiration of a long-term residency permit.

A **foreign national** who is employed without a work permit or performs work in a manner which is inconsistent with their work permit is committing a violation that is subject to a **fine of up to CZK 10,000**.

An **employer** (can be either a legal entity or a natural person) who illegally employs a foreign national can be subject to a **fine of up to CZK 2,000,000**.

8.2 Labor Law Relationships

Labor law relationships – i.e. the relationships between employees and their employers – are regulated by a number of legal acts and in particular by the Labor Code (Act No. 65/1965 Coll.).

➤ Employment

In the Czech Republic, employment is the most typical type of Labor Law relationship. It comprises the mutual rights and obligations of the employee and the employer. In the Czech Republic, employment is usually initiated by the signing of an **employment contract**. Employment can be arranged for a **non-specific period of time or for a specific term**. The employment contract may also include an arrangement covering a **three-month** trial period – unless a shorter trial period has been arranged.

Employment can be terminated through any of the following:

- An **agreement** on the termination of employment.
- A **termination notice** (submitted by the employee or the employer, wherein the employer may only terminate employment in situations that are specifically defined in the Labor Code. After the submission of the termination notice, employment is terminated at the end of the notice period – the length of which is usually 2 months).
- An **immediate termination** (by the employee or the employer; however, this type of termination may only be used in a limited range of circumstances).
- A **terminal during the trial period** (by the employee or the employer, neither of whom has to supply a reason for the termination).
- The **expiration of the employment contract**, if the employment was arranged for a specific period of time.
- In the case of foreign national employees, employment may also be terminated as of the **date on which their residence permit for the Czech Republic expires**, based on an enforceable decision to revoke the permit; or, on a date on which a judgment ordering the deportation of the individual becomes legally enforceable.

The **employment contract** is a very important part of the labor law relationship as it clearly defines the rights and obligations associated with the employment that has been arranged for under the contract. Before signing the contract, your employer should make you aware of your rights and obligations associated with the employment contract

you are about to sign and of the work and salary that is applicable to the job that you are taking. When arranging for employment, the employer is required to adhere to the principle of equal treatment under the law and to the rules related to anti-discrimination and possible abuses of the rights and obligations that are part of labor law relationships.

The employment contract must meet certain formal and content-related **requirements**. The most important requirement is that the contract must be in a **written form**. In the contract, the employer and the employee must agree to some **essential issues**, which include the type of work that is to be done, the location of the employment and the employment start date. Without these, the contract would be invalid.

The employment contract may also include other terms and conditions, which the parties would like have present. Should the employment contract contain any provisions or arrangements that would not be in compliance with the law (with respect to their contents), the sections of the contract containing such provisions or arrangements would be invalid. (For example, an arrangement under which the employee waive some of his or her rights (under the law) would not be a valid (enforceable) part of the contract.)

➤ **Contracts for Work Performed on a Non-Employment Basis**

Such contracts and agreements are an **addition** to a conventional employment contract. Under such contracts or agreements, the employee does not receive the same level of protection as he or she would under a regular employment contract (such as an entitlement to take a vacation). These contracts and agreements can exist alongside of regular employment; whether they are arranged for with the same employer (as a supplemental job assignment) or whether they are arranged for with different employers. A differentiation is made between a ‘work agreement’ (which can apply to a job performed for a specific employer, wherein the working hours must not exceed one-half of a regular work week) and a ‘contract for work’ (which applies when the expected amount of work – extent of the assignment – does not exceed 100 hours of work for one employer in a single calendar year).

8. 3. Rights and Obligations of the Employee

Under the Labor Code, employers are required to **treat all of their employees equally** in terms of their working conditions, compensation, professional training and job promotions or other types of advancement. Direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace, based on the individual’s gender, sexual orientation, language, beliefs, religious, political or other affiliations, etc. is illegal. If the rights and obligations related to equal treatment or discrimination are violated, the employee has the right to ask the employer to halt any such violation of these requirements and to request a remedy and redress for the consequences of any such violation. Should such a remedy or redress be insufficient and should the employee feel that they have been inadequately compensated, the employee has the right to make a claim for monetary compensation. The level of any such compensation would be decided by a court.

Under the Labor Code (Section 83a, Subsection 1), the maximum allowable number of **working hours per week are a total of 40 hours**. The basic (mandatory, paid) amount of vacation time in the Czech Republic is a total of **four (4) weeks**.

The term **‘minimum wage’** refers to the least amount that an employer can pay to an employee for work performed by an employee under the law. The minimum wage

standards and the conditions for the assessment of the minimum wages are determined by the government.

As of July 1, 2006, minimum wage requirements in the Czech Republic were:

- CZK 48.10 per hour worked by the employee as part of regular working hours.
- CZK 7,955 per month for employees on a monthly salary.

In cases in which an employer does not have a collective bargaining agreement or if the salary has not been negotiated as part of a collective bargaining agreement, the salary may not be less than the applicable minimum salary assessment. The **minimum salary assessments** are defined by the government (Government Decree No. 333/1993 Coll., on minimum salary assessments and compensation for work in difficult and hazardous conditions and night work).

Due to the role of a **woman** as a mother and due to physical differences, labor law legislation gives women (especially those who are pregnant or mothers) an **increased level of protection and care**. There are even certain types of jobs, which women are precluded from performing.

➤ **Maternity Leave**

The employer is required to tolerate the absence of a female worker for a period of time coinciding with the birth of a child and care for a newborn child for a period of 28 weeks; or, if the woman has had two or more children at the same time or is a single mother, this period is extended to 37 weeks (the standard maternity leave).

If the women is giving birth to a child, maternity leave may never be less than 14 weeks and it cannot be terminated or interrupted any sooner than six weeks after the birth of the child.

While on maternity or parental leave, the mother/father is not entitled to any salary compensation. During this period, the individual receives financial assistance in the form of a sick leave benefit and state social support payments to which they are entitled under the conditions specified in the regulations covering sick leave benefits (financial assistance during motherhood and other financial assistance) and also under the Act on State Social Support (parental assistance). For more detailed information, see Chapter 10. 4.

➤ **Parental Leave**

Parental leave is available to:

- Female staff – mothers of children after the end of maternity leave.
- Male staff – fathers starting with the birth of the child.

This parental leave is granted for the period of time requested by the parent but for no longer than until the child reaches the age of 3. Just as with maternity leave, parental leave is also a major disruption in the person's ability to perform a job and the employer is required to tolerate the person's absence under such circumstances. Male and female employees are entitled to take maternity and parental leave at the same time.

The Labor Code and the implementing regulations and related statutes cover in detail the rights and entitlements of employees, as associated with their employment. The respecting of the rights and obligations that are established under the legal regulations covering labor law relationships and related to employee compensation, salary replacement, working hours, vacation, occupational safety, the employment of minors and employees caring for a child is monitored by the **State Labor Inspection Authority** (www.suip.cz) and their local labor inspection offices. Violations of the above requirements by employers can be reported to the above-noted authorities.

8. 4. Employment Brokering and Other Career Services

Local **Labor Offices** play an important role when it comes to the enforcement of the right to employment. The most important services that are provided by the Labor Offices in this area include employment brokering, consulting and information services, arrangements for requalification and the payment of welfare and requalification (training) support.

◆ **Eligibility:**

Foreign nationals have the same rights to employment as Czech citizens, provided they have a permanent residence permit or asylum in the Czech Republic.

Local Labor Offices maintain a **database of job seekers**. Any eligible person who is not currently employed (or in a similar type of labor law relationship) or self-employed or a student may be included in this database. The job seeker must assist the Labor Office, as necessary, with the search for a job if requested to do so. A job seeker may be removed from the database if he or she refuses to take suitable employment without a legitimate reason for refusing to take such a job; or, if he or she refuses to enter an appropriate retraining or requalification program; or, if the person doesn't cooperate with the Labor Office in its efforts to find the person employment.

Under specific conditions, a job seeker is entitled to receive **welfare**. The amount of the welfare provided is calculated as a percentage of the average monthly salary the individual was paid in their last job. The maximum amount of such welfare is equal to 2.5 times the minimum subsistence stipend (the 'living minimum').

Due to the anticipated changes in the concept of the minimum subsistence stipend after January 1, 2007, there will also be a change in the Employment Act (in those sections of the act which deal with the minimum subsistence stipend issue). This also applies to the maximum amount of a welfare support payment. Starting January 1, 2007, the maximum level of welfare support payment will be equal to 58% of the average wage (nationally) for the first, second and third quarters of the calendar year preceding the year in which the application for welfare was filed.

Labor Offices maintain a database of available job openings, which is publicly accessible on the following website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs:
<http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz>

In addition to the local Labor Office, job seekers can also use the services of various headhunter agencies, which are licensed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. If the agency has a permit to broker employment for foreign nationals in the Czech Republic, the agency can also broker jobs for foreigners with a temporary residency permit. These agencies can provide their services either at no charge or for a fee, which cannot however be charged to the person looking for work. Available job openings can also be searched for through the **classified sections of newspapers** and **various internet job hunting sites**.

8. 5. Unions

Employees have the right to associate through unions set up to protect their rights and to bargain for the most favorable working conditions with employers. The Labor Code and other legal regulations give the unions a broad range of authority. For example, unions oversee adherence to labor law regulations and negotiate so-called 'collective bargaining agreements' on behalf of employees. Such agreements can deal with the employee rights within a single company or across an entire industrial segment.



Useful Links

- Detailed information on the employment of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic can be found on the following employment related website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> (►Zahraniční zaměstnanost /Foreign Employment/).
- A list of all categories that do not require a work permit for employment in the Czech Republic can be found on the following employment related website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> (►Zahraniční zaměstnanost /Foreign Employment/ ►Zaměstnávání cizinců /Employment of Foreign Nationals/ ►Zvláštní případy /Special Cases/).
- For a list of Labor Offices see: <http://portal.mpsv.cz> (►Zaměstnanost /Employment/ ►Informace z úřadů práce /Information from Labor Offices/).
- A sample of an application for a work permit and other necessary forms can be downloaded from the following employment related website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> (►Zahraniční zaměstnanost /Foreign Employment/ ►Formuláře ke stažení /Downloadable Forms/).
- The list of categories of foreign nationals to whom the Labor Office will issue a permit without regard to the conditions in the current labor market can be found on the following employment related website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> (►Zahraniční zaměstnanost /Foreign Employment/ ►Zaměstnávání cizinců /Employment of Foreign Nationals/ ►Zvláštní případy /Special Cases/).

