



Out-of-school care for children living in disadvantaged areas

Czech Republic

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This report is available in electronic format only.

Introduction and policy context

The public affairs administration in the Czech Republic has two systems. The first one is state power, the highest authorities of which are the government, ministries and other nationwide offices. State administration has authorities and offices in individual regions for example employment offices, police, courts, land registries and prosecution. It has 205 local councils with “delegated authority” for performing state administration. The second system is public corporations of area based self-administration, the authorities of which are voted for by citizens. They are called “higher territorial self-administrative units” – county councils and local councils. There are thirteen county councils and Prague City Council.¹

The Czech Republic (CR) has 10.23 million inhabitants². The number of children aged 0-14 years is currently 1.6 million, which equates to 15.6% of the population. In December 2006, the unemployment rate was 7.7%. The Czech Republic has a relatively low level of poverty with 8% of CR inhabitants with an income below the poverty line (calculated according to EU methodology). However, without pensions and other social benefits 39% of people living in the CR would be threatened by poverty. 15% of children younger than 15 years old live in households that face poverty in the CR.³

Disadvantaged regions

There are two regions in the CR which are considered as disadvantaged and which are provided with additional support. They are Northwest Bohemia and the Moravian-Silesian Region. There are also four areas in the South Moravia and five areas in other regions which are considered to be economically weak. The disadvantaged and economically weaker regions cover one third of the country and about 29% of the population live there.

There is a standard EU based methodology, which includes a range of indicators, to designate disadvantaged regions. The most significant indicators are as follows: poor standard of living, above-average unemployment, low average wages, poor quality of housing, bad transport services, extremely damaged environment, industrial restructuring, and high level of urbanisation. According to EU methodology and its indicators, the level of average wages, in 75% of regions in the CR would be considered as weak or disadvantaged in the EU.

Education and schooling

There is almost no illiteracy in the CR. 0.4% of people have no education, and the number of people who do not complete obligatory school education is also low at around 6%⁴. The average length of school attendance is approximately 16 years. At present, the concept of lifelong learning and education is being implemented. The largest section of the population has participated in higher secondary education, and the proportion of people with tertiary education (university education) is about 16%. Primary, secondary and tertiary education are free of charge.

¹ Source: Český statistický úřad (Czech Statistical Office).

² Source: Czech Statistical Office.

³ Source: Czech Statistical Office.

⁴ Source: Calculation of people, houses and flats, 2001.

Obligatory school attendance is nine years (five years of primary education and four years of lower secondary education⁵). Primary education takes place from age six to 11 or 12 years and children spend between 600 to 800 hours per year in primary education. The number of teaching days at Czech schools is five per week, and lessons are 45 minutes long. The school year is split into two semesters, and holidays are ten weeks long, with the main holidays lasting for eight weeks (July-August). The length of a school day at the primary stage (children aged 6-12 years) is from 8am-12noon up to 2pm depending on the year group.

⁵ According to education level International Standards for Classifying Education ISCED.

National childcare policy

In the Czech Republic (CR) the basic starting point for childcare is the Concept of National Policy for Children and Youth (for 2003- 2007). The concept emphasises two levels of care for children: support and protection.

Support includes “state measures to solve problems threatening the young generation or hindering its development” (Concept, 2003). Support also includes government activity or government authority activity or local councils that creates conditions within the scope of national policy for children to participate in arranging, organising and carrying out activities. Children participate in creating community plans, and there is support for children’s parliaments, which work in some cities and towns for example in Vsetín, Brno, Prague, Pardubice, Český Krumlov.

Also included here is support for care and education beyond the formal schooling system and support for founders and operators of out-of school childcare services. Non-governmental non-profit organisations account for a large share of this support. Their activity is also supported by the government in particular through grants to projects.

Protection is aimed at tackling the negative effects and disadvantages faced by children, for example social disadvantage.

Also included in the policy in the Czech Republic is childcare support for families. A system of government social support has been set up, which ensures that there is support for families with children in specific social situations. Households are assessed on their need and are given financial support. The financial support is in two strands dependent on the family’s income and independent of the family’s income. The support based on family income includes: child benefit, social benefit and housing benefit. Other support available includes parent benefit, birth benefit, care benefit and death benefit. Government social support benefits take into consideration both the income and the social situation of the family. Parents also have tax breaks according to the number of children they have.

Childcare

The performance of government administration in the area of childcare, including out of school care at central governmental level is primarily the remit of the *Ministry of Schooling, Youth and Physical Education*. Other departments, particularly the Work and Social Affairs Department, are also involved in the development and provision of childcare. Departments engaged in it in part are Health, Culture, the Environment, Home Affairs and Justice. Individual departments create their own approaches to childcare out of school within their competence. Out of-school care falls particularly within the scope of, the Ministry of Schooling, Youth and Physical Education, the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Environment. Within the scope of national policy there are also concepts and programmes for childcare aimed at problems or certain target groups, for example drug addicts, Roma (gypsy) children, children of immigrants, children with special needs, victims of crime and victims of child abuse.

At the county level, childcare including out of school care is the remit of the county schooling department offices. County schooling departments perform management, operational and supervision activity, and they can set up facilities and secure premises. The county councils establish the out of school care facilities and they are responsible for providing premises and operational financing including administering salaries for employees. Departments of schooling are split into various divisions internally, among which is the Department of Youth and Physical Education, which primarily administers out of school education and care. Departments and divisions work together with the other relevant departments and divisions of county offices (for example, work and social affairs, health, culture, and the environment). The number of staff in the division of youth and physical activity, those divisions which are primarily responsible for out of school care, vary from three workers to ten workers, and the numbers of employees are not bound to the numbers of children in the given region, but they are linked to the need for care in the area. County offices decide their own long-term aims for the development of care and education including out-of school childcare, and their own childcare programmes according to the needs and interests of self-administrative authorities, based on their long-term aims in the

development of care and education. County councils, based on Act No. 129/2000 Coll., on county councils, provide grants to civic associations, humanitarian organisations and other legal and physical entities operating as childcare providers in the county including out of school care.

