



Initial education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Czech Republic

Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19

Initial evidence suggests that pre-existing resources in the education system facilitated areas of the Czech Republic's early response to the pandemic. The Digital Education Strategy to 2020 (2014), which has had a positive impact on students' digital skills, may have helped facilitate distance learning, while different supporting projects or institutions for teachers and school leaders were able to quickly mobilise resources to provide professional development and supportive professional communities. As the Czech Republic works to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term strategic aims and resilience, the crisis has brought specific challenges. In view of the Czech Republic's ongoing work to make the education system more inclusive and equitable, stronger targeted support from the central government for disadvantaged and Roma students could in turn help stimulate more consistent and ongoing support efforts from local and regional authorities. As education institutions reopen, these students will continue to require extra support. Furthermore, in the reflective discussions following the crisis, there may be an opportunity to enhance collaboration among governance levels by establishing formal channels for mutual reflection and peer learning.

This snapshot presents information originally published as part of the **Education Policy Outlook: Czech Republic (2020)**, available at: www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Czech-Republic-2020.pdf



The Czech education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 10 March, the Czech Republic announced the closure of all primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, and professional schools from the 11 March. A phased reopening of schools began from 11 May. Initial responses in light of the work of the *Education Policy Outlook* in 2020 in the context of this pandemic are:

1. **Ensuring continued access to learning and smooth educational pathways:** School leaders were charged with assigning work to staff, prioritising curricula and selecting appropriate learning and communications tools. In support, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) created a website, [advice, guidelines and tools](#) for educators, parents and students from primary to tertiary, and published [set of best practices](#). Czech Television broadcast daily educational programmes and launched an online bank of educational videos. Regular webinars and blogs to support teachers, and a tech support group on Facebook were established through the National Pedagogical Institute and the [System of Professional Development Support for Teachers and Directors](#) project. The MŠMT delayed the *Maturita* and upper secondary school admissions examinations to at least 21 days and 14 days respectively, after the reopening of schools; various measures, including a YouTube channel and mobile application, were launched to support examination preparation from a distance. Regulatory adjustments enabled universities to adapt the academic year and admissions procedures, and to conduct examinations remotely.
2. **Strengthening the internal world of the student:** The MŠMT developed a [handbook for children](#), in comic format, informing them about the coronavirus, encouraging responsible behaviour and offering emotional support. On-site school counselling services resumed with the first wave of school reopenings.
3. **Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information about students:** For the period of closure, the MŠMT did not require teachers to log student absences or pedagogical provision, and class books would not be inspected. Formative and verbal assessment methods were promoted to monitor learning during distance education. The Czech Republic introduced [regulations for the evaluation of the second semester](#): assessment data collected prior to closure would be prioritised, or during closure if the student had adequate conditions to engage in distance education; if necessary, grades from the first semester would be used. The Czech Schools Inspectorate conducted a [survey of principals to ascertain forms and methods of distance education](#), reaching nearly 5 000 primary and secondary schools. A [survey of parents of students in compulsory education](#) was carried out by an independent research team.
4. **Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** Schools were asked to provide educational material to students without access to digital education. Schools that offered extra support measures to students with specific needs received funding to cover the cost of such measures. There were also local examples of targeted support: in [Prague](#), missions for locally-recruited volunteers included support for families of children with particularly challenging special educational needs.
5. **Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** Although not forced to close, most kindergarten providers chose to do so. Emergency childcare was coordinated at regional level for children of essential workers between 0 and 13 years old. The [O2 Foundation](#), in collaboration with the MŠMT, launched an education portal supporting schools to transfer their work online, offered free consultations with experts and awarded grants to schools implementing distance education. At the local level, students were mobilised to support their community: the [University of South Bohemia volunteer programme](#) provided babysitting, tutoring and food shopping, and in the [Liberec region](#), students and schools made and distributed protective equipment for local health services.



Table 1

Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)		Czech Republic	Average	Min	Max
<i>Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
1	Index of self-efficacy	-0.28	0.01	-0.61	0.36
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	88.7%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
<i>Teachers' readiness (according to lower secondary teachers' self-reports in TALIS 2018)</i>					
3	Percentage of teachers with a high level of need for professional development related to ICT skills for teaching	13.0%	17.7%	5.3%	39.0%
4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that most teachers in the school provide practical support to each other when applying new ideas	76.7%	77.9%	64.7%	86.5%

Note: The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 07 May 2020**.

For more information visit: <http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/>

Contacts:	Diana Toledo Figueroa (Project Leader): Diana.ToledoFigueroa@oecd.org Christa Rawkins (Policy Analyst): Christa.Rawkins@oecd.org
------------------	--

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries or the European Union.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

© OECD 2020

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at: <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.

© OECD 2020: INITIAL EDUCATION POLICY RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CZECH REPUBLIC