- The list of current labor law regulations can be found on the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> (►Práce a právo /*Labor and the Law*/).
- The application form for inclusion in the database of job seekers and the application for welfare assistance can be obtained at your local Labor Office or downloaded from the following website: <http://portal.mpsv.cz> (►Zaměstnanost /*Employment*/ ►Pro občany ►Formuláře ke stažení /*Downloadable Forms*/).
- A list of headhunting agencies can be found on the following website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://portal.mpsv.cz> (►Zaměstnanost /*Employment*/ ►Pro občany /*For Citizens*/ ►Agentury práce /*Employment Agencies*/ ►klik na „hledej“ = zobrazí se seznam všech agentur práce /*clicking on 'hledej' /search/ will display the list of all employment agencies*/).
- Additional information on unions and the individual union organizations can be found on the website of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions: <http://www.cmkos.cz>

9. DOING BUSINESS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

A person who is earning their living on their own (a sole proprietor) is referred to as a **'self-employed individual'**.

9. 1. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

In the Czech Republic, small businesses are regulated under Act No. 455/1990 Coll., on small businesses (as last amended). Natural persons with a permanent residence (address) outside of the Czech Republic or a legal entity with a registered address outside of the Czech Republic (hereafter referred to as a 'foreign entity') may operate a business in the Czech Republic under the same conditions and under the same limitations as a Czech entity – unless otherwise established under the Act on Small Businesses or other separate legislation. A natural person who has a permanent residence permit or who has been granted asylum and a legal entity with a registered address in the Czech Republic are also each treated as a 'Czech entity'. **Foreign nationals with permanent residence status and asylum holders** therefore have the same status in terms of their ability to operate a small business as a Czech citizen. Foreign nationals without permanent residence status (this excludes EU nationals, nationals from other countries that are part of the European Economic Area Treaty and Swiss citizens) must possess a valid residency permit in order to conduct business in the Czech Republic (a visa, long-term residence permit – see below).

Business activities of foreign natural persons are subject to the following general and special conditions:

General conditions (as of August 1, 2006):

- At least 18 years of age.
- Capable of undertaking legal acts.
- An irreproachable character.
- If the person is already doing business or had previously done business in the Czech Republic, the person must be free of any outstanding tax obligations that are associated with that respective business.
- If the person is already doing business or had previously done business in the Czech Republic, the person must be free of any outstanding obligations related to social security contributions or contributions to the government employment policy.
- If the person is already doing business or had previously done business in the Czech Republic, the person must be free of any outstanding obligations related to contributions to the public health insurance scheme.

Special conditions for the operation of a business include professional or other qualifications if these are required under the Act on Small Businesses or under separate regulations.

Current legislation differentiates between the following types of small businesses:

- **Unregulated Businesses** – In the majority of cases, the right to conduct business starts when the founding of the business is announced to the local Trades Licensing Office. Such a business is certified through the issuance of a trading license.
- **Regulated Businesses** – The ability to start the business is dependent upon an approval from the respective governmental authority. Permission to start the business occurs through the issuance of a license and a trading certificate.

The **announcement** or the **business license application** must be submitted in person with the **local Trades Licensing Office** (the local Trades Licensing Office is the trades licensing department operating under the municipal offices of a ‘municipality with extended powers’). A foreign natural person submits the announcement or the business license application to the Trades Licensing Office in the location of the person’s registered permanent residence in the Czech Republic or (if the above cannot be determined) the location of the business in the Czech Republic. Any documents or paperwork accompanying the application, which were not issued in the Czech language must be officially translated and certified (superlegalized or apostille certified – for details see Chapter 4. 4.). With the exception to the above are documents on academic achievements that were issued by an EU member country or that were submitted by an individual from an EU country, all documents and paperwork verifying the applicant’s foreign academic status must be validated (in a manner comparable to the discussion in Chapters 6.5. and 6.7.). When registering an unregulated business, the Trades Licensing Office will issue a trading license within fifteen (15) days. In the case of a regulated business, a decision on the granting of a business license shall be issued within sixty (60) days.

If the announcement of an unregulated business or an application for a business license for a regulated business is being submitted by a foreign national – a foreign natural person who is required to provide proof of their legal residence in the Czech Republic and who has verified the meeting of the applicable requirements (with the exception of the requirement related to a residence permit) – the Trades Licensing Office shall issue to such a person a statement that as of that date, the person meets the applicable general and special criteria for the operation of a business in the Czech Republic. The applicant can then use this statement when applying for a residency permit. However, the statement itself does not constitute a permit to operate a business in the Czech Republic.

Using the above statement issued by the Trades Licensing Office, the foreign national shall have proof for the consulate/foreign police of the purpose of his or her stay in the Czech Republic when applying for an extended visa for a stay over 90 days or for a long-term residency permit for business purposes. If the applicant then submits the above visa/long-term residence permit to the Trades Licensing Office within six (6) months after the Trades Licensing Office has issued the above-noted statement, the Trades Licensing Office will subsequently issue an official trading license for the applicant within fifteen (15) days after the visa/long-term residence permit has been provided. (In the opposite case, the Trades Licensing Office will initiate the proceedings for a reversal of the issuance of a right to conduct business.)

A **personal income tax return** must be filed by anyone whose annual income exceeded CZK 15,000. Such a tax return is filed with the local Revenue Authority by

March 31 of the following year or by June 30 if the tax return is being filed by a tax preparer. Any questions regarding your tax obligations while conducting business can be directed to the Revenue Authority in the location of your business.

9. 2. Companies and Corporations

The legislation applicable to corporate enterprises can be found under Act No. 513/1991 Coll., the Commercial Code (as last amended). Companies and corporations have the status of being legal entities.

A foreign entity's right to conduct business in the Czech Republic starts on the date of the registration of this entity with the Czech Companies Register. In order to conduct business as a company, foreign nationals must possess a **residence permit issued for the purpose of membership in a legal entity** (when filing an application for an extended visa for a stay over 90 days / a long-term residence permit, the applicant provides an abstract from the Companies Register as proof of the reason for their stay in the country).

Trading companies, cooperatives, other legal entities and foreign entities must be registered with the Companies Register. The **Companies Register** is a publicly accessible database maintained by the regional courts (the so-called 'registry court'), based on the registered address of the respective legal entity. Anyone has the right to access this registry and to make copies and obtain abstracts from it. The registry contains the data on business entities, which must be maintained in the registry in accordance with legal regulations.



Useful Links

- Local Trades Licensing Offices maintain a **register of small businesses**, which is available on the website of the Ministry of Industry and Trade: <http://rzp.mpo.cz> (►Hledání v registru /Registry Search/).
- Detailed information regarding the **requirements for the operation of a small business** by foreign nationals in the Czech Republic can be found in the following locations:
 - The public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Životní situace /Everyday Situations/ ►Podnikatel /Businesses/ ►Živnostníci /Small Businesses/).
 - Every Trades Licensing Office. A list of these offices can also be found on the public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Adresář /Directory/).
 - The website of the Ministry of Industry and Trade: <http://www.mpo.cz> (►Podpora podnikání /Business Support/ ►Živnostenské podnikání /Small Businesses/).
 - There is a booklet „*Informational Materials for Foreign National Persons Transacting Business According the Small Business Act in the Czech Republic*“ available in various language versions on the website of the Ministry of Industry and Trade: <http://www.mpo.cz> (►Podpora podnikání

/Business Support/ ▶Živnostenské podnikání /Small Businesses/ ▶Integrace cizinců /Integration of Foreign Nationals/ ▶Projekt č. 1/2005 ▶Project No. 1/2005/).

- A directory of local Revenue Authorities in the Czech Republic can be found on the website of the Ministry of Finance: <http://www.mfcr.cz> (▶Daně a cla /Taxes and Duties/ ▶Daňová správa /Tax Administration/) and through the public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (▶Adresář /Directory/ ▶Úřady veřejné správy podle druhu /Public Offices by Type/ ▶Daňová správa /Tax Administration/).
- Tax return forms and other forms can be found at the clerk's office of the local Revenue Authority and can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Finance: <http://www.mfcr.cz> ((▶Daně a cla /Taxes and Duties/ ▶Daně /Taxes/ ▶Tiskopisy ke stažení /Downloadable Forms/).
- The Companies Registry is accessible through the website of the Czech Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.cz/or>.

10. SOCIAL SECURITY

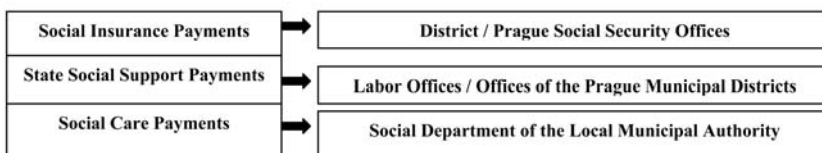
In the case of need, individual persons (Czech citizens and foreign nationals) are protected through the following three systems:

Social Insurance	State Social Support	Social Care
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These three programs are complementary and make up an integrated system.

10. 1. The Social Security System and Its Administration

The authorities responsible for the management and distribution of contributions distributed under the social security system are the District Social Security Offices (OSSZ); in Prague, it is the Prague Social Security Administration (PSSZ) and its local branches; and, the Czech Social Security Administration, which is located in Prague and which manages and controls the OSSZ and the PSSZ. The government authority responsible for the distribution of State social support is the local Labor Office (or, in Prague, the offices of the respective municipal districts). The authority responsible for the distribution of social care payments is the Social Department operating under the local municipal authority.



10. 2. Social Insurance

➤ **Disability Insurance**

Part of the social security system is **Disability Insurance** (Act No. 54/1956 Coll.). This type of insurance is intended for working individuals and its purpose is to financially secure these individuals at a time when they lose their income due to a temporary circumstance such as illness, pregnancy or motherhood.

◆ **Eligibility:**

All **employees** or other individuals with the same status (persons with the status of an 'employee' are defined under the Disability Insurance Act) and **self-employed individuals** are part of the disability insurance system.

The disability insurance system in the Czech Republic is based on the following:

- Only individuals who are insured and who work in a manner establishing eligibility for participation are covered by this insurance program.
- At the time of the occurrence of the event on the basis of which the individual is to receive assistance under this program, the applicant for assistance must have been a subscriber to the disability insurance program or have been protected as part of the protection period after the termination of employment.
- The applicant must meet the legal requirements for eligibility to receive financial assistance under this program.
- The amount of financial assistance received under this program is calculated off of the applicant's previous income, which was subject to social security contributions.
- Participants in the disability insurance program are required to pay premiums for this insurance.

Under the disability insurance program, **employees** (all employees are **required** to **participate** in this program) receive four types of benefits:

- Disability
- Support when Caring for a Family Member
- Financial Assistance during Motherhood
- Compensatory Pay during Pregnancy and Motherhood

Disability

Employees participating in the disability insurance program who are found to be unable to perform their job by a doctor or who are ordered into a quarantine situation are eligible for the payment of benefits under this program. Benefits can be received for a maximum of one year. Under certain situations, previous disabilities falling within the same year as the current disability also count as part of the total number of days receiving benefits.