Town and village councils (local councils) are very involved in childcare. Local councils have departments of schooling, youth and physical education. They have a legally determined childcare obligation including out of school care and they finance childcare activity in the area from their own resources. They formulate their own strategies, perform monitoring, and set up and secure premises, including their equipment and financial provision.

The second most significant central governmental department involved in out of school care is the department of social affairs. *The Ministry of Work and Social Affairs* is involved in the area of out of school care and is focused on socially disadvantaged specific target groups and groups threatened by *social exclusion*⁶ (for example, children of immigrants, Roma (gypsy) children, children from socially disadvantaged families). It coordinates and provides methodological and financial support to social services, and it creates projects and programmes (for example for children of immigrants, Roma (gypsy) children and children from disadvantaged families). It is in charge of the activities of social departments at offices at the municipality, county and local levels. Social departments in the area of childcare secure and perform activities within the scope of socio-legal protection of children.

Departments of social affairs at county, municipal, and local councils perform managerial, methodological and supervisory activity. They co-ordinate the work of social work field workers who work with informal groups of children in their own environments, and deliver social intervention development activities. At present, they are intensively involved in the creation of community plans of social services in their regions. Their activity is also focused on providing social services to help and support individual members of a disadvantaged family and/or a family as a whole.

The non-governmental, non-profit sector also plays a key role in the provision of out of school care. A wide spectrum of civic associations, foundations, endowment funds, and publicly beneficial companies are involved in out of school care. There is no reliable information on the number of organisations of this nature in the Czech Republic, and there is no clear outline of their structure, operation or financing. Those that work the most in this area are civic associations (90%)⁷. We do know that they supply leisure and educational activities, organise regular and occasional interest activities focused among other things on sport activities, tourism, the environment, folklore, dance, music, information technology, and prevention and they provide weekend and holiday care. They include national associations as well as local associations.

Churches and church parishes provide out of school care and they offer educational, consulting and leisure activities. They operate facilities which provide out-of school care through after-school centres, community centres, open access clubs and leisure centres. The care is usually provided by voluntary, unpaid staff.

⁶ Definition used in the CR – *social exclusion* is comprehensively conditional insufficient involvement by an individual or group or local society in the life of the whole society, or insufficient access to social institutions securing education, health, protection and basic well-being. It actually means life in poverty, without participation in the labour market (for young people it means non-participation in systematic education), without adequate accommodation, without sufficient income, usually in isolation or in a small group of similarly deprived people at the edge of society. (Matoušek, 2004)

⁷ Source: Report on research by Occupational umbrella organisations in the CR civil sector, 2005.

There are private childcare providers which have established foundations and endowment funds. They provide grants, and establish a range of services including out of school, social services for key target groups, and operate commercial services to look after children.

Out-of-school care for children

In the Czech Republic, there is a significant network of out of school care facilities for children. They are founded and run both by county councils and local councils, as well as churches and non-governmental non-profit organisations. There is good access to all kinds of facilities, and they are open to all children. The charge is minimal and some parents receive subsidies. However, there is a problem in encouraging children from disadvantaged families in particularly Roma families to participate in services.

Out of school facilities for children can be managed by the state (represented by county councils and local councils), the non-profit sector (foundations, civic associations, associations of corporations or individuals), churches, and private organisations. The majority, an estimated 60% are run by the non-profit sector, followed by the public sector which accounts for programmes in approximately 35% of facilities. Approximately 3-4% are run by the church and only 1-2% are private sector. Out of school facilities themselves can establish publicly beneficial companies, founded as corporations.

The number of out of school facilities across the CR is considered to be sufficient, with facilities being available in urban and rural areas. It is a positive legacy of the period before the political and economic changes caused by the fall of Communism, because under communism there was a statutory obligation to establish such facilities in all towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants.

Out of school care facilities are funded through a number of sources. Facilities established by the state receive financial subsidies from the government. The subsidies cover operating costs and employee wages, and they receive funding from grants, and local self-administrative authorities, foundations, and in exceptional cases they also obtain sponsorship (grant resources are grants issued by local councils (approximately 50%), grants issued by counties (approximately 36%) and nationwide grants (approximately 14 %) ⁸. Participants using activities are expected to contribute to the activities. There are no direct financial grants, tax breaks or vouchers to help parents pay for out of school care, even for the parents of children from disadvantaged areas.

There is a network of out of school care facilities provided by the Ministry of Schooling, Youth and Physical Education, which offers regular, occasional and holiday activities. These are: leisure centres, after-school centres, school clubs, interest and artistic schools.

There are a number of laws, regulations and decrees for out of school care facilities that prescribe the structure and content of the activities, monitor and evaluate the skills and qualifications of staff including their safety checks, and designate premises and equipment for out of school activities. County, municipal and local councils and other founders of facilities also put in place their own regulations, with which they assess the suitability of buildings and the operating time of the facilities according to local needs.

⁸ Source: Research report Interest Education as a Tool for Expedient Utilisation of the Free Time of Children and Youth, 2005.

Leisure Centres: provide interest activities for children aged 6-15 years old around 30% of children in this age group attend. The clubs meet once or twice a week as well as offering occasional interest and education activities, spontaneous activities, camping activities, and work with gifted children. The centres are open throughout the week, from 8am till 10pm. Regular interest networks and clubs most often take place between 3pm and 8pm, and there is a charge for the activity. In 2005, there were 295 leisure centres and 220,000 children aged 6-15 attended. Leisure centres are primarily located in cities, towns and villages with over 5,000 inhabitants.

After-school centres: for children aged 6-12 years. They provide interest activities, relaxation and recreational activities, and may help with preparation for learning at school. An after-school centre fulfils a social function, offers parents care for children for a certain period prior to or after completion of learning at school or prior to them leaving to go to do other out of school activities.

They can operate during holidays, and in co-operation with other entities organises events on days off when there is no school. Activities organised by an after-school centre are primarily concentrated on children registered for regular daily attendance although children can also take part on a less regular basis. They sometimes offer joint activities for parents and children and are available for children with special educational needs who are integrated into activities.

