

Chapter 2

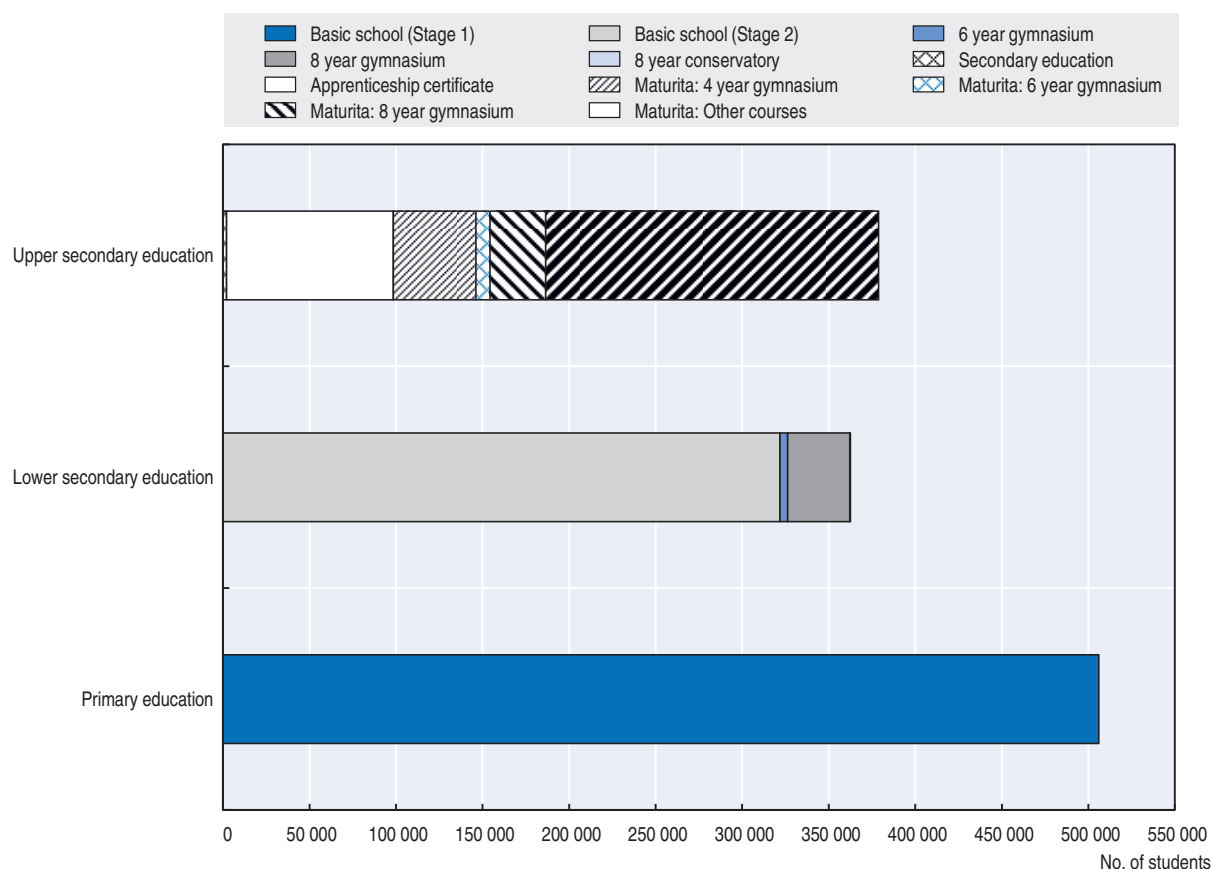
Governance of schooling and the school network in the Czech Republic

This chapter focuses on the framework of governance applied to schooling in the Czech Republic and on how the school network is organised. It looks at the oversight and management of the schooling system at the national, regional, municipal and school level and considers how different regions face different challenges to their respective network of schools. It considers the strengths and challenges inherent in the current system and makes policy recommendations designed to improve the governance of how resources are used effectively.

Context and features

As presented in Chapter 1, a steep decline in the school age population during the 1990s and 2000s majorly impacted the Czech school network. In the school year 2013/14, the Czech Republic educated 367 352 children in pre-school education, 868 934 students in basic education, that is primary and lower secondary education, and 378 754 students in upper secondary education (MŠMT, 2014). Figure 2.1 presents an overview of the current distribution of Czech students across the three main stages of schooling: first stage of basic education (primary education); second stage of basic education (lower secondary education); and secondary education (upper secondary education).