Support when Caring for a Family Member

The following employees are eligible to receive benefits when caring for a family member:

- Employees who are unable to work because they must care for a child younger than 10 years of age or another family member.
- Employees who share a common household with the family member who is being cared for; this condition is not reviewed when a parent is caring for a child under 10 years of age.

The financial assistance provided when caring for a family member can be received for a maximum period of an initial 9 calendar days (16 calendar days in the case of employees who are alone) provided the need to provide care lasts that long.

Financial Assistance during Motherhood

The following female employees are eligible for this type of financial assistance:

- An employee who has been a participant in the disability insurance program for at least 270 days over a 2-year period prior to giving birth.
- The pregnancy ended with the birth of a child.
- The employee does not do the job for which the financial assistance is being derived.

The financial assistance during motherhood is provided for a period of 28 weeks (27 weeks in the case of a single mother or a mother who gave birth to two or more children at the same time and has to care for at least two of them). The aid is provided from the 6-8th week prior to the expected delivery.

Compensatory Pay during Pregnancy and Motherhood

The following female employees are eligible for compensatory pay during pregnancy and motherhood:

- Employees who are transferred to a different job due to pregnancy or motherhood.
- Employees whose income has been reduced as a result of such a transfer.

The compensatory pay during pregnancy and motherhood can be provided until the woman starts her maternity leave and after the end of the maternity leave until the 9th month after the birth of the child.

The participation of **self-employed individuals** in the disability insurance program is **voluntary** and to subscribe to the program, a person must register for the insurance using a standardized form. Coverage starts on the date specified in the registration form, but no earlier than on the date of its filing with the district social security office in the subscriber's location. An exception would be a situation in which the self-employed individual can register retroactively. To register retroactively, the self-employed person has to submit the registration form within 8 days after the start (re-initiation) of their self-employment status.

The following benefits are provided under the disability insurance program for self-employed individuals:

- Disability
- Financial Assistance during Motherhood

When distributing disability insurance benefits, the same rules apply to self-employed individuals as those applicable to employed subscribers, with the following differences:

- The self-employed subscriber must have been a subscriber to the program for at least three months prior to occurrence of the disability. This requirement does not have to be met if the individual was a subscriber to the program at the time of the start (re-initiation) of their self-employment status.
- The person must have been paying premiums into the disability insurance program.
- In order to be eligible for financial assistance during motherhood, the self-employed individual must have been a subscriber to the program for at least 180 days during the year preceding that of the delivery of the child.
- The self-employed individual may not be personally engaged in an income generating activity under self-employment.

Claiming Benefits

The insured individual makes a claim for benefits to be paid under the disability insurance program by submitting a form that is issued by the attending physician. Claims are submitted to the person's employer. Self-employed subscribers file claims with the district social security office in the location of their residence or in the location of their self-employment (if the subscriber is not a permanent resident of the Czech Republic).

The Payment of Benefits under the Disability Insurance Program

If the employee works for an employer with over 25 employees (organization), the benefits are paid by the employer. If the employee works for an employer with 25 or fewer employees (small organization), the benefits are paid by the district social security office. Self-employed subscribers received their benefits from their local district social security office.

The **amount** of money received as a disability benefit, support for caring for a family member or financial assistance during motherhood is based on the recipient's level of income. For more information see: www.mpsv.cz (► *Nemocenské pojištění /Disability Insurance/* ► *Výpočet dávek nemocenského pojištění /Calculation of Disability Insurance Premiums/*).

On **January 1, 2007**, the new **Disability Insurance Act** (Act No. 187/2006 Coll.) comes into effect. The major changes introduced in the new law apply specifically to the following issues:

Disability Benefits

- The benefits are always paid starting on the 15th calendar day of the current disability, calculated on the basis of calendar days.
- During the initial 14 days of the temporary disability, the employee receives salary compensation from the employer (for work days only).

Financial Assistance During Motherhood

- There is an option for the mother of the child to take turns with the husband (or father of the child) in caring for a child and receiving financial assistance under this program. The mother and the partner can take turns starting in the 7th week after birth.

Administration of the Disability Insurance Program

- Employee disability insurance policies will only be administered by the district social security offices and these offices will also be responsible for the payment of benefits in accordance with the statutory timeframes.

> Pension Insurance

◆ Eligibility:

Participation in the pension insurance program in the Czech Republic is **mandatory** for all economically active individuals.

Benefits provided under the basic pension insurance scheme include old age pensions, full disability pensions, partial disability pensions, surviving spouse and orphan benefits (Act No. 155/1995 Coll.). Pension benefits have two components – the basic benefit (a fixed amount, which is the same for all types of pensions, regardless of the how long the individual has been insured and regardless of the level of income) and the percentage-based benefit (eligibility to receive this pension and its level and payment terms is determined by the Czech Social Security Administration, which is located in Prague) (Act No. 582/1991 Coll.).

An insured individual is eligible to receive a **basic old age pension** upon meeting one of the following criteria:

- The person has been insured under the program for at least 25 years and has reached an age establishing eligibility for an old age pension (hereinafter as 'pension age').
- The person has been insured under the program for at least 15 years and is at least 65 years of age.

The general retirement age is differentiated based on the gender of the recipient.

A retired person may collect their basic old age pension and still be employed at the same time only if he or she has an employment arrangement for a specific period of time (a maximum of one year).

An individual insured under the program is eligible for two types of **early old age pensions** (provided the person has two or three years left until he or she reaches retirement age).

A recipient of an early old age pension may only hold a job which does not require participation in the insurance program.

An insured individual is eligible to receive a **full disability pension** upon meeting the following criteria:

- The person has become fully disabled (a decline in the ability to perform a job on a continuous basis by at least 66%).
- And, the person has been insured for the required period of time.
- Or, the person has become fully disabled as a result of a job-related injury or illness (in this case, the length of time for which the individual has been insured is immaterial).

It is permitted to collect a full disability pension and to work at the same time because the Pension Insurance Act does not prohibit such an arrangement.

An insured individual is eligible to receive a **partial disability pension** upon meeting the following criteria:

- The person has become partially disabled (a decline in the ability to perform a job on a continuous basis by at least 33%).
- And, the person has been insured for the required period of time.
- Or, the person has become partially disabled as a result of a job-related injury or illness).

It is permitted to collect a partial disability pension and to work at the same time because the Pension Insurance Act does not prohibit such an arrangement.

An insured individual is also regarded as fully (partially) disabled if the person's health condition impairs his or her ability to function normally on a long-term basis (specific conditions to which this applies are specified in the respective implementing regulation).

An insured individual is eligible to receive a **surviving spouse pension** upon meeting the following criteria:

- The deceased spouse was either the recipient of an old age, full disability or a partial disability pension;
- and/or, the deceased spouse had been insured long enough to be eligible for a full disability pension or had met the eligibility requirements for an old age pension at the time of death;
- or, the deceased spouse had died as a result of a job-related injury or illness.

The surviving spouse pension is always paid for a period of one year after the death of the other spouse. After that, the surviving spouse may continue to receive these pension benefits if the person meets at least one of the following criteria:

- The surviving spouse is caring for an unprovided for child.
- The surviving spouse is caring for a minor with a long-term disability requiring special care or a minor who is mostly or fully unable to exist on their own.
- The surviving spouse is caring for his/her parent or a parent of the deceased spouse who is living in the same household and who is mostly or fully unable to function on their own; or, if the surviving spouse is caring for such a parent who is partially unable to exist on their own and who is over the age of 80.
- The surviving spouse is fully disabled.

The surviving spouse has reached the age of 55 (woman) or 58 (man) or has reached retirement age if the retirement age is less than the above.

The eligibility to receive the surviving spouse benefit can reapply if any of the above conditions are met again within five years after the expiration of a former eligibility for the payment of this benefit.

To become eligible for an **orphan pension**, the recipient must be an unprovided for child whose parent or guardian or the person who has taken the child into care and on whom the child was financially dependent at the time of the person's death due to the fact that the child's own parents could not provide such care for legitimate reasons has deceased. However, the parent/guardian/care giver has to have met the eligibility criteria as that listed above for the payment of a surviving spouse benefit. If both of the child's parents have deceased, the child may collect an orphan pension for each of the deceased parents.

Applications for any of the above types of pension benefits are filed with the applicant's employer or with the district social security office.



For more information, see www.mpsv.cz or www.cssz.cz (Pension Insurance).

Supplementary Pension Insurance with a State Subsidy (Act No. 42/1994 Coll.)

This pension program represents an upgrade to the basic pension insurance scheme and it allows for the subscribers to secure additional income along side the basic pension in the form of long-term retirement savings. This program is also available to foreign nationals who are at least 18 years of age, residents of the Czech Republic (or any other EU country) and who are subscribers to the public health insurance and social security programs or who are recipients of pension benefits under the Czech pension insurance scheme.

Subscribing to this program is voluntary and is based on a contract (policy) between the subscriber and one of the pension funds operating in the Czech market. The pension funds manage the money that is deposited into the subscriber's account and they pay out the supplementary pension insurance benefits. The pension funds are governed by the applicable pension plans. Before signing the policy contract with the pension fund, the subscriber must be provided with the respective pension plan and the prospectus for the pension fund.

Benefits distributed under the supplementary pension insurance program include old age pensions (mandatory), a disability pension and an early retirement pension, a survivor pension, one-time settlements and an early withdrawal benefit.

> Social Security Contributions

Contributions to the social security program, which include pension insurance and disability insurance premiums, are – along with the contributions to the government employment policy – regulated by Act No. 589/1992 Coll.

The premiums paid from the assessment base are:

- a) For employers – 26 % (3.3 % of which is for disability insurance, 21.5 % of which is for pension insurance and 1.2 % of which is for the government employment policy).
- b) For employees – 8 % (1.1 % of which is for disability insurance, 6.5 % of which is for pension insurance and 0.4 % of which is for the government employment policy).
- c) For self-employed individuals – 29.6% for pension insurance and the government employment policy (of which 28 % is for pension insurance and 1.6 % is for the government employment policy) + 4.4 % for disability insurance.
- d) For individuals voluntarily participating in the pension insurance program – 28 % for pension insurance.

10. 3. Living Minimum

The term 'living minimum' refers to a socially recognized minimum level of income, which an individual requires in order to survive. This value is used for an assessment of eligibility for certain government social support programs and it represents the basis for the calculation of the amount of such benefits.

Under Act No. 463/ 1991 Coll., on living minimums (as amended), this benefit is broken down into the following two components:

Contribution for the Personal Needs of Household Members	Contribution for the Household
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The contribution for the personal needs of household members is designed to cover the costs of food and other basic needs such as clothing, shoes, etc. There are five different levels of a living minimum for personal needs (one level for adults and four levels for unprovided for children based on age).