The centres usually operate from 6:30am till 8am when school begins, and in the afternoon they operate from 12 noon until 5pm. The children take part in the activities based on written agreements made with parents. The parents pay a charge of an average of CZK 1,000 per year (i.e. approximately 0.5% of average monthly earnings). In 2005 there were 4,065 after-school centres in operation, with over 215,000 children attending⁹. They tend to be located in primary schools, and they can be independent facilities serving more than one school. They are established in schools for children with disabilities and special educational needs.

In general, activities at centres are aimed at the development of hobbies and interests. They use playrooms, gyms and playing fields at schools, as well as workshops and information technology. Walks, outings and sports events are common activities organised by the centres.

The after-school centre consists of several sections. Each has a permanent teacher known in the CR as an educator. There are about 25-30 children in the group. If the centre is run by a school, then it is the responsibility of the headteacher and it is paid for through the school finances.

As well as the teachers, volunteers work in the centres. They do not manage educational groups but help to organise events, outings, competitions and events for parents.

There are no special programmes for children living in disadvantaged areas. However, there are special programmes and projects for Roma (gypsy) children who form a disadvantaged group in the CR.

School Clubs: These are established for children aged 12-15 years. In 2005 there were 474 school clubs with 35,000 attending.¹⁰ They are focused on interest activities, and they do not offer childcare to parents before or after lessons. They are run by local councils, private individuals or corporations. They are established most often at primary schools or as independent facilities.

⁹ Data source: Statistical Report 2005, National Institute for Children and Youth.

¹⁰ Data source: Statistical Report 2005, National Institute for Children and Youth.

The clubs are staffed by paid employees and volunteers.

Primary Artistic Schools: These are oriented towards education in aesthetic and artistic development. They offer musical, creative and literary dramatic activities. There were a total of 474 schools working in this area in 2005¹¹. They are open in the afternoon (usually from 2pm until 10pm), and there is a charge to parents. They can be run by local councils, private individuals and corporations. The charges vary according to the type of service and are relatively expensive. Primary artistic schools also prepare holiday (camping) activities and weekend training, and they organise competitions and cultural performances for parents and the public.

The minimum level of qualifications for staff at all of the out of school care facilities that are in the control of the schooling department (leisure centres, after-school centres and school clubs, primary artistic schools, and children's homes) is secondary education. There were around 13,000 employees (in 2005) working at out of school care facilities. Of these, there were 10,000 employees at after-school centres, and 1,700 at leisure centres¹². The staff are encouraged to participate in further training and education, which is developed at a nationwide and county level and provided by the National Institute of Further Education.

It is estimated that in the non profit sector, unpaid voluntary staff make up over 80% of all workers. The volunteers are parents of children, former members, and other people interested in working with children. In the governmental sector, however, it can be difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteers. A system of licences for organisations working with children outside of school is about to be introduced. Currently, a system of providing accreditation to providers of education for volunteer staff with children in the non-profit sector is being introduced. Until now the education of staff has been left to the managers. No central regulations or criteria exist for the selection of volunteer workers.

Churches and religious societies are active in out of school care both during the school year as well as in holidays. The activity they deliver is targeted at specific target groups of children often at children from a disadvantaged background and physically disabled children.

Monitoring and assessment of out-of-school care

The monitoring and assessment of childcare including out of school care is carried out by the individual governmental departments. No system of monitoring and evaluation exists that is applied across departments, or service providers.

The Schooling Department has its control office (Czech Schools Inspection Office), which is a state administration authority. At present it employs over 600 workers. This office performs its activity based on documents, which are the Plan of Main Tasks and the Set of Assessment Criteria. Inspection Office staff visit all types of establishments aimed at out of school care provided by all sectors. It deals with suggestions and complaints from children, as well as from parents, employees, founders, or other government administration authorities. It is involved in selecting managerial staff for out of school care facilities, it carries out administrative supervision, it checks adherence to regulations and assesses

¹¹ Data source: Institute for Information in Education.

¹² Data source: Statistical Report 2005, National Institute of Children and Youth.

the material and personnel, and monitors funding and finance. There is no obligation for services to carry out regular monitoring. Feedback from parents or children is not gathered. The childcare facilities themselves carry out obligatory self-evaluation.

In the department of social affairs, a project has been underway since 2005 called Quality in Social Services. Monitoring of quality is based on a uniform approach, which is the introduction of national and specific standards of quality for social services. Included in the project is a system of assessing quality in social services, which has not been addressed before. A new institute for inspecting the provision of social services was established to check that providers of social work services fulfil the conditions and obligations imposed by law by providers of social services. Based on this law, the services offered to children in out of school care will be monitored and assessed within the scope of the department of social affairs.

Out-of-school care for children in disadvantaged areas

There are two types of disadvantaged areas in the Czech Republic. The first type applies to the two regions Northwest Bohemia and Moravian-Silesian Region, which have been undergoing a period of deep social and economic restructuring in the last ten years. The second type is represented by disadvantaged parts (districts) of various regions, particularly in South Moravia which has high unemployment and below average wages.

Northwest Bohemia

Northwest Bohemia is situated close to the German border with about 850,000 inhabitants, 17% of which are children under 14 years old. There are about 250 settlements and it is highly urbanised and facing industrial restructuring and decline. It has the highest unemployment rate in the Czech Republic at 15%. The average wage is 87% of the national average, and educational attainment is the lowest in the country. The region has the highest crime rate in the Czech Republic.

Northwest Bohemia was negatively affected by the migration policy of the 1970s and 1980s. The Communist government built housing complexes for Romany people from across the Czechoslovak Social Republic, particularly from Slovakia, where the living standard of Romany population had been very low. The aim was to integrate Roma people but success has been limited. Almost 100% of Romany people are unemployed and in receipt of welfare benefits.

All of the out of school care facilities described in this report are available in the region. There are 240 school youth centres with 35,000 children aged 6–12 years attending, which constitutes 75% of all children in the region. There are 32 leisure centres. In 2005, about 25,000 children took part in regular activities (clubs, leisure activity groups) and 250,000 participated in various occasional events.

There is out of school care in the region run by churches, and leisure centres, low-threshold clubs and community centres. An example of good practice is the House of Children and Youth in Teplice which is run by a Catholic church. The activities on offer there include leisure activities, tutoring and programs for the prevention of addiction and crime.