Figure 2.1. **Students enrolled in different levels of education, 2013/14**



Note: Secondary education is equivalent to lower secondary education in the international standard classification of education systems, but is presented as upper secondary education here to reflect the Czech school system and the typical age that students study this.

Source: MŠMT (2014), Výroční zpráva o stavu a rozvoji vzdělávání v České republice v roce 2013: Vzdělávání v roce 2013 v datech [Annual Report on the Status and Development of Education in the Czech Republic in 2013: Education in 2013], www.msmt.cz/file/33944/, Table 10.

Shared responsibilities within the school network

There are four major tiers of governance in the Czech school system. This has been the case since 2002-03 (Chapter 1). Responsibilities for organising and providing education in the public sector at different stages are broadly split as follows: first and second stages of basic education (municipalities); secondary education (regions). However, there are some complexities, including the organisation of some specialised school provision by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and by regions at the second stage of basic education. In secondary education, there is also a well-established private sector (see below).

1. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) establishes the legal framework for the school system (and higher education) and sets parameters for the organisation of schooling. Notably, the MŠMT takes the lead on developing the long-term strategic orientations for the Czech school system – the current strategy has been established for a period of five years and constitutes a key steering document, the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (here after “Strategy 2020”). Based on this, a long-term plan for implementation of the strategy was being finalised around the time of the OECD review visit. The Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for the Period 2015-20 is now available in Czech on a dedicated website to the Strategy 2020 (www.vzdelavani2020.cz/).

The MŠMT also oversees the development of national curricula (the Framework Education Programmes) and holds overall responsibility for the School Registry of Schools and School Facilities (here after “school registry”). At the time of the OECD review visit, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) had 986 employees. The majority of these (513 employees) was funded with European Union (EU) grants and the remaining (473 employees) by the state.

At the central level, there are a number of specialised bodies to support the implementation of MŠMT policies. The major bodies include:

- National Institute of Education (NÚV): The NÚV is directly managed and funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Its main objectives are:
 - ❖ to manage the development of Framework Education Programmes (FEP) and assist schools in creating their School Educational Programmes (SEP) as well as their introduction into teaching
 - ❖ to broadly promote the development of general, vocational, art and language education and support schools in the pedagogical-psychological, educational and career counselling and further education of teachers (with an emphasis on lifelong learning and co-operation with the EU).
- Centre for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (CERMAT): CERMAT was founded in 2006 and is directly managed and funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Its main objectives are:
 - ❖ to manage the common part of the state school-leaving examination (the *maturita*). The first *maturita* were organised in 2010
 - ❖ to prepare the proposals of the standards of evaluation of learning outcomes based on the curricula for approval by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

- ❖ to conduct research in the field of forms, tools and methods of assessment of learning outcomes.

CERMAT provides results of the *maturita* to regional education offices and they choose whether or not to publish these.

- Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI): The ČŠI is administrative body of the Czech Republic and part of the state organisational bodies. The MŠMT appoints (and dismisses) the chief school inspector. The ČŠI has its headquarters in Prague and 14 regional inspectorates. Its main objectives include:
 - ❖ evaluating operations in all schools and school facilities (e.g. school canteens, youth dormitories) which are in the school registry (inspectors visit schools established by various founders – state, private or church schools)
 - ❖ controlling compliance with legal regulations related to the provision of education and school services and checking and auditing state budget funding
 - ❖ producing school inspection reports (on each school inspected), thematic reports and audit protocols
 - ❖ analysing and publishing relevant and broadly usable data on conditions and quality of the Czech education system, including an annual school inspection report.