The contribution for the household is designed to cover basic shared household expenses – i.e. the costs for housing and related services. There are four different levels

of a living minimum for household needs – each of which is based on the number of persons in the household.

Living and Existence Minimum (effective as of January 1, 2007)

Under the new act (Act No. 110/2006 Coll.), on living and existence minimums, the term ‘living minimum’ refers to a minimum, socially recognized level of income, which is required for the purchase of basic provisions (food and other basic personal items). There are the following types of living minimum contributions:

- For individuals.
- For the first adult in a multi-member household.
- For each additional adult in a multi-member household.
- For unprovided for children (three different age groups).

The term ‘existence minimum’ refers to a minimum income, which is considered to be necessary for the covering of the costs for food and other basic items at a level allowing the individual to survive. The existence minimum cannot be used for unprovided for children, the recipients of an old age pension, for fully disabled individuals and for persons over the age of 65.

Neither the living minimum nor the existence minimum includes a contribution for the covering of basic housing costs. Such assistance for housing is handled as part of the state social support system in the form of a housing allowance and through the system for assistance with material needs as an additional housing allowance.

10. 4. State Social Support (Welfare)

◆ Eligibility:

A person is eligible for the payment of state social support if the individual (and the persons who are reviewed as part of this individual’s application – this applies to benefits that are based on the recipient’s income) is a permanent resident of the Czech Republic. In the interpretation of the Act on State Social Support, the term ‘permanent resident’ also applies to foreign nationals who are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay longer than 365 days, individuals who are covered by a directly applicable European Community regulation, etc.

The state social support program is used by the government to take care of families with unprovided for children if the family is facing a legitimate, socially disadvantageous situation, which cannot be resolved with the family’s own resources. The distribution of state social support is regulated by Act No. 117/1995 Coll., on state social support (as last amended). The family’s eligibility to receive such support is not based on the family’s assets and, for certain benefits, eligibility is based on the family’s income.

- State social support benefits that are not based on the family’s income:
- ✓ Parental allowance – a parent is eligible for the payment of a parental allowance if he or she provides all day care to a child up to 4 years of age or to a child up to 7 years of age, if the child has a long-term disability.
 - ✓ Foster care allowances – are allowances paid for the support of the needs associated with the caring for a child who is in foster care.

- ✓ Childbirth allowance – this is a one-time benefit paid to a mother as support for the needs associated with the birth of a child.
- ✓ Burial allowance – this allowance can be paid to individuals who arrange a funeral for a person who was a permanent resident of the Czech Republic at the time of their death or a person whose funeral took place in the Czech Republic.

State social support benefits that are based on the family’s income:

- ✓ Children’s allowance – this allowance is the basic long-term benefit that is provided to families with children; the person eligible for his benefit is the child.
- ✓ Social allowance – the purpose of this allowance is to support families with low incomes to cover the costs associated with their basic needs. Eligibility for a social allowance is conditioned on care for an unprovided for child and by the level of the family’s income.
- ✓ Housing allowance – this allowance is used by the government to contribute to the housing needs of families and individuals with low incomes.
- ✓ School supply allowance – this allowance is designed to cover the respective expenses of families with children who are starting school attendance.

Applications for state social support benefits are filed using standardized forms at the applicant’s local Labor Office (or at the offices of the respective municipal district in Prague). Due to the relatively frequent changes in the individual regulations regarding the supply of state social support, we recommend that you visit the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs on a regular basis or contact your local Labor Office (or office of the respective Prague municipal district) directly.

10.5. Social Care

Social care specifically applies to social care allowances and social services.

Social Care Allowances

In the Czech Republic, there are a number of social care allowances that are designed to aid the overcoming of unfavorable social situations faced by individuals or entire families.

Individuals with an insufficient level of income receive social care allowances from the designated municipal offices in accordance with the Act on Social Needs (Act No. 482/1991 Coll. – as last amended). These allowances are provided in the form of financial assistance to individuals or families with low incomes who cannot generate any extra income on their own through work, the utilization of assets, etc.

◆ **Eligibility:**

Individuals with a permanent residence in the Czech Republic, individuals who are eligible under a special international agreement, individuals covered by a directly applicable European Community regulation, etc. are eligible to receive social care allowances.

As of January 1, 2007, the Act on Social Needs will be replaced by the **Act on Minimum Living and Subsistence Levels** (Act No. 111/2006 Coll.). Under the new

act, the following types of assistance will be provided by the designated municipal offices: A living allowance, housing allowance and immediate/emergency aid.

◆ **Eligibility:**

The following types of individuals are eligible for the living and housing allowances, if they meet the applicable criteria:

- a) Persons who are registered in the Czech Republic as permanent residents.
- b) Persons who have been granted asylum or additional protection.
- c) Foreign nationals who are not permanent residents of the Czech Republic but for whom eligibility is established under a special international agreement.
- d) Nationals of other EU member countries if they are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay of longer than 3 months (if such individuals are not eligible to receive social benefits under a directly applicable European Community regulation).
- e) Family members of EU nationals who are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay of longer than 3 months (if such individuals are not eligible to receive social benefits under a directly applicable European Community regulation).
- f) Foreign nationals, who are in possession of a permanent residency permit and who were awarded the legal status of a long-term European Community resident in another EU country, and their family members if they have a registered address in the Czech Republic.

Immediate/emergency aid can also be provided to other persons staying in the Czech Republic – in addition to persons in the above-listed groups.

In addition to financial assistance provided to individuals and families with low incomes, there are a number of social care allowances, which cater to the special needs of persons with disabilities (e.g. an allowance for the operation of a motor vehicle, an allowance for housing modifications, etc.). Further information on these social care allowances can be obtained at the municipal offices of municipalities with extended powers.

Besides social care allowances, there is also a system of special benefits for citizens with serious disabilities. An application for such special benefits must be filed with the municipal office of a municipality with extended powers in the applicant's location; the applicant's medical condition is evaluated by the physician operating under the local Labor Office. The possession of a disability card (there are various types of these) is associated with a number of different benefits and discounts (e.g. free rides on public transit, the use of specially designated parking spaces, the toll-free use of freeways and expressways, etc.).

Due to the relatively frequent changes in the individual regulations regarding eligibility for the payment of state social support allowances and state social care allowances, we recommend that you visit the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs on a frequent basis. Alternatively, directly contact your local Labor Office or municipal office where you will be able to obtain further information on eligibility for participation in these programs along with other types of assistance with respect to your own social situation.

We strongly recommend that you apply for such assistance if you believe that you are eligible and obtain a confirmation of the receipt of your application from the clerk at the respective government office. You cannot be denied the right to submit such an application. If the application itself is denied, you can appeal such a decision. Instructions on filing an appeal can always be found in the ‘Advice’ section of the respective decision.

Social Services

The system of social services is to be newly regulated by Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, which comes into effect on January 1, 2007.

◆ **Eligibility:**

Social services and the care allowance are available to the following individuals upon their meeting of the criteria specified in this act.

- Persons who are registered in the Czech Republic as permanent residents.
- Persons who have been granted asylum.
- Foreign nationals who are not permanent residents of the Czech Republic but for whom eligibility is established under a special international agreement.
- Nationals of other EU member countries if they are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay of longer than 3 months (if such individuals are not eligible to receive social benefits under a directly applicable European Community regulation).
- Family members of EU nationals who are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay of longer than 3 months (if such individuals are not eligible to receive social benefits under a directly applicable European Community regulation).
- Foreign nationals, who are in possession of a permanent residency permit and who were awarded the legal status of a long-term European Community resident in another EU country, if they are registered in the Czech Republic for a stay of longer than 3 months.

Selected social services (shelters, contact centers, crisis assistance, low-threshold day centers, low-threshold centers for children and teenagers, overnight shelters, secondary care services, social interaction services for families with children, social interaction services for senior citizens and the disabled, social therapy workshops, therapeutic communities and field programs) are also available to individuals who are legally residing in the Czech Republic, provided they meet the respective criteria – as specified in the Act on Social Services.

Further information on social services and the supplying of these services can be obtained, for example, at municipal or regional offices (social departments), at public or specialized counseling centers or directly from the providers of these services.

- Detailed information on disability insurance can be found on the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> or at any District Social Security Office (a directory of district branch offices of the Czech Social Security Administration can be found at: <http://www.cssz.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/).
- Detailed information on pension insurance and the different types of pension benefits can be found on the website of the Czech Social Security Administration: <http://www.cssz.cz> (►Důchodové pojištění /Pension Insurance/) and at the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> ►Důchodové pojištění /Pension Insurance/).
- Detailed information on the state social support allowances can be obtained at your local Labor Office (see Chapter 16. 2. for contact information) and at the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> (►Státní sociální podpora /State Social Support/).
- Detailed information on social need allowance and other social care allowances can be found:
 - At local municipal offices, at designated municipal offices and at municipal offices of municipalities with extended powers.
 - On the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> ►Dávky sociální péče /Social Care Allowances/).
- For further information on the living minimum can be found on the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: <http://www.mpsv.cz> (►Příjmy a životní úroveň /Income and Living Standards/).

11. HOUSING

11. 1. Living in Your Own Apartment or House

One of the available housing options is the option to purchase an apartment or house into private ownership. The conditions applicable to the acquisition of real estate in the Czech Republic by foreign nationals are specifically defined under the Foreign Exchange Act (Act No. 219/1995 Coll. – as last amended).

◆ **Eligibility:**

Under the Foreign Exchange Act, the acquisition of real property by foreign nationals has specific limitations. In general, houses and apartments can be acquired into private ownership by natural persons with a permanent residence in the Czech Republic or by legal entities with a registered address in the Czech Republic. For further information, look under Section 17 of the Foreign Exchange Act.

When purchasing a house or apartment into private ownership, the seller and the buyer sign a purchase agreement, which is regulated by the Czech Civil Code (Act No. 40/1964 Coll.). The agreement must be in a written form in order to be valid. **The buyer becomes the owner of the property** upon the registration of the title of ownership into the buyer's name with the land registry (not at the time of the signing of the purchase agreement!). The entire process of purchasing the property, which starts with the signing of a purchase agreement and ends with the registration of the title of ownership into the buyer's name with the land registry, is a complex process that can take several months. It is therefore advisable to seek the assistance of a real estate specialist such as an attorney, a real estate broker, etc.

11. 2. Renting

Another way in which to solve the need for housing is to rent an apartment. Unlike the private ownership option, this option is available to a large number of people because the signing of a lease does not usually require the same level of financial resources as purchasing property. The legislative requirements that govern the rental of apartments are also part of the Czech Civil Code. Under the Civil Code, a rental apartment (or a part thereof) can be sublet (for either a specific or a non-specific period of time).