Moravian-Silesian region

Moravia-Silesia This region is on the eastern border with Poland and Slovakia. It has 1.25 million inhabitants, 18% of which are children aged 6 – 15 years. There are 302 settlements. About 78% of all inhabitants live in urban settlements. It is an industrial region, which has been undergoing restructuring in the last ten years. The unemployment rate is above the Czech Republic average at 14–16%. The average wages are 90% of the national average.

Due to migration, a large number of Roma (gypsy) people have settled in the region in the last 40 years. They are considered a disadvantaged group and they are the target group of various projects and programs supporting social integration.

Out of school care activities here are similar to the rest of the CR. There are 410 school youth centres, 40 school clubs, 35 leisure centres and 55 basic art schools. In 2005, 24,000 children took part in activities in school youth centres and 1,700 in school clubs. A high number of participants took advantage of leisure centres – about 21,000 participate in regular activities and clubs and 230,000 children participate in occasional events.

The non-profit sector offers a variety of leisure activities, for example clubs, community centres, and contact centres aimed at tackling social exclusion.

A positive example within the Czech Republic is an unusual model project, Vesnička soužití (Village of Coexistence), funded and operated by the Catholic Church Charity, which is aimed at the integration of disadvantaged citizens – particularly Romany people. It was founded in the city of Ostrava in 2002. Its principal aim is the integration of Roma (gypsy) people with the wider community. The village comprises houses with 127 residents who helped to construct the village. It includes a centre for out of school care for children, which organises prevention programs, education activities, leisure activities, counselling services and field work. It is aimed at children affected by addiction.

South Moravia region

Region South Moravia is located in the southeastern part of the Czech Republic along the borders with Austria and Slovakia. The centre of the region is Brno and it is mostly a rural area. Brno has one of the largest Romany communities in the country. Rural areas suffer from insufficient transport services. The unemployment rate is 12%, and wages are lower than the national average.

Out of school care for children is similar to all other regions in the country. There are 438 school youth centres, 57 school clubs, 64 art schools and 32 leisure centres.

The number of children has been decreasing but the capacity of school youth centres has been increasing. This is caused by limited offer of job opportunities, which forces parents to commute further distances for their jobs. About 60% of all children aged 6-12 take part in regular activities and about 3% of children attend the school clubs. In 2006, about 40% of all children took part in regular activities in the leisure centres and the occasional events were attended by 240,000 children.

An example of good practice within the non-profit sphere is the work of Ratolest (which, organises the project Pět P (Five Ps) and runs a club. There are also various associations directed at working with Roma (gypsy) children, for example Drom which organises various leisure activities, prevention programs and tutoring.

Several leisure centres and low-threshold clubs are established and run by a Catholic church - the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Out-of-school care for children from ethnic minorities – Roma (gypsy) children

Roma (gypsy) children are the target group of some specific care in disadvantaged areas. This ethnic group faces multiple disadvantage including:

- low social status,
- poor quality of life, and
- low educational attainment

Roma gypsies encounter various forms of discrimination from individuals and groups. They have poorer access to social services, and at present they have a low level of social support, poor quality of housing, restricted access to the labour market etc.

It is estimated that there are between 250,000 and 300,000 Roma making up 2-3% of the population in the CR. In order to illustrate the complicated situation we will firstly state several basic pieces of information. Due to the historic and economic development (especially in the period of 40 years of so-called “real socialism” until 1989), the Czech Republic has strong egalitarian traditions. For the period of social and political transformation after 1989, a strong functional social network was characteristic. The network enabled people who were not integrated socially to have a relatively simple existence due to welfare benefits

One of the problems that Roma gypsy children face is the language barrier and traditional lack of appreciation of the value of systematic education in Roma gypsy communities. Only a small percentage of Roma gypsy children attend pre-school education (nursery schools). There are preparatory classes for primary schools (for children aged 5-6 years from disadvantaged environments) but attendance is low. Some of the Roma gypsy children do not fully develop their education potential and many leave the education system early.

Various concepts, programmes and projects at a local, county and national level support Roma gypsy children¹³. The projects are aimed at their parents and also offer staff development and training for teaching staff to work effectively with parents and provide activities at out of school facilities, particularly in after-school centres and leisure centres. At a nationwide level, the Concept of Timely Care for Children (aged 3-6 years) from Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Environments is being implemented. The target group for this is children from social and cultural environments that make it difficult to be involved in education. The concept is focused on pre-school education and support of the competences of parents.

All out of school facilities in the schooling department integrate Roma gypsy children into their activities. They prepare programmes, projects, and implement specific primary prevention all for Roma gypsy children aged 6-12 years. It is mostly Roma gypsy children who utilise the offers of activities at after-school centres and leisure centres. Specific programmes and activities are prepared – for example Czech language support, help to prepare for school activities, interest activity etc.

Half of the leisure centres¹⁴ prepare programmes for Roma gypsy children. They offer open access clubs. The activities are available throughout the whole week, including Saturdays and Sundays, and there is holiday activity. One leisure centre offers activities for children of refugees and asylum seekers. The target in the schooling department at out of school care facilities is to increase the number of open access clubs, to build up multi-functional areas for their activity, to create a larger number of irregular interest activities, and work in innovative ways¹⁵.

¹³ Based on Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, higher specialist and other education, and Act No. 563/2004 Coll., on teaching staff, preparatory forms and the profession of assistant teacher are set up at primary schools (conditions for their qualifications are also determined). In 2005, there were more than 140 preparatory forms in the CR, which had approximately 2 thousand Roma gypsy children. Besides teachers, over 300 upbringers (teacher’s assistants) worked in these forms. These upbringers are of Roma gypsy origin and become middlepersons between the Roma gypsy community and educational system institutions.

¹⁴ Source: Report on Research Project Preparedness of Leisure Centres for Work with Selected Social Groups, 2003.

¹⁵ The Preparedness of Leisure Centres for work with selected social groups and for the introduction of new forms of work Report (2003) stated that there is an insufficient network of all-access, open facilities for out of school upbringing in the CR.