2. Fourteen Czech self-governing regions

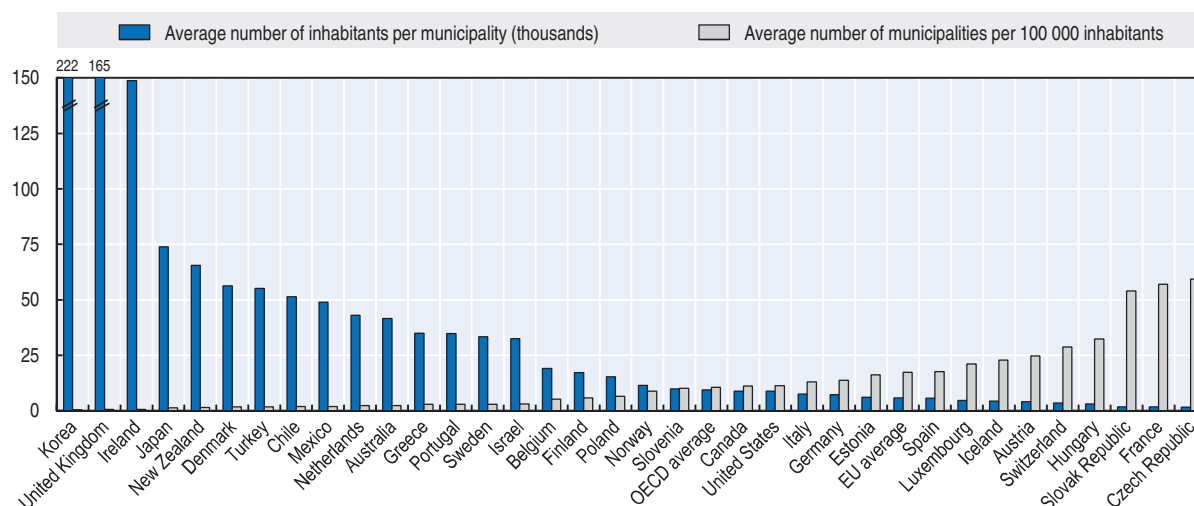
The fourteen Czech self-governing regions are responsible for setting long-term development plans for their school systems. The regional long-term development plans should align to the national long-term development plan, but also include specific goals and objectives to fit the regional context. This is also an important steering tool for the Czech regions and the importance of the design of a specific regional development plan is underlined by the considerable differences in economic and educational context among the Czech regions (Chapter 1). The Czech regions are responsible for organising upper secondary educational provision. Also, the Czech regions distribute the state funding for “teaching costs” to all schools in their region, including those run by municipalities (see Chapter 3).

3. Over 6 000 self-governing municipalities

The third tier comprises the Czech municipalities, of which there are over 6 000 (Chapter 1, Table 1.2). The high number of municipalities and low average population in each municipality places the Czech Republic as the OECD country with the highest level of municipal fragmentation (Figure 2.2). Since 1990, the Czech municipalities have been responsible for organising and providing pre-school and basic education. However, less than half (2 560) of the municipalities operate at least one school (Table 2.7). Although municipalities are responsible for providing basic education, in 2013/14, 4.6% of students in the second stage of basic education (lower secondary education) were in schools run by the Czech regions, following either eight-year programmes (4.1%) or six-year programmes in a *gymnasium* (Figure 2.1).

4. Schools

As part of the process of decentralisation, the concept of schools as independent legal entities was fully introduced in 2003, when this was made mandatory for all schools. As independent legal entities, schools enter legal relations under their own name and bear full responsibility for these. The status of independent legal entities has given school

Figure 2.2. **Municipal fragmentation in international comparison, 2014/15**

Source: OECD (2015c), Subnational governments in OECD countries: Key data (brochure), OECD, Paris.

principals greater autonomy for decisions about financial matters, for the management of the school property to the extent determined by the school founder, for the independent management of labour affairs, the possible development of additional school activities and the management of own profits and losses, as well as their own accounting (see Chapter 5). While all schools are independent legal entities, public schools can have three specific legal forms: subsidised organisations, school legal entities, or organisational units of the state. School principals at schools which have the legal status of a subsidised organisation or a school legal entity, that is most public schools, are the authorised body of these schools and as such hold full responsibility for the quality of education, the management and administration of the school, the school's budget and finances, human resource management, and community relations.

These legal changes mean that, in international comparison, Czech schools enjoy high levels of autonomy: lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic make 68.0% of key decisions, compared to an OECD average of 40.6% (see Figure 5.2).¹ In fact, the Czech Republic is one of four countries (others are Australia, Iceland and the Slovak Republic) where there was a trend toward greater decision making at the school level between 2003 and 2011 (OECD, 2012, Indicator D6).

