

# Czech Republic Country Fiche



## IO 1: Guide for Positive

*“Boosting positive narrative on Romani integration through Arts” with  
reference number 2020-1-CZ01-KA204-078214*

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## Introduction

### **Theory of Bohemia / Bohemians**

In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Roma came to France from Bohemia and that is why they called them Bohemians (Hováthová, 2002, p. 15). The word has survived to this day, but its meaning has become more general as a name for persons feeding on art. The fact that the term Bohemia is historically connected with the Roma in present Czech Republic disappeared. However we can still find certain common features. Most artists like the Roma are living a tumultuous and unconventional life, oppose conservatism and defend themselves against the crowd. They are often extroverted, without permanent employment and live unsystematically. (Horváthová, 2002, p. 15.)

### **Historical excursion (with the focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Roma have been coming to the territory of today's Czech Republic since the end of the 14th century. During the second world war, most of the Czech Roma died in the concentration camps being targeted as both the asocial group and members of "unclean race". After the war, the Roma from Slovakia were offered to settle down along the Czech borders, especially in the areas left after the Sudetenland Germans. Roma, sometimes even by force, started to move into the Czech industrial regions where a cheap labor was needed. After the communist coup in 1948, the status of the Roma as a nationality was repealed and the Roma were officially recognized only as a socially backward ethnic group.

After November 1989, the Roma got organized into many political and non-political parties and movements and in 1991 their status as a national minority was again adopted by the Federal Constitution. ROI (Romani Civic Initiative), joining OF (Civic Forum, the strongest political party led by today's president Václav Havel) entered

Parliament after 1990 election with a Romani party, therefore Romani representatives are no longer in Parliament.

The situation of the Roma after 1989 has changed a lot, in both good and bad ways. There is a raising number of NGOs which try to bring up different projects concerning improvement of schooling for the Romani children, housing conditions, employment issues etc. On the other hand we can see that in the process of socio-economic transformation, the Roma are first to be fired and last to be hired and their living conditions put them to the very end of social hierarchy within the Czech society.

Together with the collapse of totalitarian regime, different expressions of Czech nationalism grow up. Roma people became favorite target of skinhead's attacks and according to the Human Rights Watch "police continue to harass Romanies and are often indifferent and slow to react to attacks". Many Roma are repeatedly excluded from both public and private services. Also the Czech citizenship law passed after the split was reported by international organizations (including CSCE, UNHCR, Dept. of State Annual Report and others) as discriminatory towards the Roma as many of them have not only been refused an access to the Czech Republic but some of them even ended up being stateless.

### **Composition of the Roma population**

The Roma, living within Czech republic, might be divided into five basic groups: Slovak Roma, Czech Roma, Hungarian Roma, Vlax (Olašské) Roma and Sinti. Most of the Roma in present Czech Republic come from the first mentioned group, Slovak Roma make up about 75–85% of all Roma population. Another important branch of the Roma nation is the Olašské Roma (about 10%), who began to come from Hungarian Wallachia in the second half of the 19th century, and the remaining part consists of originally Hungarian Roma and a small number of German Sinti.

## Statistical Information about Romani in Czech Republic and their characteristics

Based on the qualified estimates of the coordinators for Roma minority affairs, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic works with an estimated 240,300 ethnic Roma living in Czech Republic in 2017, which is about 2.2% of the population of the country. A total of 40,370 people mentioned Romani languages as their mother tongue (or one of their mother tongues). According to estimates by the European Center for Roma Rights in 2003, there are between 250,000 and 300,000 Roma in the Czech Republic. For comparison, however, it is important to note that in the 2011 Census of Population, Housing and Dwellings, 13,150 persons registered with the Roma national minority, which was less than 0.1% of the population. Despite the fact that this is already a considerably outdated figure, this is the last official statistic of the Roma population in the Czech Republic. There can be several reasons for the low level of self-declaration of the Roma, such as fear of stigmatization, discrimination only after not perceiving one's own person as a member of a national minority.

### **Current Situation – A problem of poverty**

Poverty and social exclusion represent one of the key problems faced by the Czech society today. The share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the Czech Republic currently reaches only 14.6%, which puts the Czech Republic below the EU-28 average, which is 24.7%<sup>1</sup>, but this is no great reason for optimism. In today's Czech Republic, poverty or social exclusion threaten approximately 1.5 million people, including nearly 100,000 children below 6 years of age and almost 180,000 of people over 65 years of age (Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech

Republic, GAC, 2015) Moreover, we should not feel reassured by international comparisons. Statistics define the state of being at risk of poverty based on the median income. However, even if adjusted for local costs, the Czech median income is much lower than the European average. In real terms, a Czech household at risk of poverty is therefore significantly poorer than a household at risk of poverty in Germany or Sweden.