The leasing of an apartment is based on the signing of a lease agreement between the lessor of the apartment and the tenant.

A lease agreement must be in a written form and contain the following basic information in order for it to be valid:

- An identification of the contracting parties (lessor and tenant).
- The identification of the apartment (address, apartment number, number of rooms, etc.) and any adjacent amenities (hallways, laundry rooms, basement storage, balconies, etc.).
- Any limitations on its use.
- The method for the calculation of the rent or the rental amount.

- The method to be used for the payment for the services associated with occupancy of the apartment or the exact amounts (utility payments such as central heating, hot water, elevator charges, refuse collection and other fees).

The rights and obligations associated with the lease of an apartment are regulated by the provisions of the Civil Code or the respective lease agreement.

The lease can be terminated in several different ways:

- Through a **written agreement** between the lessor and the tenant.
- Upon the **expiration of the lease term**.
- Through a **written cancellation** – the cancellation must indicate the deadline by which the lease is to be terminated and the termination notice period must be at least three months and terminate at the end of a calendar month. The lease can be cancelled by the tenant (even without giving a reason) or by the lessor. The lessor may only cancel the lease for reasons that are specifically listed in the Civil Code. The lease may be terminated with or without the consent of a court.

If the lessor decides to cancel the lease without the consent of a court, the tenant has the right to file a motion for declaratory relief with the court within 60 days. In such a case, the tenant is not required to vacate the apartment unless the motion has been concluded and ruled on by the court.

11. 3. Living in Co-op Apartments

The leasing of an apartment that is in the ownership of an apartment co-op has certain specific elements. Each apartment co-op usually owns one or more apartment buildings and the apartments in such buildings are allocated to the members of the co-op. The **member** to whom the apartment has been allocated has the **right to sign a lease agreement for that apartment with the co-op**. When dealing with issues related to the lease of a co-op apartment (i.e. the signing of a lease, the rights and obligations of the co-op and the tenant, etc.), one must also respect the **by-laws of the co-op** to which the Civil Code makes a reference.

11. 4. Registering Utilities and Other Services into Your Own Name

Utility services usually have to be signed up for on a separate basis (whether renting or owning). This requires signing up for certain services such as gas, electricity, water and sewage, refuse collection, phone, etc.

11. 5. Loss of Housing

If the assistance of friends or relatives is not available after the loss of a place to live, individuals may turn for help to one of the available charitable organizations, which are there to offer assistance in such situations. Among such organizations are for example, the Salvation Army and the Czech Catholic charities. These organizations can be found throughout the Czech Republic; and, among other services, they operate charitable shelters, which are frequently referred to as ‘asylum homes’. If mothers with children are in a situation needing shelter, they can for example seek help at shelters for mothers with children, which are available in selected cities. One should keep in mind that all of

these facilities and shelters offer accommodation only on a temporary basis and only to those in need. One can also use commercial housing services. However, the cost of such accommodations can be substantial – especially in larger cities. Contact information for the above services can be found in telephone directories and on the internet.

For further information on social services, see Chapter 10.5.

11. 6. Other Useful Information

➤ Home Mortgages

A mortgage is a loan intended for the purchase or construction of an apartment or house into private ownership or for the reconstruction of such a property. A mortgage can be applied for by a private individual or by a legal entity. Mortgages are available through banks, which offer different terms and conditions. The repayment of a mortgage loan is usually secured by collateral in the form of a real property (completed or under construction). The term of mortgages can be as long as 30 years. For further information on mortgage financing, contact the individual bank.

➤ Building Savings

Participation in a building savings program is another option to obtain financing for the purchase, construction or reconstruction of an apartment or a house. A building savings account can be opened by a person who has a permanent residence in the Czech Republic and who has been issued a Czech birth registration number. The benefits offered by these programs (government subsidies) can therefore also be enjoyed by foreign nationals with a permanent residence in the Czech Republic. Further information on these programs can be obtained at any building savings bank.

➤ Insurance

No apartment can be totally protected against fire, flood, burglary, etc. However, in order to reduce the risk of such an event happening, insurance coverage can be purchased for the property. Further information on homeowners or renters insurance can be obtained from individual insurance providers.



Useful Links

- Czech land registry information can be accessed via the internet at the following website: <http://www.cuzk.cz>.
- Further information on housing in the Czech Republic can be found on the website of the Czech Ministry for Regional Development: <http://www.mmr.cz> (► *Bytová politika /Housing Policies/*) and at the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Bezpečnost a prevence /Security and Prevention/* ► *Bezpečná lokalita /Secure Location/*).

12. TRANSPORTATION

12. 1. Municipal Transportation

Municipal public transit refers specifically to the municipal **bus, trolley** and **subway** (Prague only) systems. The public transit systems vary, based on the size of the respective city and other local conditions. These transportation services are **paid for** services and every city has its own system of fare collection. Fares must also be paid for the transportation of dogs and luggage, which do not fall within certain free allowances. **The possession of a valid ticket is frequently checked by public transit inspectors and traveling without a ticket is subject to steep fines.**

Further information on fares and schedules can be obtained at the individual transportation offices (in person, by phone or through their websites).

Certain Czech cities have an **integrated** public transit system. This means that the tickets purchased for traveling within the city can also be used to travel between different cities. In such integrated transit systems, the different transportation modes (bus, train, etc.) work together and offer a system of integrated routes with single fares, transit terms and conditions and regular waiting times for connections.

Integrated Transit Systems in Selected Cities

Prague - Prague Integrated Transit System (PID) <http://www.ropid.cz>

Brno - South Moravian Integrated Transit System (IDS JMK)
<http://www.idsjmk.cz>

12. 2. Intercity Transportation

Intercity public transit in the Czech Republic applies mostly to transportation by **bus** or **train**. Domestic air transportation is used much less frequently and only between the largest cities (Prague, Brno and Ostrava).

Intercity bus lines in the Czech Republic are operated by a number of carriers. Each of them has their own system of fares, which includes both **one-time tickets** and **prepaid passes**. Just as with the municipal public transit systems, most intercity bus carriers offer **discounts** for certain categories of passengers (e.g. students, the disabled, senior citizens, children (up to certain ages), etc.). For additional information, on fares, types of discounts offered, other transportation terms and conditions or schedules can be found for example at <http://www.idos.cz>, the information centers of the individual carriers or at larger bus terminals (for example at the Prague Florenc bus terminal, the Brno Zvonařka bus terminal or at the bus terminal in Ostrava, etc.).

Rail transportation in the Czech Republic is operated by the Czech Railways (<http://www.cd.cz>). In addition to basic fares, this carrier also offers a number of discounted rates that are available to various categories of passengers.

Specific train, bus and municipal public transit connections can be found on the following website: <http://www.idos.cz>. This site allows you to search for a separate connection with different modes of transportation or to combine different modes and find the best option for your particular needs.

12. 3. Driving Licenses

In order to drive a motor vehicle in the Czech Republic, the driver must have adequate driving skills, which are verified through the possession of a driver's license. A **driver's license** is issued to drivers who have acquired the necessary skills by the **local municipal offices or city halls in the Czech Republic**. The obtaining of a driver's license is conditioned on the completion of a practical training course, a theoretical course taken at a driving school and the passing of a final test. Licenses are issued by the municipal offices of municipalities with extended powers.

A holder of a driver's license must carry the license when driving a vehicle and provide it to the police upon request.

A Czech driver's license allows its holder to drive in other countries, provided the respective country recognizes such a license. If not, the driver must apply for the issuance of an **international driver's license**. Only the holder of a national driver's license can apply for an international driver's license.

Drivers can also drive in the Czech Republic with a valid driver's license issued by another EU country or a driver's license/international driver's license issued by another country, based on the Convention on Road Traffic.

Every person who intends to use his or her own **vehicle** in the Czech Republic (with the exception of persons whose stay in the country does not exceed 185 days in a single calendar year) must **register** their vehicle with the local municipal authority.

Motor vehicles registered in the Czech Republic are subject to regular technical inspections, the purposes of which are to monitor the technical condition of the vehicle and the emission levels of the engines. The certificate on the technical condition of a vehicle and the emissions certificate are issued by special technical inspection stations and emission testing stations.

The Czech Republic has a toll road system, which included selected freeways and expressways. The payment of the toll is verified by presenting a toll sticker, which can be purchased at almost any gas station, post office, border crossing or through the auto clubs.

The Maximum Speed Limits in the Czech Republic

City: 50 km/h

Outside of the City: 90 km/h

Freeway: 130 km/h

There is a zero alcohol tolerance policy in the Czech Republic!



Useful Links

- Further information on driving licenses can be found on the website of the Ministry of Transportation: <http://www.mdcrcz> (►Silniční doprava /*Road Transportation*/ ►Řidičské průkazy, Autoškoly /*Driving Licenses, Driving Schools*/ ►Řidičské průkazy /*Driving Licenses*/).
- Further information on vehicle registration requirements can be found on the website of the Ministry of Transportation: <http://www.mdcrcz> (►Silniční doprava /*Road Transportation*/ ►Dovoz, registrace a schvalování vozidel /*Import, Registration and Approval of Vehicles*/ ►Schvalování vozidel /*Vehicle Approvals*/).
- Further information on technical inspection stations and emission testing stations can be found on the website of the Ministry of Transportation: <http://www.mdcrcz> (►Silniční doprava /*Road Transportation*/ ►STK a SME /*State Technical Inspection and State Emission Control*/).

13. FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND OTHER MILESTONES

One must remember that family relationships between nationals of other countries can be governed by a legal system other than that of the Czech Republic. Act No. 97/1963 Coll. on private and procedural international law, as amended, establishes which legal system governs the family relationships of foreign nationals. In addition to other areas covered by this law, this law establishes the following:

- *The ability of a person to enter into a marriage relationship and the conditions for the validity of such a marriage are governed by the laws of the country of which the individual is a citizen.*
- *The act of the marriage (how the marriage takes place) is governed by the laws of the country in which the marriage takes place.*
- *The personal and property relationships between the married couple are governed by the laws of the country of which they are citizens. Note, however, if the two individuals are citizens of different countries, these relationships are governed by Czech law.*
- *The dissolution of the marriage through divorce is governed by the laws of the country in which the couple are citizens at the time of the filing of the divorce; Note, however, if the two individuals are citizens of different countries, the divorce would proceed in accordance with Czech law. If non-Czech laws would otherwise apply, but such laws would not allow for a divorce or would only allow for a divorce under highly restrictive conditions; and, if the married couple, or at least one of the two individuals lived in the Czech Republic for a substantial period of time, the jurisdiction of the Czech laws can apply.*
- *Relationships between parents and their children, including the upbringing and maintenance of the children, are governed by the laws of the country of which the child is a citizen. Note, however, if the child is living in the Czech Republic, these relationships can be governed by Czech law, if it is within the child's interest.*

The provisions of the above act shall only apply if a specific international agreement to which the Czech Republic is a party does not establish otherwise.