School autonomy is comparatively large in all domains – from the organisation of instruction and personnel management to planning and structures – with the exception of resource management where school autonomy is similar to the OECD average (Table 2.1).² However, the majority of school-level decisions are taken against a framework set by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Table 2.1). For example, for curricular issues, schools have substantial autonomy through the development of School Educational Programmes (SEP) as long as they are in line with national Framework Education Programmes (FEP).

A differentiated and broad educational offer

In international comparison, the Czech school system is one of the most differentiated, meaning that there is a number of different educational programmes and school types

Table 2.1. **Percentage of decisions taken at the school level in public lower secondary education, 2011**

	Czech Republic		OECD average		
	In full autonomy	Within a framework set by a higher authority	In full autonomy	Within a framework set by a higher authority	Other
Organisation of instruction	22	78	39	30	6
Personnel management	33	33	16	12	3
Planning and structures	0	70	3	20	0
Resource management	19	17	21	10	1

Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>, Tables D6.4a and b.

offering different provision at the second stage of basic education (lower secondary) and secondary education (upper secondary education, both general, technical and vocational). From as young as 11 years of age, Czech children may attend a special school type offering a specialised educational provision. This is much younger than in the OECD on average (14 years, see Chapter 1, Table 1.6).

At the first stage of basic education, Czech children may attend a basic art school which provides a basic education with a specialised focus on dance, music and art. Despite the general context of a reduced student population in basic education, these enjoy high enrolment and remain popular.

At the second stage of basic education, students may attend eight-year or six-year programmes at a *gymnasium* (4.6% of students at the second stage of basic education in 2013/14, see Figure 2.1). These schools are organised by the Czech regions and in some cases also providers in the private sector. Czech children may also choose to follow the second step of specialised education in the arts and attend a *conservatoire* (in 2013/14, a negligible proportion of students in the second stage of basic education did so, see Figure 2.1).

The provision of upper secondary education is the responsibility of the Czech regions and is primarily organised along the lines of the final qualification that students work toward. In 2013/14, at the upper secondary level, 74.1% of students were in educational programmes leading to a *maturita* certificate (Figure 2.1). The *maturita* certificate can be achieved in both general education (in *gymnasia*) and technical education (in secondary technical schools [*střední odborné školy*, SOŠ]). In secondary technical schools, students can follow four-year technical programmes or *lyceum* programmes with a curriculum including up to 70% of general education (Cedefop, 2015).

In 2013/14, 25.4% of Czech upper secondary students were in educational programmes leading to an apprenticeship certificate (Figure 2.1). These are three-year vocational programmes, usually provided by secondary vocational schools (SoU), that prepare students to directly enter the labour market and perform manual work and similar occupations, e.g. bricklayer, hairdresser (Cedefop, 2015). There is a huge diversity in vocational programmes (there can be hundreds of different programmes in a region, see also Chapter 3). The fields of vocational education are organised and planned by the Czech regions.

A negligible proportion of students (0.5%) complete a “secondary education” programme, which is the international equivalent of a lower secondary education qualification. These programmes are offered by “practical schools” or secondary vocational schools (SoU) and are designed primarily for students with special educational needs (Cedefop, 2015). Such programmes aim to prepare students to directly enter the job market.

The private sector mainly provides upper secondary education, but recent increases in basic education

In 1990, an amendment to the Education Act introduced the possibility to establish privately managed schools. The aim was to extend educational possibilities in line with the interests of students and the needs on the labour market and to create a competitive environment in the school system (MŠMT, forthcoming). In 2012/13, 6.4% of Czech students were enrolled in privately managed schools.

Czech statistics distinguish between “church schools” and “private schools”. Privately managed schools entered in the school registry receive public funding to cover teaching costs. Church schools receive 100% of the per capita national normatives, while private schools receive basic grants of between 50% to 80% of the per capita national normatives, which can be increased to 80% to 100% if the private school meets a certain set of criteria. Private schools enter into an annual contract with the relevant regional authority which sets the percentage of funding allocation. However, church schools receive their funding allocation directly from the Ministry of Education and some may receive an increased normative amount to also cover operational costs.