There is currently a governmental proposal for comprehensive support for families from socio-culturally disadvantaged environments, which, for example, proposes back-payment for out of school service activities, contributions towards looking after children, and tax breaks. Staff at out of school care facilities work together with social departments in the relevant county or town/village councils to enable disadvantaged children to have free or reduced cost access to the activity.

In the CR government takes the role of supervisor in relation to how parents perform their parenting duties.

Social workers can become involved in creating and organising leisure interest activities for Roma gypsy families.

Social work fieldwork in Roma gypsy communities is also carried out by the non-governmental, non-profit sector. They offer social advice, non-resident services and consulting services, they establish open all-access clubs for children, they organise occasional and regular interest activities, they help with the preparation of children for school, and they also provide direct material help (clothing, school aids, and resources for leisure activity), for example through the Person in Distress project.

Conclusion

Out of school care activities for children aged 6-12 years in the disadvantaged regions and localities is the same as in all other regions in the Czech Republic and there are no special facilities or services. However, the existing facilities are funded by the state, region, city and local councils (through grants and financial help for projects and programs). In the disadvantaged regions there are programs and projects aimed at specific disadvantaged groups. In the Czech Republic there is a range of concepts, programs, projects for other disadvantaged groups including children with special educational needs and children with disabilities. These activities focus particularly on supporting their integration, education, the institutional care and their families.

The operation and the activities of all the facilities for out of school care for children in the disadvantaged regions are subject to the same laws and regulations as others. All facilities are subject to standard budget rules and rules of financial management. They do not receive any additional funding.

There is no evidence available on the positive effect and efficiency of out of school care for children in disadvantaged regions. Concrete positive effect can be observed in the careers of individual representatives of the Romany community. There are individuals who, after attending OSC activities start to attend school regularly, who are better prepared for school and who can develop social skills through leisure activities. However, their social status, their life style, their housing standards and their system of values have not undergone demonstrable changes.

There are a number of conceptions, programmes, projects and measures for children with special needs. They are oriented particularly towards support of their integration, education, institutional care, and family support.

The state of political and economic affairs in the Czech Republic is still affected by 40 years of totalitarian rule which ended in 1990. One of the social stratification impacts is that due to income and social levelling there were no considerably poor classes. This only developed in the last five years leading to the emergence of individuals and groups living in poverty which is primarily the Romany community. Government aims to tackle disparities between regions through the Strategy for the Regional Development of the Czech Republic. It focuses on the economic differences and unemployment and does not include out of school care.

In the Czech Republic no special measures are taken in the field of out of school care for children (aged 6-12 years) in disadvantaged regions. Nevertheless, the government child-care policy includes and gives support to measures, projects and programs aimed at socially disadvantaged target groups. These include Roma (gypsy) children in particular. The programme and projects aim to support education towards a healthy life-style, prevent (crime, violence, addictions, etc), support education (preparation classes before entering basic school, tutoring) and support leisure time and interest activities.

Case Study 1: School Youth Centre

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Head: Milena Sobotková

Contacted person: Iva Škábová (instructor)

Context

School youth centre is based in the premises of the elementary school in Nové Veselí. Nové Veselí is a central village about 30 km far from the regional city of Jihlava. Nové Veselí is an important centre for surrounding villages, it falls into the micro-region of Žďár nad Sázavou and it is located on the main road between Žďár nad Sázavou and Jihlava.

All of the basic services and social institutions are available for the citizens of the village. Services are offered to both, individuals and families. Children make the use of educational institutions – a kindergarten for pre-school children (3 – 5 years old), elementary school (for children aged 6 – 15), school youth centre (for children aged 6 – 15). Additional facilities include a social centre (so-called house of culture), a local public library, a sport centre (football pitch, tennis courts, sports hall, multi-purpose playing field designed for ball games), health centre, chemists, and social care for senior citizens and disabled (household assistance, meals in school canteen, home delivery of meals). There is a plan for building a sheltered home.

There are several non-profit associations and clubs working in the village dealing with children aged 6 – 12, for example a sports club, a cultural association (concerned with maintaining local and regional traditions) and a group for amateur theatre. The village has quite a varied social life, social-cultural events and sport tournaments are held regularly.

There are 1228 residents in the village. Current unemployment rate is about 9%. Employment opportunities in the village are satisfactory. Together there are about 300 registered economic subjects, mostly small companies (with 5 to 50 employees). There are around 120 children aged 5 – 12 in the village.

Description of the school youth centre

The school youth centre is authorized by a written contract with the school management to use the material equipment and the premises of the school. It occupies two rooms – playrooms, and it also regularly takes advantage of the school gym, the school library and the I.T. lab. The school garden, school yard and the school playing field can also be used for various activities with children. The material equipment and conditions are seen as sufficient.

The premises of the school in question consist of three interconnected buildings. The buildings were built successively in 1928, 1984 and 1991. All buildings were partly renovated and rebuilt in 2001. This applies namely to the roofs, electrical distribution system and central heating. All school buildings are in the possession of the local council, which is the establishing authority of the school as well as the youth centre.

Activities of the school youth centre

The school youth centre consists of three education groups with 90 children aged 6 – 12. One of the groups is focused on specific activities for children from disadvantaged background. Currently there are eight children in this group – three children from poor families and a sibling group of Roma origin. Some of the approaches and the content of activities of this group differ from the other two groups. Namely, it is an individual approach to work with children based particularly on preparation for classes, developing their language and social skills and on material help – books and school equipment (for example. art supplies). The goal is to motivate the children towards positive life strategies (stress is put on

understanding education as a value and on prevention of pathological phenomena – such as addictions and delinquency). Children from this education group are integrated in all other activities (interest, sport, technical and so on) which form a part of the everyday program of the school youth club. When dealing with educational and behavioral problems of these children, the school youth club cooperates with the school management, the educational consultant and with the authorized employee of the local council.

The school youth club operates in the mornings from 6:30 – 7:25 and in the afternoons from 11:00 – 16:00. The club is closed during the school holidays. The operating times were determined according to the parents' requirements.