As the sociologist Daniel Prokop points out (Daniel Prokop, Zdroje tekutého hněvu. Už nezapírejme chudobu. Aktualne.cz., 2013), Czech poor households are much more affected by price increases. For example, in the years 2005-2012 the prices of food went up by more than 25%, housing and energy prices increased by 60% and healthcare costs by 62%. Thus, for pensioners and poor people, for whom these costs amount to a great share of their household budgets, the increase in the cost of living was more than 1.5 times greater than for the average Czech citizen. The level of indebtedness of poor households has also grown significantly over the last decade. In addition, a number of studies comparing different education systems have clearly shown that in the Czech Republic the generations growing up in poverty have a hard time escaping it. The Czech education system does not offer everyone equal educational opportunities and students' results are greatly influenced by the social status of their parents.

The Roma in the Czech Republic are among the groups most affected by social exclusion with all the negative consequences of this phenomenon. Specifically: low educational attainment, high unemployment, poor quality of housing and crime. The attitudes of the Czech Republic also show a strong anti-Roma attitude. The coexistence of the Roma and the majority society is not ideal or problem-free. In everyday life, prejudices appear on both sides, misunderstanding, mistrust as well as discriminatory or hate speech behaviour are frequent.

### **Roma antipathy**

According to the Center for Public Opinion Research of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Republics from March 2020, the Roma, together with the Arabs, provoke the greatest antipathy among the respondents. About 70% of respondents considered the Roma to be "rather" or "very unsympathetic" The comparison shown in Table 1 confirms that the degree of sympathy or antipathy to those listed nationalities is more or less stable throughout the period under review.

*Relation to national minorities (Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Vietnamese, Jews, Germans, Bulgarians, Russians, Ukrainians, in the Czech Republic in %*

**Tabulka 1: Vztah k národnostním skupinám žijícím v ČR (%)<sup>1</sup>**

	Velmi sympatičtí (1)	Spíše sympatičtí (2)	Ani sympatičtí, ani nesympatičtí (3)	Spíše nesympatičtí (4)	Velmi nesympatičtí (5)	Nevím	průměr
Češi	47	38	13	2	0	0	1,70
Slováci	41	43	12	3	1	0	1,79
Poláci	13	38	34	10	3	2	2,51
Maďaři	7	28	44	11	4	6	2,74
Vietnamci	6	34	38	17	4	1	2,80
Židé	6	27	40	11	6	10	2,82
Němci	5	32	37	18	6	2	2,88
Bulhaři	5	25	42	15	5	8	2,88
Rusové	5	20	39	24	10	1	3,15
Ukrajinci	2	22	40	25	10	1	3,18
Číňané	2	16	37	26	13	6	3,34
Rumuni	2	14	37	30	10	7	3,35
Arabové	1	6	20	35	34	4	3,98
Romové	1	4	23	36	35	1	4,02

Pozn.: V tabulce jsou národnosti srovnány podle pořadí tak, jak se umístily v průměru podle oblíbenosti.

Zdroj: CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, Naše společnost 29. 2. – 11. 3. 2020, 1012 respondentů starších 15 let, osobní rozhovor.

source: <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/ostatni/vztahy-a-zivotni-postoje/5203-vztah-ceske-verejnosti-k-narodnostnim-skupinam-zijicim-v-cr-brezen-2020>