In 2012/13, 1.4% of Czech students were in schools established by registered churches and religious societies (MŠMT, forthcoming). Representatives of the Czech Bishops Conference reported that there are 140 denominational schools, all but one of which are Christian (95 Roman Catholic, 44 Protestant, 1 Jewish). The proportion of students enrolled outside the public sector has remained fairly stable since 2005/06 (6.6%). Compared to in other OECD countries, the private sector is less developed in the Czech Republic at the primary and lower secondary levels, that is, the Czech basic schools (Table 2.2), but since 2005/06 there has been a minor expansion in church schools offering basic education (MŠMT, forthcoming).

Table 2.2. Proportion of students in private schools in international comparison, 2012

	Pre-primary education			Primary			Lower secondary			Upper secondary		
	Public	Government-dependent private	Independent private	Public	Government-dependent private	Independent private	Public	Government-dependent private	Independent private	Public	Government-dependent private	Independent private
Austria	70	30	..	94	6	..	91	9	..	90	10	..
Czech Republic	98	2	x	98	2	x	97	3	x	86	14	x
Germany	35	65	..	96	4	..	91	9	..	92	8	..
Hungary	93	7	x	89	11	x	88	12	x	76	24	x
Poland	84	1	14	97	1	3	95	1	4	85	1	14
Slovak Republic	96	4	0	94	6	0	93	7	0	85	15	0
OECD average	68	20	11	89	8	2	86	11	3	81	14	5
EU21 average	75	15	11	90	8	2	86	12	2	82	14	4

x: not applicable.

.. : not available and included in the column to the left.

Source: OECD (2014), *OECD Economic Surveys: Czech Republic 2014*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-cze-2014-en, Table C7.1.

At the upper secondary level, however, the proportion of students enrolled in the private sector is around the OECD average (Table 2.2). In the Moravian-Silesian region, the

Czech Republic's second most densely populated region (Figure 1.A1.1), out of the 909 schools in the region, 95 are in the private sector. While 0.7% of 6-14 year-old students are enrolled in the private sector, 18.1% of 15-18 year-old students are (data provided to the OECD review team by representatives of the Moravian-Silesian region). A specificity of the Czech private school sector is the predominant offer of vocational education (MŠMT, forthcoming). The PISA 2012 sample included 7.4% of students who were enrolled in privately managed schools (the sample includes both students at the lower and upper secondary levels of education) and showed no performance differences to those students in public schools – this stands in contrast to on average in the OECD where there is a clear performance advantage for students in private schools (OECD, 2014, Table IV.4.7).

A relatively large special education sector

For many years, the approach to educating children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic has been based on a classification with three broad categories of special needs: a health disability; a health disadvantage; or a social disadvantage. At the time of the OECD review, the MŠMT was working on a new classification system with five broad categories. According to legal regulations in force in the area of the school system, there are two ways of educating students with special educational needs: i) individual integration; and ii) group integration (special classes both in normal schools and in schools designed for students with a specific learning challenge) (MŠMT, forthcoming). Table 2.3 gives the numbers and percentages of children in mainstream and special classes for different levels of schooling.

Table 2.3. Trend in number and proportion of children with special educational needs

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Pre-schools					
Children individually integrated into mainstream classes	1 780	1 911	2 032	2 156	2 299
Share of children integrated in mainstream (%)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Number of children in special classes	7 190	7 325	7 478	7 611	7 764
Share of children in special classes (%)	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1
Basic schools					
Individually integrated into mainstream classes	34 761	36 226	39 160	40 888	43 352
Share of children integrated in mainstream (%)	4.4	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.2
Number of children in special classes	37 040	34 497	32 631	31 222	30 277
Share of children in special classes (%)	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.7
Secondary schools					
Individually integrated into mainstream classes	6 284	6 532	7 295	7 807	8 872
Share of children integrated in mainstream (%)	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.8	2.1
Number of children in special classes	13 444	12 199	11 830	11 353	11 004
Share of children in special classes (%)	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.6

Source: MŠMT (2014), *Výroční zpráva o stavu a rozvoji vzdělávání v České republice v roce 2013: Vzdělávání v roce 2013 v datech* [Annual Report on the Status and Development of Education in the Czech Republic in 2013: Education in 2013], www.msmt.cz/file/33944/, Table 29.