In a family, just as with other rights and obligations, a man and a woman have an equal status and they make joint decisions on family matters. Both spouses have the right to the same standard of living and each may assert a claim for child support.

Both parents should equally participate in the upbringing of their children. Parents are **required to provide for** their children. This requirement applies until the children are able to exist on their own. Both parents contribute to the maintenance of their children – depending on their respective abilities and financial situation. Under Czech law, children of married and of unmarried couples have the same rights and their parents the same obligations.

13. 1. Registries and Their Responsibilities

A registry is the government's way to keep track of births, marriages, registered partnerships and the deaths of private individuals in the Czech Republic and the births, marriages and deaths of Czech citizens outside of the country. The registry consists of the following sub-registries – the Birth Registry (which maintains the database of births), the Marriage Registry (maintains the database of marriages), the Registered Partnership Registry (which maintains the database of registered partnerships) and the Registry of Deaths (which maintains the registry of deceased individuals).

The registry databases are also used to store other information (changes and revisions to the existing entries).

The entries contained in the registry databases are used to issue **registry documents** (birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates and registered partnership certificates).

Registry offices operate under the municipal offices, city halls, the offices of the Prague municipal districts, district offices of other cities or the offices servicing the military zones designated by the Ministry of the Interior.

13. 2. Marriage (requirements)

Marriage is entered into based on the deliberate and full consent of a man and a woman, who agree to enter into a marriage state before a registry official, an official who is not part of the registry office (if one of the individuals has a permanent address in the jurisdiction of such an office) or before a religious body authorized to perform marriages under a special regulation. The marriage vows are made in a public in the presence of two witnesses.

Prior to getting married, the couple must complete a standard form and submit it at the registry office in the location where the marriage is to take place. The form must be accompanied by the required set of documents. A church marriage may only be performed after the couple have verified to the individual performing the marriage that they have met the applicable legal requirements for getting married. This verification may not be older than 3 months and it is issued by the registry office in the location where the marriage is to take place.

A marriage may not be entered into with an already married individual and it may not be entered into between ancestors, progeny or siblings. The same applies to a relationship based on an adoption, if the adoption is still in effect. A minor over the age of 16, a person whose capabilities of undertaking legal actions has been limited by the court or a mentally impaired individual whose impairment would result in a limited capability for undertaking legal actions must attach the approval of a court to permit the marriage to the marriage application form.

If the documents that are being submitted as part of the application form were issued by authorities in a foreign country, these must be accompanied by an official

translation into Czech with the necessary certifications (see Chapter 4.4.). The registry office may waive the requirement to provide such certified documents if the certification would pose an undue hardship.

If a foreign national wishes to get married in the Czech Republic, he or she must provide the registry office, prior to the marriage, with a proof of legal residence, issued by the Czech Foreign Police.

Female last names are created using Czech grammar (such names are not the exact same name as that of the man). When registering the marriage, a foreign wife can request that the last name in the original (male) version be retained and entered into the registry as the name she plans to use.

Gay and lesbian couples can enter into a **registered partnership** under which they may enjoy certain rights and take on certain obligations of a married couple (Act No. 115/2006 Coll., on registered partnerships and the changes to selected related laws, effective as of July 1, 2006).

13. 3. Divorce

In the Czech Republic, a married couple can get divorced. A divorce is performed by the court. Before ruling on the dissolution of the marriage through a divorce, arrangements must be made regarding the subsequent care for all of the couple's children who are minors. The Czech Republic recognizes two types of divorce – the so-called 'undisputed' divorce and the 'disputed (more complex)' divorce.

In the case of the **undisputed** type of divorce, the entire procedure is significantly faster and simpler. If the following applies, the court will divorce the marriage without examining whether or not the marriage has been permanently and irreparably dissolved:

- The marriage has lasted for at least one year.
- The couple has reached a mutual agreement on getting a divorce.
- The two individuals have not lived together for at least 6 months.
- Any ownership rights and custody rights have been settled between the couple.

In the case of a **disputed** divorce (when one of the two individuals does not agree to the divorce or if the couple are unable to settle their relationships with respect to future matters), the court may only grant the divorce request that was filed by one of the two spouses if the marriage has been permanently and irreparably dissolved. The court will only issue a decision after a hearing attended by the parents and the guardian of their child (children), appointed specifically for the divorce proceedings. In certain exceptional situations, the court may deny the application for a divorce.

Before issuing a decision to grant the divorce of a married couple where there is a minor child, the court will establish the rights and obligations of the parents with respect to the child, which will be applicable after the divorce. The court shall decide in whose custody the child shall be placed and how each of the parents shall contribute to the upbringing of the child. If both of the parents are capable of raising the child and if they are interested in doing so, the court may place the child into either a joint custody

or an alternating custody – provided such an arrangement is appropriate to the child’s interest and can provide for the satisfaction of the child’s needs.

A parent’s responsibility for the support of their child does not end with the divorce. If one of the parents believes that the responsibility to support the child is not being properly attended to by the other parent, that parent may file a request for a change in the child’s support arrangements with the court. Arrangements for the support of a child can be changed even if such a change is not a part of divorce proceedings. These arrangements can also be changed if one of the parents refuses to attend to their obligations for support of the child during the marriage.

If the court places the child into the custody of one of the parents, the court may also set specific conditions for contact between the child and the other parent, a grandparent or a sibling, if such an arrangement is within the interest of the child and if the situation in the family requires it. A mutual arrangement between the parents, which does not require the approval of the court, is given a preference over the imposition of an arrangement by the court. Children have the right to enjoy the same standard of living as their parents. Unmarried parents of a child who is a minor may also turn to the courts with a request for child support arrangements (i.e., the above does not just apply to ‘married’ couples).

A divorced spouse (a man or a woman) who is unable to support himself or herself on their own may request support from the ex-spouse, based on their abilities and financial situation.

13. 4. The Birth of a Child to a Foreign National

The duty to report the birth of a child to the registry office lies with the healthcare facility where the child was born; or, if the child was not delivered in a healthcare facility, the birth must be reported by the first doctor to attend the child during or after the child’s birth. The registry office in the district where the child was born has the authority to enter the birth of the child into the births’ database. The registry clerk will enter the information about the child’s birth into the births’ database, issue a birth certificate to the child and report the birth to the national registry office.

Current legislation protects a child born to a foreign national who was staying in the Czech Republic – however, the child’s stay in the country after its birth is automatically regarded as temporary. In the case of a child whose father was a Czech citizen and whose mother was a foreign national, legally residing in the Czech Republic; then, unless the parents decide otherwise, the child is registered as a permanent resident whose registered address is the address of the municipal authority in the area in which the child was born.

Notwithstanding, this protection is temporary and within 60 days after the birth of the child, the parent must apply for a visa/long-term residency permit/permanent residency permit on behalf of the child. If an application for a permanent residence permit is filed within the above timeframe, the child shall have had permanent residence status since birth. If the parents leave the Czech Republic with the child, the child’s residency status shall be regarded as temporary.

A child born to parents who are staying in the Czech Republic under a visa (especially under an extended visa for stays over 90 days) is not covered under the public health insurance program, even if the parents are covered (such as through their employment in the Czech Republic). If the mother is covered by the public health insurance program, the child's delivery and initial care is covered up to a limit of CZK 5,000 (this covers the cost of a complication-free delivery). In the event of any complications in the delivery, the medical care provided to the child – whether or not such care is absolutely necessary – is not covered by the Czech public insurance and the parents may be charged for such services at commercial rates. For such situations, the PVZP a.s. insurance company offers a new product, which requires a pregnant woman to pay higher premiums and once the child is born, extended medical care – covered by insurance – is available. Nevertheless, we would like to note that individuals subscribing to the public health insurance program are not insured by PVZP a.s., and we therefore recommend that they contact this insurance provider directly for further information about this product.

If the child is born without coverage under the above-discussed PVZP a.s. policy, the following steps must be taken: The parents must purchase a long-term, contract-based health insurance policy for the child (however, parents may of course choose the alternative of covering the medical expenses for the child from their own funds). In such a situation, the child would have to undergo an entry exam, which would be paid for by the parents. Based on this exam, the insurance provider will structure a health insurance policy for the child and determine the premiums for such a policy. The insurer then issues an insurance card for the child. The medical expenses incurred while the child is being cared for at the hospital immediately after his or her birth must be paid for in cash (because the policy will have been purchased after the child has undergone the initial entry exam).

13. 5. Death of a Loved One

The duty to enter the information about the death of a person into the death registry database lies with the registry serving the area where the person deceased. The death is reported to the registry office by the medical examiner through a post-mortem examination report. Based on this report, the registry clerk will enter the information about the death registry database and issue a **death certificate** to the members of the deceased person's family (spouse, parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren) or to the person's siblings or authorized representatives, acting on their behalf.

The deceased person's family must then make arrangements for a burial (or similar alternate arrangements) in the Czech Republic or arrangements to transport the body out of the Czech Republic. For further information, contact any mortuary.



Useful Links

- Detailed information on registries can be obtained from your local municipal authority or by visiting the following links:
 - The public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (► *Občan /Citizens/* ► *Občan a stát /Citizens and the State/* ► *Osobní údaje /Personal Data/* ► *Matriky /Registries/*), where you can also find instructions on how to proceed with the issuance of registry documents, the accessing of registry records, in obtaining confirmations of the information recorded in the registry databases, etc.
 - The website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> ► *Rady a služby /Advice and Services/* ► *Matriky – matriční úřady /Registries – Registrar Offices/*).
- Detailed information on the subject of marriage can be obtained from your local registry office or by visiting the following links:
 - The website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (► *Rady a služby /Advice and Services/* ► *Manželství /Marriage/*).
 - The public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (► *Cizinec /Foreigners/* ► *Manželství /Marriage/* or ► *Občan /Citizens/* ► *Rodina /Family/* ► *Manželství /Marriage/*), where you will also find detailed instructions on how to proceed with getting married and detailed information about civil marriages, religious marriages, marriage to a foreign national, etc.

14. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON LIVING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

14. 1. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

When communicating with others, a person is expected to do so in a polite, non-confrontational and considerate manner. It is customary to give the chance to participate to all of the people involved in a discussion and to listen to all opinions – even those to which we are opposed and to which we should not respond impulsively.

Czechs are usually not usually loud or unduly boisterous in public. A more reserved and tempered demeanor and a level of self control are appreciated. Excessively loud conversations accompanied by the excessive use of gestures may attract unwanted attentions.