## The problem of so called excluded localities

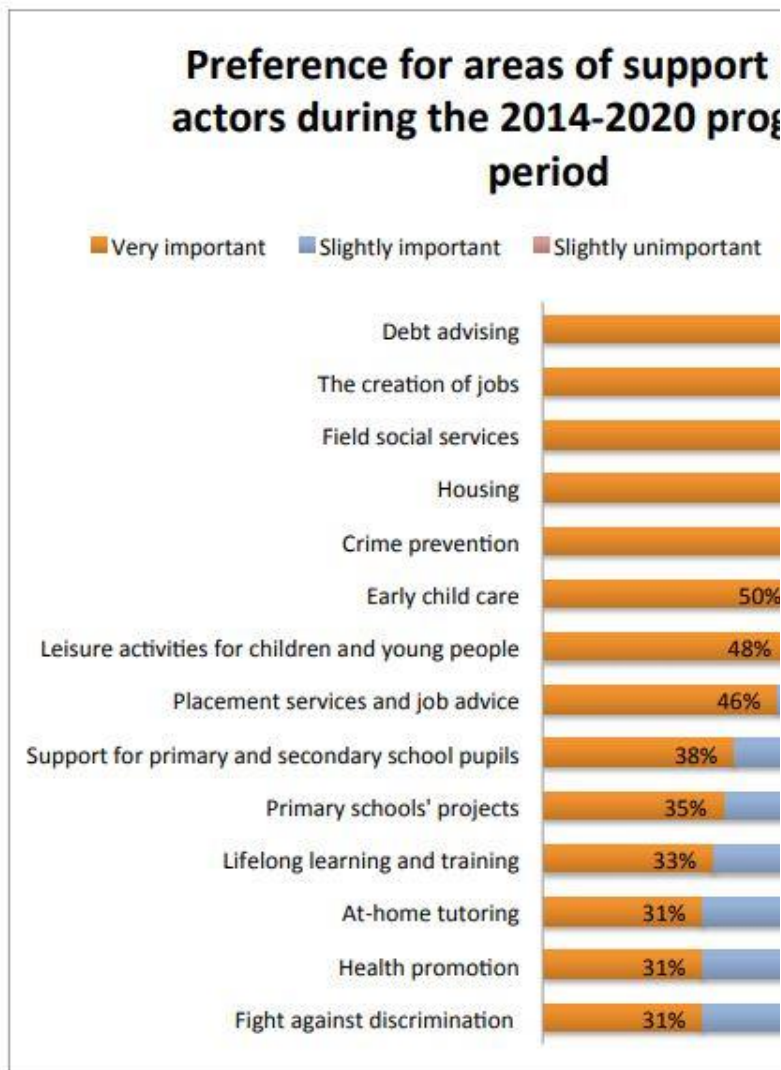


According to the Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic

([https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic\\_2.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic_2.pdf)) commissioned by the Ministry of Labor years ago, in 2006 there were around 300 slums, streets or neighborhoods in the Czech Republic with about 80,000 inhabitants. Ten years later, there were already over 600 ghettos and up to 115,000 inhabitants predominantly of Roma origin. They were dependent on benefits and without work, had debts, low education or other problems.

According to Analysis, the situation was exacerbated by the economic crisis and stagnation in 2009 to 2013 and people moved to more remote places. Poor localities disintegrated into smaller units. In 2006, an average of 271 inhabitants lived in the excluded place, in 2015 the number of average inhabitants living in the poor locality had dropped to 188.

About half of the Roma population lives in such excluded localities. Hence we can argue that socially excluded localities are generally becoming more fragmented, disintegrating into an ever-greater number of smaller units. The socially excluded inhabitants tend to relocate or be relocated to more isolated localities. The numbers of people living in these localities are derived from estimates made in the context of field research. These estimates were based on observations carried out by researchers and on information provided by local actors. It is crucial to keep in mind that no absolutely reliable official statistics exist (for example, the data on permanent residence is inadequate, the 2011 Census of population and housing no longer reflects the current situation). Only those dormitories that have been identified as housing socially excluded persons were taken into account. However, not all of them are used exclusively by the socially excluded. Some are used by migrant workers or as temporary housing for individuals who do not show signs of social exclusion. Social exclusion in the Czech Republic is losing its predominantly urban character.



In the Czech context, the concept of social exclusion has been clearly dominant in both the analytical and the practical approach to poverty. Czech studies reveal certain characteristics that are specific to the domestic environment. Firstly, the definition is founded primarily on the material and spatial dimensions of social exclusion. In this case, a socially excluded locality equals a neglected locality. In addition to the material and spatial dimensions, these definitions also foreground the symbolic dimension. Such localities are simply seen as “Roma” localities -- even those in which the Roma do not constitute a statistical majority. Their boundaries can also be symbolic (e.g. the locality is perceived as “a bad address”; people describe it as “the house of horror”, “ghetto”, “Bronx”, and so on

## Good Practices in pedagogical techniques and methodologies using arts for social inclusion groups inclusion

### **Artherapy with Roma children in the school club of Grammar School of 28 October in Brno**

Artherapy is simply a “treatment” by using art techniques. As the name suggests, it should be a therapy, but in this case it is not a real therapy. Rather, it involves the use of certain methods of art therapy, artistic and other artistic creativity so it has a positive impact on individuals from socially excluded backgrounds. For children, it is an effort to shape the characters and set life values and good attitudes. The school club is a school facility of the 28. October Municipal School in Brno city. The school is introducing policy open to the children and their parents. The club is located directly in the school, in the morning it is used mainly as a computer room, second-graders can come here in the afternoon to participate in creating the school magazine *Amaro jilo*, learning to work with computers, singing and dancing or to improve in German or mathematics. There are also a football and a floorball team. The club serves weekly to about 150 children from 11 to 15 years of age.