A set of school advisory facilities is responsible for both diagnosing and providing support to children and students with special educational needs (as established in Decree No. 72/2005 on providing advisory services at schools and in-school advisory facilities). A professional diagnosis by a school advisory facility can lead to a child being certified as having a special educational need. The parents or legal guardians must then decide on the type of

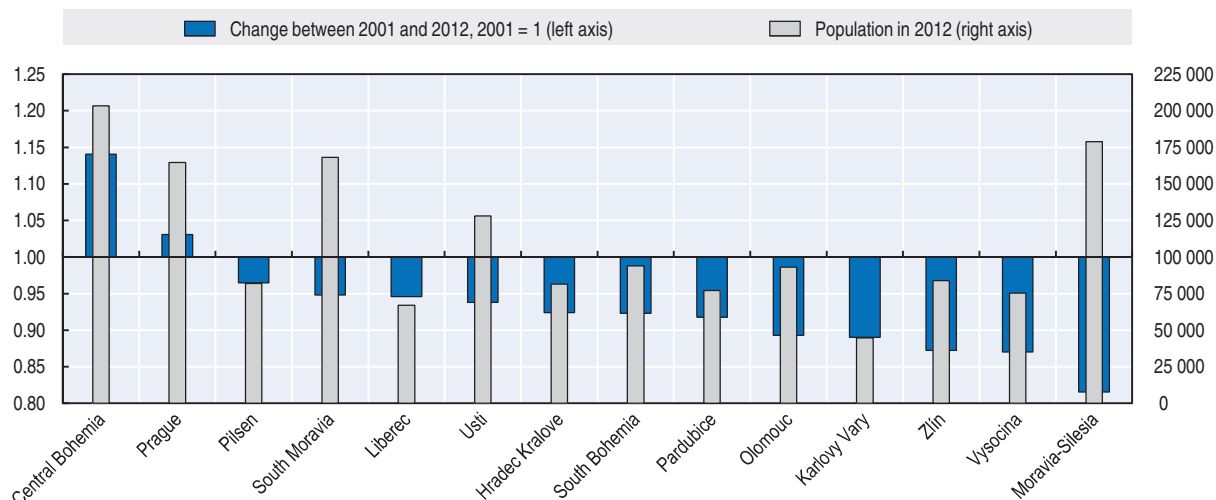
education that the child will follow and must give their consent if a child is to follow special classes (with reduced curriculum) in mainstream schools or to attend a special education school. Schools providing education to students with certified special educational needs can benefit from additional resources in a variety of ways. For example, special teaching aids, diagnostic tools, special textbooks and other materials and/or additional human resources, including teacher assistants and school psychologists (MŠMT, forthcoming).

Different educational planning challenges for different Czech regions

Decreasing birth rates during the 1980s and 1990s has been one of the biggest challenges to the Czech school system (MŠMT, forthcoming; also Chapter 1). Despite the fact that the birth rates started to increase from 2002, over the period 2001 to 2012 the Czech population of children under the age of 15 decreased by 4%. However, due to internal migration, this has impacted various Czech regions differently. With the exception of Prague (urban area) and the Vysocina region (rural area), all Czech regions are internationally classified as “intermediate”, that is, a mix of rural and urban areas (OECD regional database). Unsurprisingly, Prague stands out from other Czech regions with a high population density (2 558 people per square kilometre) (Figure 1.A1.1). Prague, and to a greater extent its surrounding region, the Central Bohemia region, had a positive net migration from other Czech regions in 2011 (Figure 1.A1.2). In contrast, the Moravian-Silesian region, which has the second highest population density among Czech regions, saw a negative net migration to other Czech regions in 2011 (Figure 1.A1.2).

Such demographic changes have seen a growth in the number of children of compulsory school age in Prague, and most notably in the Central Bohemian region (3% and 14% respectively; Figure 2.3). All other regions have seen the compulsory school age population shrink, which would have sustained the pressure to consolidate the school network. In particular, the compulsory school age population dropped by 11% in Olomouc and Karlovy Vary, by 13% in Zlín and Vysocina and by 18% in Moravia-Silesia (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Number of children under the age of 15 by region



Source: OECD (2015a), OECD Regional Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.