*The following are regarded as **unsuitable** in communicating with others (except with close friends):*

- *Picking a controversial topic for conversation.*
 - *Failure to respect the opinions of others and interrupting others when they are speaking.*
 - *Speaking too quickly.*
 - *Poor pronunciation.*
 - *Excessive use of gestures.*
 - *Highly emotional (theatrical) behavior.*
 - *Use of profanity, picking on others, making fun of others.*
 - *Making derogatory remarks about others, etc.*
- Inconsiderate behavior, such as speaking with your hands in your pockets or while chewing gum or smoking a cigarette, etc. is also regarded as being **impolite**.*

As part of official communications, it is advisable to use proper Czech. A woman is an equal partner in a conversation. Native speakers will usually appreciate foreigners who speak (or try to speak) Czech.

It is generally recommended to choose non-controversial topics for conversation and topics, which do not require the participants to express strong opinions (e.g. politics or religion) and which are not offensive or personally intrusive to others. It is regarded as unusual when a person speaks (boasts) about their credits and achievements and material well-being in an excessive manner in the course of a conversation. An extreme curiosity and intrusive questions regarding a person's medical condition, personal, family or work situation are also considered to be impolite. Such topics should only be discussed if brought up by the other person involved and amongst close friends.

The following types of behavior on the part of a speaker is considered to be inappropriate:

- *Enquiring about the age of a woman in the course of a conversation.*
- *Asking about the other person's salary or income.*
- *Asking about the value of the person's assets.*
- *Mentioning sensitive information that could be subject to abuse (such as someone's birth registration number).*
- *Reminding someone about a painful, traumatic or tragic event such as a death in the family, divorce, etc.*

Generally acceptable topics for a social conversation include the weather, family and children.

A single or multiple nods of the head are regarded as a gesture of an **approval** or **agreement** and a turn of the head from side-to-side is regarded as a gesture of disapproval or disagreement. It is considered inconsiderate to point at someone or something with one's finger, to open one's mouth to indicate surprise or to pull someone's sleeve to let them know you want to talk to them. It is not customary to sit right next to another person when traveling on public transit unless necessary, to walk too close to someone else or to hold or touch the other person during a conversation (this particularly applies to a conversation between a man and a woman). One meter is considered to be a polite distance during conversations. During conversations, eye contact with the other person should be maintained (but not to such a continuous extent that the other person would feel uncomfortable). Avoiding eye contact is looked upon negatively and can have a significant impact on the credibility of the speaker.

A greeting or an introduction is usually accompanied by a handshake. However, a handshake is normally not used in all situations – especially if the people greeting one another are not friends or if they are not introducing themselves to one another. A handshake is also commonly used during formal or business meetings. Only family members and good friends (even those of the opposite sex) may hug one another or kiss one another on the cheek during greetings or when saying goodbye.

The following is customary:

- *A handshake should be firm and brief.*
- *The person's right hand is used when shaking hands.*
- *When shaking hands in a group, don't cross arms.*
- *The proper when shaking hands is for a woman to offer her hand first to a man, a superior to an underling and an older person to a younger person.*
- *A handshake should be accompanied by brief eye contact.*

14. 2. Daily Routine

When attending business meetings, you should arrive on time. The time set for an appointment or meeting should be respected and any changes should be announced in advance and be accompanied by an apology for having to make a change. It is considered to impolite to have someone wait for more than 15 minutes.

The workday in the Czech Republic starts earlier than in many other European countries. Small businesses often open as early as 7:00 a.m. and supermarkets tend to open at 8:00 a.m. Many blue collar jobs start between 6 and 7:00 a.m., schools (elementary and secondary) usually start at 8:00 a.m. and public offices and banks generally open between 8 and 9:00 a.m. Days when public offices are officially open to the public are usually Mondays and Wednesdays.

The above-noted schedule sets the daily routine for people in the Czech Republic and their general eating schedules. Although there are of course many exceptions, lunch is usually taken between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., dinner usually between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. and most Czechs go to bed between 10:00 p.m. and midnight.

Restaurants and pubs are normally open from 10:00 a.m. through midnight; but, many bars and clubs stay open much later – some of them all night long. Theater performances and concerts usually start between 7 and 8:00 p.m.

14. 3 Czech Cuisine

Czechs like to follow certain rituals during their meals. They like to start their meal when eating with others by saying *dobrou chuť* (the check equivalent of the English ‘enjoy your meal’ or the French ‘bon appetit’). It is impolite to start eating before everyone else is sitting down at the table. In the Czech culture men and women eat at the same table, at the same time.

A **tradition Czech lunch** starts with a soup and the main course usually consists of a meat dish and a side dish. All types of meat are popular and the most commonly served meats are pork and beef, the least common is lamb and poultry is becoming increasingly popular. Traditional Czech dishes include *pork roast served with dumplings and sauerkraut*, *a goose or duck served with dumplings and sauerkraut* and *beef goulash served with dumplings*. The main course is then followed with a salad or canned fruit. Local specialties include traditional *bramborák* (potato pancakes made from freshly shredded potatoes, fried in oil), *utopenci* (smoked sausage, pickled in a vinegar dressing with onions) and *olomoucké tvarůžky* (ripened Moravian cheese).

Things to remember:

- *Guests usually seat themselves in a restaurant (the exception would be the more expensive upscale restaurants).*
- *The Czech place setting includes a soup spoon, a dinner fork and a knife.*
- *The fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right hand.*
- *A fork and a knife placed on a plate parallel to one another indicate that the diner is finished with the meal and the waiter can remove the plate; crossing silverware indicates that the guest is not yet done with their food.*
- *Tipping is not required but is common and the tip is proportional to the size of the bill.*
- *The tip should not be left lying on the table or placed into the hand of the waiter.*
- *In the Czech culture, it is customary that the person who invites someone to a restaurant also picks up the bill.*
- *It is considered very impolite to belch or to slurp one's food.*

14. 4. Customs and Traditions

The most important Czech customs are customs and traditions associated with Christmas and Easter holidays and weddings.

Christmas

Christmas is the most popular family holiday in the Czech Republic. It is celebrated from December 24th – 26th as the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas holidays are normally preceded by a major housecleaning and the baking of elaborate traditional Christmas cookies of many different kinds (before Christmas Eve, the Czechs also like to bake a traditional Christmas brioche type bread). The holiday includes the exchange of gifts, which are put under a Christmas tree on Christmas Eve (December 24th) and there are also elaborate Christmas decorations. The most important Christmas decoration is the Christmas tree. The traditional Christmas dinner includes fish soup and a breaded and fried carp, served with a potato salad. The dinner is an essential part of the Czech Christmas Eve. There are many other traditions that are followed and enjoyed on Christmas – the tradition of a husband and wife or partners kissing under the mistletoe, the tradition of cutting an apple to predict the future for the next year, the tradition of floating a candlestick made out of an empty walnut shell, etc.

Easter

Easter is a holiday celebrated on the occasion of the crucifixion and rising from the dead of Jesus Christ. On Easter, Czech families decorate Easter eggs as a symbol of the spring awakening of the earth. The famous Czech Easter eggs, which are painted and elaborately decorated, are referred to as *kraslice* and they are sold during the season at craft fairs and specialty shops. These Easter eggs are a big part of the Czech Easter tradition and its decorations. The Easter celebrations also involve the making of special foods such as an Easter bread, a cake in the shape of a lamb and a special poultry stuffing. Czech homes are decorated with new branches of spring shrubs, which are allowed to open early. Men and boys make (or buy) willow switches, which they use on Easter Monday morning to chase down women and girls. In the Czech Republic, the celebration of Easter is not heavily religious and Good Friday is not a holiday.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day

The end of the year is a very popular celebration, which in the Czech Republic is associated with heavy drinking, fireworks, traditional fortune telling and New Year's resolutions.

Weddings

If two partners decide to marry one another, it is customary for the future husband to visit the parents of the future bride with a bouquet of flowers and to officially ask for their approval to marry their daughter. In the Czech Republic, the majority of weddings take the form of a civil ceremony (civil wedding), which takes place in a wedding hall – usually located at the municipal offices (however, wedding are also held in more romantic locations such as a castle or chateau). The couple can also get married in a church in a religious ceremony (religious wedding).

The newly married couple sends out cards with an announcement of their marriage to their friends and colleagues – some of whom will have been invited to the wedding ceremony. The wedding ceremony involves a wedding cake, a wedding bouquet for the bride and both mothers and all wedding guests wear a small symbolic floral corsage. The bride usually wears a white wedding dress. When taking their vows, the bride and groom exchange wedding rings, kiss one another as a married couple for the first time and sign the wedding record along with the their two witnesses. The bride usually takes the groom's last name (but can keep her own last name). As the couple leaves the wedding hall, the guests shower them with confetti or rice. As the bride and groom arrive at the restaurant where the wedding reception is to be held, there is yet another tradition - the breaking of a plate or glass for good luck. The couple jointly cleans up the broken glass. During the reception, the newly married couple is served soup out of a single dish and they feed one another. The reception ends with the distribution of wedding gifts and the departure of the newly married couple on their honeymoon.

14. 5. Brief Cultural Overview

➤ National Landmarks

The Czech Republic is the home to many historical landmarks, which have become popular destinations for tourists from all over the world. Twelve of these landmarks have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Information about Czech cultural landmarks, museums, and other popular destinations can be found on the website of the Czech Ministry of Culture: <http://www.mkcr.cz> (► Informační linky /*Information Links*/).

Among the most important educational and cultural institutions in the Czech Republic are the Charles University, the National Theater and the National Museum.

➤ Famous Czech Artists

The Czech Republic was home to many well-known artists – especially world famous composers such as Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček.

➤ Historical Writers and Reformers

- **Jan Hus** (circa 1369/1370 – 1415) was a famous Czech religious thinker, reformer and preacher of the medieval period.
- **Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius)** (1592 – 1670) was a Czech writer and teacher whose work and achievements are known worldwide.

➤ More Recent Czech Writers

- **Božena Němcová** (1820 – 1862) – a famous 19th century Czech author.
- **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk**, (1850 – 1937) – a Czech philosopher, historian and the first president of Czechoslovakia.
- **Jaroslav Hašek** (1883 – 1923) – a writer, publicist and journalist.
- **Franz Kafka** (1883 – 1924) – a Prague-based writer in the German language who was of a Jewish origin and one of the most influential and prized authors of the 20th century.

- **Karel Čapek** (1890 – 1938) – author, journalist, playwright, philosopher and translator.
- **Bohumil Hrabal** (1914 – 1997) – novelist and one of the most influential and unique writers of the late 20th century.
- **Arnošt Lustig** (*1926) – a Czech writer and publicist and the author of a number of works on the Holocaust.
- **Milan Kundera** (*1929) – a Franco-Czech writer, the globally most successful and widely translated author of Czech origin whose novels and essays significantly contributed to the development of the novel.
- **Václav Havel** (*1936) – an author and playwright, one of the initial members of the Charta 77 dissident movement and a leading figure in the post-November 1989 political changes.
- **Michal Viewegh** (*1962) – author and publicist, currently the best selling Czech novelist.