### **Palánek center in the city of Vyškov**

Playful and experimental learning helps to support the development of Roma children in the South Moravian city of Vyškov, where socially disadvantaged Roma children needed help with school curriculum and also with how to spend meaningfully their leisure time. IQ Roma organization started afternoon support activities and help with tutoring. Due to the limited resources of the counseling center, it was not possible to address everyone's capacities individually, so it was created regular group tutoring in the counseling center Palánek. Group tutoring now

takes place twice a week and is it open for 3 hours to every child in need. Using various techniques that included art therapy, solving problems through theater or dance, helped children learn through play and improve their communication skills. Visits and specials excursions to local firefighters, rugby team or to Museum of Romani culture in Brno and to other institutions also showed them how meaningfully one can spend his or her free time. IQ Roma service organization also takes care individually and boosts children's self-confidence. Children now communication with each other decently and are aware of the consequences of their behavior for the future. Children even come to the center an hour before is the official start of group activities so they can spend together more time.

Other activities are for example voluntary cleaning of local areas which has positive impact on the way kids perceive and treat their surroundings. This all helped them gained a greater sense of self-worth and importance to others. What is important to mention is that more than 50% of children have maintained or improved their grades at school. And teachers have noticed an increase in abilities and skills of their pupils. These changes lead to a general improvement in cooperation between the city, the school organization and the local Roma community. The city has taken the initiatives in addressing the current problems and perceives IQ Roma service organization as a useful and important partner. (Roma MATRIX příručka dobré praxe 4. Integrace romských a neromských dětí a rodičů v oblasti vzdělávání).

### **The World Roma Festival „Khamoro“**

Khamoro (the Word comes from Romani and means sunshine) is an international Romani festival held annually in the city of Prague, Czech Republic. It belongs to the most prestigious Roma projects on an international level with top international Roma musicians performing. The five-day-long festival is held in May on the streets of Prague and in a number of the city's clubs. The festival is divided into three sections: the Expert Section, which includes

seminars, Culture Section, which consists of music, dancing, and parades, and Media Section, which provides the information leading up to the festiva

### **Museum of Romany Culture in Brno**



*The main building of the Mueum in Brno, Bratislavská street*

Museum of Romany Culture in Brno is the only museum in Europe of its kind. Museum serves as a documentary and research centre of the culture and history of Roma people. It was founded in 1991 by members of the Czech Romani intelligentsia in the period of freedom which followed so called Velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia in November 1989. The museum's early days were difficult - initially it was based in just one small office, and In December 2000 it moved to its present more spacious building on Bratislavská Street in Brno, owned by the local council. The institution is state funded under the Ministry of Culture of

the Czech Republic. From its beginning in 1991 the Museum is led by Jana Horváthová, leading Roma historian, ethnographer and museum expert. Museum has the permanent exhibition called "Story of Roma", smaller exhibitions of mostly Romani artists, and extensive collections of Romani art, documents, books, movies, photographs, textile, crafting tools or jewellery. Museum offers lectured programs on Roma art, history, holocaust etc. for schools as well as individuals and all the activities aim at Roma people (especially children

### **The Memorial: Camp Lety**

Camp Lety was established on the outskirts of Lety in today's south Bohemian district of Písek as a disciplinary labour camp and later, during World War II, a collection camp and a so-called „gypsy“ camp. There were people whom the Protectorate authorities considered to be gypsies, i.e. mainly Czech Roma. They were held in inhumane conditions and most of them deceased here or later in other concentration camps. An agricultural enterprise – a large-capacity pig farm – was built on the site in 1970s . A memorial was set up at the pig farm in 1990s; in August 2017, the government decided to buy and demolish the pig farm and build a memorial. In 2017 the Czech Government released 111,5 mil. CZK (aproximately 4,5 mil. EUR) of funds for demolition and archaeological research in the locality. Since 2018, the Museum of Romani Culture has been administering the premises of the former pig farm as well as the Cultural Monument of Lety.

he Museum of Romani Culture is currently carrying out maintenance works in the vicinity of the pig farm. Preparations are underway to announce a landscape architectural competition for the design of a new monument. The information center in the village of Lety (Municipal Office) is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm.