The school youth club fees of 70 crowns/month (€ 2/month) are paid quarterly. The parents of the children from the disadvantaged background can apply in writing at the club authority for remission of the fees. Children are registered in the school youth club by their parents, who fill in registration form – subscription card - and send it to the school youth club management. It is compulsory to fill in the number of hours the child spends in the youth centre each day and the way and times the child leaves the youth centre (i.e. who will pick the child up regularly or if it can leave on its own, and so on.) Parents can cancel the subscription at any time during the school year. Parents must announce a non-standard time of their child's leaving the youth club in person, in exceptional cases by email or by telephone. In case of children from disadvantaged background this announcement needs to be made in person.

The record about the children attending the youth club is kept in a book of attendance. The data are kept in compliance with Personal Data Protection Act, no. 101/2000 Sb.

An internal set of rules of the school youth club is a basic document, which specifies the principal rules of the operation of the club and the rights and obligations of both, the authority and the children. The set of rules is presented to parents during the introductory parents meeting, and to the children attending the school youth club during the first week of the school year.

A yearly plan of operation is created by the school youth club management and each educational group creates an individual weekly plan accordingly. Currently a school educational plan is being developed which draws on a centrally published document called the Framework educational plan. The school educational plan will be effective since 1. 9. 2007. Parents were invited to cooperate during the development of the plan. However, this invitation has been met with minimal interest on the side of parents. Children do not cooperate in the creation of the program.

The activities offered to children during the morning operation hours are individual. In case of children from disadvantaged background, the activities focus on motivation towards education in form of games. In the afternoons, it is preferred to alternate activities in three units. The first unit consists of various relaxation and not-organized activities and games available to all children in the club. During this time, stress is put on non-directive leadership. For the second part of the afternoon children are divided into educational groups. Children from disadvantaged environment work at homework, develop their language and reading skills and so on. The third unit is again prepared for all children together and is dedicated to interest activities. Children can engage in sports, arts or music at their discretion. Two parents work as volunteers helping to manage the interest activities. The weekly plan respects children's wishes and interests. Several times a week games are played in the school gym and the I.T. lab is used during the common program times. When the weather conditions allow, the games and relaxation activities take place in the school playing field, the school yard or the school garden and short trips in environs of the school are undertaken.

The school youth club employees do not monitor whether children come from incomplete families (i.e. live with one parent only) and there are no specialized programs for this kind of children. Monitoring this kind of data is seen as encroachment of personal and parental rights.

The school youth club activity is regularly assessed by its establishing authority and also by the Czech school inspection.

Examples of good practice

According to parents' evaluation the most positive about the school youth club is the wide offer of interest activities. The establisher appreciates the creation and distribution of presents for lonely citizens and senior citizens (for example. for Christmas and the Mother Day), co-organization of the school masked ball and the preparation and organization of Christmas and Easter selling exhibitions and of an event for the International Day of Children.

The operating hours of the school youth centre comply with the wishes of working parents.

Personnel

There are four employees in the school youth club – all of them are women. Three educational workers work full-time (including the head of the school youth club). Each of the workers is permanently in charge of one of the education groups. The common activities are organized jointly by all workers. The head of the school youth club graduated with an M.A. degree in education, her professional experience has been 13 years. The instructor working with children from disadvantaged background has a B.A. degree in education and additional training in special pedagogy. She has been working in the school youth club for ten years. The third instructor does not have a specialized degree in education. She has finished her education on secondary level and a retraining program for a position of a pedagogical assistant. She has been working in the school youth club for almost a year. There is one more part time employee on the position of pedagogical assistant who takes part in all activities and gives individual care to a disabled child, who attends the youth club. Her contract is for one year and she does not have professional training in education.

Financial background

The operation of the school youth club is funded exclusively by its establishing authority, i.e. the local council. Employees' salaries come from the state budget.

Case Study 2: Rubikon Centre

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Head: Dan Žárský

Contacted/addressed person: Marta Doubravová

Context

The town of Vsetín lies in the Region Zlín in the northeast part of the Czech Republic. It has 31, 000 inhabitants, their average age is 36 years, the number of children aged 6 – 12 is about 2500. There is a large Roma community in the town. There is a well-developed economic structure with companies operating in mechanical engineering, electrical and textile fields. In addition there are also glass and rubber-making industries. Agriculture is dominated by animal husbandry. Horse breeding also takes up an important part. The services of tourist industry have recently been dynamically developing. There is a hospital, a public library, several sport centres, a football and an ice-hockey stadium (the football and ice-hockey teams play the first league), a museum, establishments for cultural events, clubs, and so on.

The unemployment rate is currently almost 10%. Vsetín has a wide range of services, educational institutions of all degrees and types (apart from a university), there are more than 120 citizen-action organizations working in the non-profit sector. The town council offers its own grant programs for non-profit subjects.

Description of the centre

The centre is located in the part of the town inhabited by socially weak families. The premises of the centre are owned by the town of Vsetín. The house was partly restored in 2006 at the expense of the town budget. The centre rents the house on the basis of a written contract. The rent is given back to the centre as a subsidy from the town council.

The area of the house is sufficient for the activities of the centre. However, there are some drawbacks from the point of view of material equipment and technical conditions of the house, such as difficult and expensive heating, low-quality doors and window frames, insufficient capacity of power distribution (the distribution network is often overcharged). Part of the premises is also a sports field.

Activities of the centre

The centre is a low-threshold service. The establishing authority is Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. The centre was opened in 2004.

The operation times are four times a week in the afternoons (from 1:30 to 5:30). The same applies to school holidays. The services offered are mostly free of charge; selected activities require financial contribution (the contribution differs according to the activity between 50 – 100 Kč, i.e. €3). This applies for example to forums and lectures, exhibition visits, theatre performances, trips, etc. In 2006 there were 156 children aged 6 – 12 attending the centre regularly.

The target group are children from poor families and Roma children, who come from families with low social-economic status. Families of the children attending the centre are often indebted; their housing and material conditions are insufficient. The families have a high unemployment rate (almost 90%); they also have different system of values (for example. education has a low value) and life strategies (for example. drawing on subsidies, starting families at the age of 16 – 18). The children often develop negative and pathological phenomena, for example. truancy, children

delinquency – petty thefts and deceptions, gambling, soft drugs, and so on. Particularly Roma children have insufficient language skills, restricted vocabulary and insufficient communication skill both in Romany and Czech.