Strengths

Education is accorded strong political priority and recognition that teacher quality needs to improve

While educational investment remains low in international comparison, there has been a clear policy to increase investment in the Czech school system (and also at the tertiary level) (see Chapter 1). Expenditure per student at the primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels saw a larger increase than on average in the OECD between 2005 and 2012. This reflects the recognition that teacher salaries are not competitive compared to those on offer in other jobs requiring tertiary qualifications in the Czech labour market and initial efforts to address this over the past decade (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.9). On 1 January 2015, there was a further 3.5% increase in the level of resources for teacher remuneration and the strategic orientations aim to continue to fund salary increases for teachers. At the time of the OECD review, the MŠMT (*Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy* – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) was holding negotiations with the Ministry of Finance to secure additional funding to support the teacher career system (see Chapter 4). Collectively, these are significant efforts to address an identified weak point of the system, that is, the need to attract and retain high quality teachers.

There is continuity in the policy aim to improve teacher quality. “Support for educational staff” was one of four long-term policy objectives set for the 2011-15 period and included an ambition to improve professional standards and working conditions and to establish a career structure with links to remuneration (Santiago et al., 2012). However, the OECD review team notes that the implementation of the career structure has been delayed. The Strategy 2020 proposes “Supporting high-quality teaching and teachers as a prerequisite for such teaching” as one of the three long-term policy objectives for the period 2016-20 (MŠMT, n.d.).

The ministry’s five year strategic plan for education (Strategy 2020) targets the major challenges

Recognition of the need for stability and more strategic oversight

The ministry’s Strategy 2020 is of fundamental importance. It acknowledges the need for “sufficient stability in the system and support for its long-term, continual development” (MŠMT, n.d.). A general weakness in Czech governance has been limited strategic vision, with ministers enjoying considerable discretion to develop policies that other ministers do not feel able to support (Guastia et al., 2014). The preparation of the Strategy 2020 was initiated in 2011 and four different Ministers of Education from different political parties contributed to its development. This ensured that, at least in part, the Strategy 2020 is perceived as a non-partisan framework for future education policy development (MŠMT, forthcoming).

At the same time, the fact that over recent years the average time each minister has served is roughly one year underlines the importance of having an authoritative strategic plan to guide educational policy development. Such political instability has also impacted on the capacity for general management at the ministry and its subordinated organisations (MŠMT, forthcoming). A broader challenge for the Czech Republic is to change the political culture that currently is based on a low quality of decision making with inexperienced ministers taking decisions without adequate advice and consultation (Guastia et al., 2014). The high fluctuation of decision makers and senior ministry officials has fuelled a low quality of public administration and a relatively high degree of corruption (MŠMT, 2014).

Subsequent to the OECD review team's visit, a new version of the Service Act for public administration employees was passed and should address some of the staff turnover problems. This could present an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of central administrative capacity.

New focus on addressing inequities in Strategy 2020

There is clear evidence of entrenched inequities in the Czech school system (Chapter 1). First, there are considerable economic and educational differences on average among the 14 Czech regions, which provides an important backdrop to the respective school networks. Second, the early age of selection into “prestigious” school types (*gymnasias* and *lyceums*), coupled with the provision of reduced curricula in some provision (practical schools) and the existence of a strong special education sector sets conditions that favour a social selectivity in different school types. An earlier OECD review (Santiago et al., 2012) noted that the 2005 Education Act did not specify equity or inclusiveness among the stated education goals and that none of the 4-year long-term policy objectives (2011-15) were directly associated with equity and inclusion. In contrast, the Strategy 2020 clearly sets “Reducing inequality in education” as one of three strategic priorities for the 2016-20 period.

Table 2.4. Indicators of socio-economic background and participation in pre-primary education for Roma and non-Roma children, 2011

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic
Persons living in households at risk of poverty (%)				
Roma	83	82	83	92
Non-Roma	51	37	52	47
Respondents aged 20 to 64 who considered themselves as unemployed (%)				
Roma	38	36	33	34
Non-Roma	9	22	15	8
Household members aged 20 to 24 with at least general or vocational upper secondary education (%)				
Roma	30	23	26	18
Non-Roma	83	63	86	87
Children aged 4 to starting age of compulsory education attending pre-school or kindergarten (%)				
Roma	32	83	43	29
Non-Roma	73	88	63	59

Note: The survey results are representative for Roma living in areas in a higher than national average density of Roma population. Other residents in the same area were surveyed as a rough benchmark, but are not representative of the wider population. In the Czech Republic, 1856 Roma households and 850 non-Roma households were surveyed and at least two out of three Roma households were in urban areas.