## List of items /Publications

Methods of teaching Roma pupils, Jaroslav Balvín, Praha, Publishing House Redix, Prague, 2007

Chapters from the History of Roma, Jana Horváthová Lidové noviny Publishing House, 2002

ROMA CHILD "AFTER SCHOOL", The importance of Romani culture, family, school and informal, (extra-family and out-of-school) environment for education Roma children, Aneta Vomlelová, Bachelor theses, České Budějovice, 2011

History of the Roma - Selected Chapters from the History of the Roma in Western Europe, in the Czech Lands and in Slovakia, Bartoloměj Daniel, Olomouc, 1994

<https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2018/cesta-ke-spolecnemu-vzdelavani-romskych-a-neromskych-deti/>

Analysis of Socially Excluded Localities in the Czech Republic, GAC spo. S.r.o., 2015  
[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic\\_2.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic_2.pdf)

Daniel Prokop points out (Prokop, D. (2013): Zdroje tekutého hněvu. Už nezapírejme chudobu. Aktualne.cz.),

<https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/nazory-a-komentare/komentar-zdroje-tekuteho-hnevu-uz-nezapirejme-chudobu/r~a86dfe163cd611e3bd2b0025900fea04/>

<https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/ostatni/vztahy-a-zivotni-postoje/5203-vztah-ceske-verejnosti-k-narodnostnim-skupinam-zijicim-v-cr-brezen-2020>

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic\\_2.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/InformalSettlements/PublicDefenderCzechRepublic_2.pdf)

## Conclusions

Musical, artistic as well as physical activities are natural for Romani children and many of them show real talent in these activities. It is important to take this educational area more freely and focus on development of competencies, skills and abilities that are important for pupils. Romani students often do not have the stamina, they like to change activities and they like to dance or sing. They have also a significant artistic talent and therefore also artistic activity is natural to them. However, the educational system does not support them at all in the development of their talents and simply is too rigid to react on individual needs. The system strictly defines the boundaries and it is almost impossible to express ones' imagination. Romani children have to be guided systematically throughout their schooling and also they have to be provided with enough space in order to see expected positive outcomes in mid-term perspectives.

The cooperation of all actors involved in the field of education is essential for successful integration. These are mainly state and regional institutions, the municipality, school management, teachers and, of course, also pupils and their parents. An important role is also played by non-profit organizations that are showing greater flexibility in approaching the problem.

In its report on the joint education of Roma and non-Roma children (2018), the Ombudsman's Office identified 10 measures that can contribute to successful joint education:

1. Quality joint pre-school education of Roma and non-Roma children,
2. Appropriate setting of school districts,



3. Distribution or escort of pupils to more distant schools (bussing) with the aim of achieving an equal representation of Roma and non-Roma pupils in schools in the municipality,
4. The school's conviction about the usefulness of joint education and its explicit declaration in its school curriculum,
5. Good preparation of teachers for ethnically heterogeneous class groups (further education, sharing good practice between schools, observation in schools, mentoring),
6. Assistance of other (non) pedagogical staff of the school (pedagogical assistants, social pedagogues, school assistants, mediators) and support of external subjects in the locality,
7. Creating opportunities for Roma and non-Roma families to meet in order to improve mutual relations,
8. Tutoring and mentoring of pupils,
9. Prevention of bullying and setting a friendly school climate,
10. Helping low-income families with financial costs for education.

In the research investigation of the Ombudsman's Office, a research investigation was conducted on the topic of segregation in education. The respondents were principals and other staff of ten schools who have experience with joint / separate education of Roma and non-Roma pupils.

Respondents identified segregation in housing, inactivity or inappropriate intervention by the founder, disapproval of some parents with co-education, less willingness of some schools to accept Roma children, withdrawal of pupils with a higher need for support to segregated schools and absence of a systemic solution and political support as the main causes of segregated education. In addition to the ten desegregation measures mentioned above, respondents considered it important to build the school's reputation in order to attract non-Roma pupils and meet regularly with stakeholders (municipal police, non-profit organizations, other schools, city management). Addressed school directors basically perceive the separate education of Roma and non-Roma pupils as a problem, they would like to change the situation, but they do not have the know how. Often schools have only limited options for dealing with the situation. The key is the initiative of the municipality as the founder.