A written contract about provision of services is signed with parents only if they wish so. Mostly there is only an oral agreement. The employees of the centre keep a written record about the number of children, the provided social services (for example. crises intervention, situation intervention, counseling, information service, etc.), the agreements with users, the documentation of the process of first meeting, the operating diary (information on the course of operation).

It is not monitored whether a child comes from an incomplete family (i.e. lives with only one parent) and there are no special programs for such children. This type of family is not common in the locality.

Activities are managed through non-directive approaches to leadership and are prepared together with children. There are yearly, monthly and weekly plans of activities, the daily program is adjusted according to the actual needs, and/or potential wishes and suggestions of the users of the service. Children are always encouraged to bring up their own input, ideas and comments. The aim is their maximal involvement in both, the process of planning and realization.

Children can take advantage of educational activities, counseling services, situational intervention and in some cases also crisis intervention. The educational activities are aimed particularly to development of interests; a varied range of activities is carried out on daily basis. The activities offered by the centre include sports – ball games (football, volleyball), floor ball, and table tennis –arts and crafts, music – playing musical instruments, singing and (less frequently) reading, listening to stories and occasionally drama. Educational activities are individual and are prepared according to children's needs. These activities often use game, translation from Romany to Czech, learning rhymes and riddles, which include reading, writing, counting, and so on. The activities are aimed at supporting the development of working volitional qualities; children are purposefully led to finish their activities and their products. They are also encouraged towards responsibility (for example. for things borrower and used during different activities) and cleaning one's workplace after finishing their work. They can help with cleaning as a reward after finishing all activities. The centre also offers some irregular events: masked ball, several-day trips (a pre-Christmas trip, short trips abroad), summer camp, participation at music and sport competitions and tournaments. Children need to make financial contribution for participation at these irregular events. The contribution usually makes up about one third or one half of the real costs. Their parents can ask (orally or in writing) for a relief of the payment.

The employees of the centre together with children also organize events for public. These include a ball, theatre and music shows, sport tournaments (football, floor ball). They also regularly prepare performances of children for the Mother Day, International Day of Children and for various religious holidays.

Apart from regulations set by the establishing authority, there are also internal rules of the centre. These are files together with the basic documentation of the centre, which include: The rules for active information of the users about services offered, Protection of users' rights, Protection of users' against prejudice and negative assessment, Users' data protection, Audio/visual recording of users and its handling, Rules for filing complaints and dealing with complaints, Complaints record, Range of offered services, Guidelines for imposing penalties, Including users in decision-making of using services, List of contributors and successive services, Public information file on social service, Accidents and emergencies, Plan of evacuation in case of fire.

The centre comes under the controlling mechanisms of the Headquarters of Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. A supervisory council regularly evaluates the activities of the centre. Individual sponsors are entitled to checking within the bounds of allocated grants and particular projects.

Examples of good practice

The main aim of the centre is to motivate children to change their life strategies. The best results in this area seem to go together with systematic and long-time work with children in the centre. The children who attend the centre on regular basis have a provably less behavioral and educational problems.

The work with children also helps to build better relationships with Roma community. There is a regular contact with their parents, who are thus motivated to support their children and who also volunteer to help during various events organized by the centre. They also join in organization and preparation of special public events, such as musical and drama performances, trips and holiday stays.

On general level, the members of the community also influence the preparation of the yearly plan of operation and overall orientation of activities and they propose possible options for more services.

Personnel

There are two full-time employees (a woman and a man, both of them have a university degree in education) and two part-time employees (a woman and a man, both secondary school degree). Moreover there are also university students volunteers.

Documents obligatory for employees include. Plan of personal development, Adaptive plan, Rules for short-term placements in the centre, Rules for personal assessment, System of meetings and professional instruments of team leadership, Methodology for working with volunteers, Volunteer code.

Financial background

The funding of the centre comes from a number of sources. In 2006 these included: Ministry of labor and social affairs, Ministry of education, youth and sports, European social fund, Ministry for regional development, Nadace pro rozvoj občanské společnosti (NROS, Foundation for reinforcement of the development of civil society), Region Zlín, Vsetín Town Council, Employment Office Vsetín, Via foundation, etc.

Case Study 3: Drom – Romany Centre

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Head: Miroslav Zima

Contacted person: Simona Wachsbergerová

Context

Drom - Romany centre is based in the city of Brno. Brno is the second largest city in the Czech Republic. Historically it is a capital city of Moravia and it is the administrative centre of the Region South Moravia. The city is the seat of state and regional authorities (for example. Constitutional Court, the Highest Court, and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman). Brno is also an important centre of education. There are all types and levels of schools, including universities and colleges. The number of inhabitants in 2006 was about 370 000, including about 20 000 children aged 6 – 12. The unemployment rate is constantly about 9%.

Part of the population is formed by a Roma community, even though the exact numbers are not known (approximately about 10% of all residents). The Romany population lives mostly in three localities in the central parts of the city. According to qualified guesses the ratio of Romany inhabitants in these parts of the city are about 40 – 50%. The unemployment rate in Roma community is about 90 – 100%. The city of Brno has one of the highest ratios of Romany inhabitants in the Czech Republic. There are about 2, 5 – 3, 5 thousand Romany children aged 6 – 12. The Romany population in Brno as shown by selected indicators, such as over-populated flats; lower rate of volunteer activities; higher number of inhabitants without bank accounts; higher rate of misdemeanors and criminality (thefts, etc.), is a socially excluded group. The indicators of social exclusion of children and families include for example: higher number of children in unemployed households; low weight at birth; low attendance at (compulsory) lesson at school; worse results in education; higher birth rate (in lower age groups); higher number of children in institutional treatment. The town council sees the integration of Romany community as one of its priorities, which is supported by various projects and programs. There are also non-profit organizations and foundations working in this field, such as IQ Roma service, Moravian Romany community, Vedra Foundation, Drom).