➤ **Poets**

- **Karel Hynek Mácha** (1810-1836) – poet and a leading figure in the Czech Romantic Movement.
- **Karel Jaromír Erben** (1811-1870) – writer, poet, translator, literary historian and collector of Czech folk tunes and fairy tales.
- **Jan Neruda** (1834-1891) – famous Czech poet and journalist.
- **Vítězslav Nezval** (1900-1958) – poet, writer and translator, the leading figure in Czech Surrealism.
- **Jaroslav Seifert** (1901-1986) – Czech poet, writer, journalist and translator, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- **Karel Kryl** (1944-1994) – Czech poet and song writer, one of the leading protagonists in the Czech political protest song movement from 1968–1989.

15. NON-GOVERNMENTAL, **NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS** **SPECIALIZING IN ASSISTANCE** **TO FOREIGN NATIONALS WITH** **INTEGRATION**

> Refugee Association of the Czech Republic (AUČR)

AUČR is a non-governmental, non-profit organization of foreign nationals focused on the integration of refugees into the fabric of Czech society.

Contact

Address: Václavské náměstí 15, 110 00 Prague 1

Phone: 222 240 849, 606 105 828

Email: aucr@seznam.cz

Website: <http://www.aucr.cz>

> Center for the Integration of Foreigners (CIC)

CIC is a civic association offering advice and assistance to asylum seekers and foreign nationals with a long-term or permanent residence in the Czech Republic.

Contact

Address: Kubelíkova 55, 130 00 Prague 3

Phone: 222 713 332

Email: info@cicPrague.org

Website: <http://www.cicPrague.org>

> Center for Migration (COM)

COM specializes in legal and social counseling in the area of migration and related issues with services such as free individual counseling for foreign nationals in crisis situations. This organization also deals with issues such as the asylum seeking process, temporary protection and family reunions. These services are provided through the organization's Prague office and the accommodation facilities of the Czech Ministry of the Interior.

Contact

Address: Senovážná 2, 110 00 Prague 1

Phone: 224 224 379, 224 228 582

Email: migrace@atlas.cz

Website: <http://www.migrace.ecn.cz>

> Czech Catholic Charities

The members of the Czech Catholic Charity Foundation offer assistance to foreign nationals in the Czech Republic who find themselves in a difficult or crisis situation. This includes travelers, migrants and refugees who were forced to leave their country due to war, persecution or economic circumstances. Among the activities the charity is

involved in is the operation of humanitarian aid warehouses on national borders, the distribution of shoes and clothing in shelters, counseling centers for foreigners, leisure activities, etc.

Contact

Address: Vladislavova 12, 110 00 Prague 1

Phone: 296 243 330

Email: sekretariat@charita.cz

Website: <http://www.charita.cz>

➤ **Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU)**

OPU is a non-governmental, non-profit organization offering legal, social and psychological aid to refugees and other foreign nationals in the Czech Republic. In its work, OPU focuses on the most vulnerable groups of refugees (i.e. women and children and the ill and handicapped).

Contact

Address: Veletržní 24, 170 00 Prague 7

Phone: 220 397 355, 220 397 220

Email: opu@opu.cz

Website: <http://www.opu.cz>

➤ **Counseling Center for Integration (PPI)**

PPI is a non-governmental, non-profit organization offering assistance to individuals with refugee status and foreign nationals with long-term or permanent residence in the Czech Republic. The objective of the organization is to defend the rights of individuals who have been granted asylum as well as other foreign nationals in the Czech Republic and to help them become equal members of society.

Contact

Address: Senovážná 2, 110 00 Prague 1

Phone: 224 233 034, 224 216 758

Email: ppi@iol.cz

Website: <http://www.p-p-i.cz>

➤ **Counseling Center for Refugees (PPU)**

PPU offers legal, social and psychological counseling to individuals who have been forced to leave their country of origin and have sought protection in the Czech Republic. The members of PPU work through the organization's Prague office and through the accommodation centers and facilities for the detention of foreign nationals managed by the Czech Ministry of the Interior.

Contact

Address: Senovážná 2, 110 00 Prague 1

Phone: 224 224 379, 224 228 582

Email: poradna@refug.cz

Website: www.migrace.ecn.cz

➤ **Association of Citizens Assisting Immigrants (SOZE)**

SOZE is a non-governmental, non-profit organization specializing in assistance to refugees and other foreign nationals arriving in the Czech Republic. Their assistance includes free legal, social and psychological counseling, the organizing of leisure and educational programs and complete social and legal assistance services to foreign

nationals who have become long-term residents and are undergoing the difficult process of integration.

Contact

Address: Mostecká 5, 614 00 Brno

Phone: 545213643, 545213746

Email: soze@soze.cz

Website: <http://www.soze.cz>

16. FOREIGN POLICE DEPARTMENTS, LABOR OFFICES AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

16. 1. Foreign Police

The Foreign Police is a separate division of the Czech police forces. Its task is to issue permits for the entry and stay of foreign nationals in the Czech Republic.

> Foreign and Border Police Headquarters

Address: Olšanská 2, 130 00 Prague 3

Phone: 974 841 219

Information Line: 974 841 356, 974 841 357

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

> Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Prague

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Prague, Benešov, Beroun, Kladno, Kolín, Kutná Hora, Mělník, Mladá Boleslav, Nymburk, Prague-East, Prague-West, Příbram and Rakovník..

Contact

Address: Olšanská 2, 130 00 Prague 3

Phone: 974 820 553

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

> Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Hradec Králové

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Havlíčkův Brod, Hradec Králové, Chrudim, Jičín, Náchod, Pardubice, Rychnov nad Kněžnou, Semily, Svitavy, Trutnov and Ústí nad Orlicí.

Contact

Address: Bidlova 477, 501 01 Hradec Králové

Phone: 974 520 220

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

> Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Ústí nad Labem

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Česká Lípa, Děčín, Chomutov, Jablonec nad Nisou, Liberec, Litoměřice, Louny, Most, Teplice and Ústí nad Labem.

Contact

Address: Masarykova 27, 400 02 Ústí nad Labem

Phone: 974 420 340-5

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

➤ **Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in České Budějovice**

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters : České Budějovice, Český Krumlov, Jindřichův Hradec, Pelhřimov, Písek, Prachatice, Strakonice and Tábor.

Contact

Address: Pražská 558, 370 74 České Budějovice

Phone: 974 220 229, 387 428 506, 387 424 731

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

➤ **Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Pilsen**

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Domažlice, Cheb, Karlovy Vary, Klatovy, Pilsen-South, Pilsen-Metro, Pilsen-North, Rokycany, Sokolov and Tachov.

Contact

Address: Slovanská alej 26, 307 51 Pilsen

Phone: 377 242 493

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

➤ **Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Brno**

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Brno-Metro, Brno-Suburbs, Blansko, Břeclav, Hodonín, Jihlava, Kroměříž, Prostějov, Třebíč, Uherské Hradiště, Vyškov, Zlín, Znojmo and Žďár nad Sázavou.

Contact

Address: Kopečná 3, 602 00 Brno

Phone: 974 620 229

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

➤ **Regional Headquarters of the Foreign and Border Police in Ostrava**

The following local departments fall under this regional headquarters: Bruntál, Frýdek Místek, Jeseník, Karviná, Nový Jičín, Olomouc, Opava, Ostrava, Přerov, Vsetín - Svárov and Šumperk.

Address: Milíčova 20, 728 51 Ostrava

Phone: 974 720 229

Website: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).




Contact information for local Foreign Police departments can be found at the website of the Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.mvcr.cz> (►Kontakty /Contacts/ ►Policie /Police/ ►Služba cizinecké a pohraniční policie /Foreign and Border Police Services/).

16. 2. Labor Offices


Labor Offices issue work permits for foreign nationals who wish to work in the Czech Republic

Contact information for local labor offices can be found on the following employment-related website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs:

 <http://portal.mpsv.cz> ►Zaměstnanost /*Employment*/ ►Informace z úřadů práce /*Information from Labor Offices*/).

16. 3 Regional Authorities

The regional authority is one of the regional bodies that are responsible for the development of the respective region and for the providing of assistance for the people living in this region. The responsibilities of the regional authority include the creation of the conditions for the supply of an adequate level of social care, responding to the needs related to protection and promotion of a healthful living environment, transportation and accessibility, the availability of information, training and education, cultural affairs and the protection of public order.

 Contact information for the individual regional authorities can be found on the public administration portal: <http://portal.gov.cz> (►Kraje /*Regions*/).

17. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

AND LINKS

Internet Search Engines

Internet search engines are a useful tool when searching for information on the internet – especially in situations when you don't know the exact website on which certain information is located. The search engine itself is a website where you can enter the key words that you are searching for and the search engine will look for and display a list of links to the results of the search. Once on the search engine page, enter the key word or phrase (e.g. 'employment for foreigners') into the empty search box and click on the icon labeled SEARCH (in Czech: "HLEDEJ" or "HLEDAT" or "VYHLEDAT").

The following are a list of some Czech search engines:

www.atlas.cz

www.centrum.cz

www.quick.cz

www.seznam.cz

Yellow Pages

A practical tool, which can help you to find all types of services – plumbers, specialty stores, doctors, attorneys and also contact information for local and special government offices. The yellow pages can be found at any phone booth and they are annually updated and distributed for free to every subscriber to a landline phone. An online version of the yellow pages (including an English version) is available at:

<http://www.zlatestranky.cz>.

Postal Services

The largest provider of postal services in the Czech Republic is *Česká pošta* (the Czech Postal Service), which has branches throughout the country. Services provided include the posting, shipping and delivery of documents, packages and money to domestic and international recipients. The Czech post office also offers express and courier services, sells postage stamps and toll road stickers and handles the cashing of retirement checks.

Detailed information on the services offered by the Czech post office can be obtained at your local post office or at the following website: <http://www.cpost.cz>.

Banks

The services offered by the banks in the Czech Republic are commonly available to foreigners. Foreign nationals can open their own accounts, get an ATM card, apply for a loan, use electronic banking, etc. Detailed information about the specific services available can be obtained at the branches of each bank.

A complete list of banks and the branches of foreign banks operating in the Czech Republic is maintained by the Czech National Bank and available on its website: www.cnb.cz (► Dohled nad finančním trhem /Monitoring of Financial Markets/ ► Bankovní dohled /Banking Supervision/ ► Bankovní sektor /Banking Sector/).

Not for sale

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