Description of the centre

The centre is located in the city centre in an area inhabited by Romany population. The establishing authority and the service provider is the City of Brno – Northern District and the Drom, o.p.s. The centre operates in rented premises. The facilities and material equipment are considered satisfactory. It is possible to rent additional spaces for particular activities (for example. a gym, a football pitch, riding-hall for horse riding therapy). These spaces are rented mostly from local elementary schools.

Activities of the centre

The activities of the centre are aimed at preventive, leisure time and educational activities and also social-law services for children, adults and families. The activities of Drom are varied and are not limited to children. The main aim of Drom is to reduce the process of social exclusion in Roma community.

As for children aged 6 – 12, they can take advantage of low-threshold clubroom, stimulative educational course, tutoring, horse riding therapy, dancing lessons, clubs – arts, sewing, basket-making, crafts and music.

The low-threshold clubroom is one of the oldest activities of the centre. It has been in opened since 1990. The equipment includes toys, school equipment, art supplies, board games, etc. The clubroom is opened daily from 2 – 5 p.m. and all activities are free. Children can come independently, they do not have to sign up for activities, and there is no attendance

record. There are about 50 children taking advantage of the clubroom every day. Apart from regular activities, there are one-off activities and occasional events, sport tournaments, film projections, visits to theatres, etc. For example St. Nicolas party, Celebration of the International Romany Day, Celebration of the International Day of Children, singing competition Skřivánek, visits to the ZOO, football tournament, summer camps and outings. These one-off activities and occasional events are funded from diverse sources (projects, grants, budget) as well as from financial contributions of the participants (the contribution differs according to the events, it is never 100% of the actual cost). About 1000 children took part in these events in 2005.

Stimulative educational course is prepared for pre-school children aged 5-7. The children do not attend any pre-school institution for various reasons and they are not sufficiently prepared for beginning the formal education. There were 20 children in this course in 2005. The course is free of charge and it takes place twice a week in the mornings in the low-threshold clubroom. The tutors pick up the children at home and drop them off again after the lessons. The children take advantage of a professional program aimed at the graphic-motoric development, improvement of language skills (formulation, improvement of speech impediments, vocabulary, and basic language concepts), practice of concentration and social skills.

There are *two tutoring groups*. One group meets four times a week in the afternoon in the centre. This group had about 40 children in 2006. The second group meets in an elementary school close to the premises of the centre. Two times a week there is also tutoring in the school after the end of lessons. This group had about 17 children in 2006. Tutoring is free of charge. Children practice the subject matter discussed during lessons, write their homework, and improve their knowledge in various subjects.

Horseback riding therapy is designed particularly for children who began their formal schooling (aged 6 – 8). Its aim is to support the process of mutual interactions, to motivate children towards learning new things and towards positive changes of behavior. Children take care for animals and thus they learn about responsibility and empathy. In 2005 this activity was attended by a group of 66 children on regular basis.

Dance group meets on the premises of the centre twice a week in the afternoons. It consists of two groups – children aged 6 – 12 (20 children) and a group of minors aged 12 – 18. The dance groups participate in various festivals, benefit concerts and competitions. When preparing for a particular performance, the group meets daily. The group has had their own musical instruments and costumes since 2004 and the conditions for practice are of a high standard. There are no fees for attending the dance group.

Clubs take place usually twice a week in the afternoons for about two hours. All equipment can be borrowed free of charge. Art club provides painting on glass and porcelain, ceramics, etc. There is a special lesson once a week for talented children and two sessions a week for irregulars. About 40 children took advantage of the art club in 2006. Sewing club facilitates various techniques of working with textile – patchwork, batik, weaving, sewing, etc. There were about ten children in this club in 2006. There is also a basket-making club which focuses on traditional techniques of basket-making (straw baskets, wicker baskets, decorations) and which is regularly attended by about 12 children. Children can also attend a handcraft club, where they practice making objects of practical use from various materials. This club is the least popular; there are only about 6 children. About 12 children also learn to play musical instruments in small groups of two – three children.

The contact with those interested to take advantage of the services of the centre is defined in a text Contact with client administration. The employees keep a record about the first contact with a client. Every client interested in taking part in activities needs to accept an agreement and file a record of client (with client's consent). The centre makes a record only of the necessary data, which correspond to valid norms and data protection acts. Every client can look into his/her

record. A regular attendance in activities is not required. Client can refuse a service, if he/she is not a part of the target group or if he/she breaks rules. Clients can file a complaint orally or in writing. Complaints are answered within 30 days in writing. All the above stated processes are described in the internal set of rules of the centre.

Children and parents contribute to planning and organization of activities (and operation) only to a limited extent. The aim is to motivate the parents in particular towards higher involvement.

There is no record of the families of the children. The families in this locality show strong cohesion.

Examples of good practice

We see stimulative educational course and tutoring as examples of good practice. There is also a regular contact with class-teachers from various schools, who deal with possible educational and behavioral problems. Some class-teachers supervise the lecturers of the stimulative course and tutoring.

Personnel

There are 13 full-time employees paid from the City of Brno – Northern District budget. Additionally, there are 25 people employed in relation to various projects and grants. About ten people volunteer throughout the year. The adjusted level of education of the employees is varied. However, the head and his deputy have a university degree. The lecturers of stimulative course and tutoring have a university degree in education (3 women). All employees need to follow the Ethical code of employees.

Financial background

Funding (subsidies, gifts) comes from various sources. The biggest part of the financial means is contributed by the City of Brno council and the European Social Fund, Phare, the Ministry of education, youth and sports, etc. The accounts are kept in compliance with law and economic rules. The handling of funds is regularly checked by the establisher and donors. The reports of handling of the financial means are included in annual reports.

Evidence of the impact

The positive effects of the out of school care for children (including children from disadvantaged background) provided by various facilities show on the supportive attitudes of parents, who can thus assert themselves in the labor market and be permanently employed (this applies particularly to women and single parents). The operating hours comply with the usual working hours. All of the facilities fill an educational as well as social function. They present a significant benefit particularly to poor families (possibly Roma families), who can not afford to pay for private out of school care. The fees for taking advantage of these facilities are marginal (school youth centre) or they are free of charge (for example. Drom – Romany centre).

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