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey 2011 results in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP (2012), *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States – Survey Results at a Glance*, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf.

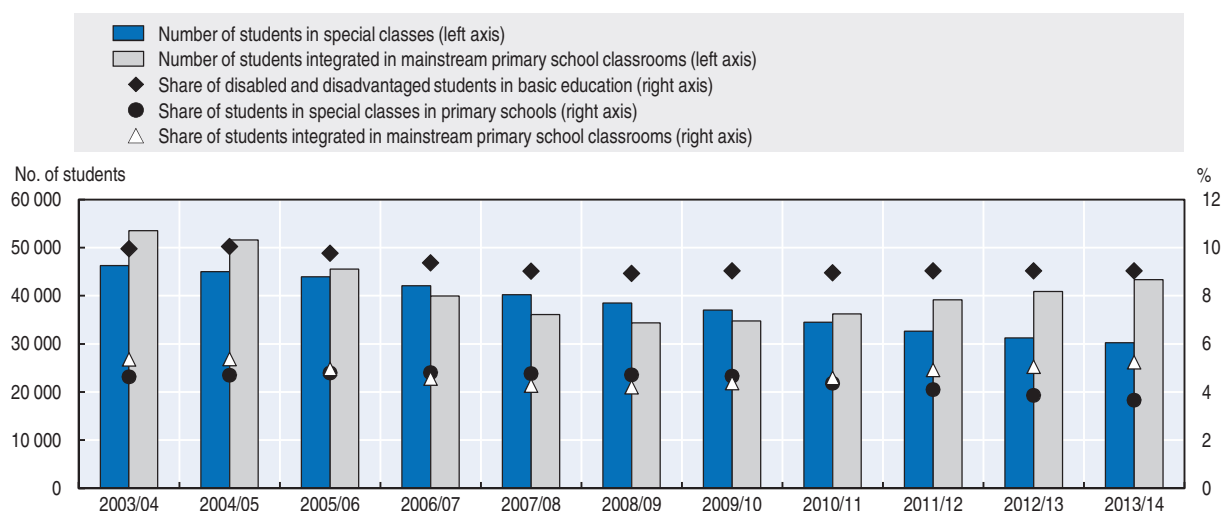
The Strategy 2020 focus on addressing inequities is also well aligned to a recent country specific recommendation by the European Commission to support underperforming schools and take measures to increase participation in mainstream education of disadvantaged children (European Commission, 2015). To this end, the proposed extension of the early childhood and care offer and introduction of a compulsory year of pre-primary education is expected to better mitigate socio-economic influences on early childhood learning development. While national statistics do not collect information by ethnicity,

results from a 2011 survey by the UNDP, World Bank and European Commission indicate that an important disadvantaged group, the Roma, is currently underrepresented in pre-primary education (Table 2.4). Only one-third of Roma households surveyed reported that children attended either pre-school or kindergarten. At the same time, survey results revealed low educational levels and tougher economic conditions for Roma households. In the absence of official data to monitor the integration of Roma children in mainstream education, some research reports compile data from different sources to provide estimates. One recent attempt (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2015) estimates a significant proportion of Roma children are educated in segregated schools, although the data are contested by the Czech government.

Political will to further integrate students with special educational needs

National statistics clearly show a trend toward favouring integration of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes in basic education. Since 2010/11, while the number of students diagnosed as having special educational needs has remained pretty stable, the proportion attending mainstream classes in basic schools has steadily increased (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. **Change in proportion of students with special educational needs in basic education**



Source: MŠMT (2014), *Výroční zpráva o stavu a rozvoji vzdělávání v České republice v roce 2013: Vzdělávání v roce 2013 v datech* [Annual Report on the Status and Development of Education in the Czech Republic in 2013: Education in 2013], www.msmt.cz/file/33944/, Table 29.

The Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2016-18 includes policy measures to promote equal opportunities and equal access to quality education. At the time of the OECD review visit, work was being conducted to finalise and introduce a set of individualised support measures for students with special educational needs in line with the amendment to the Education Act approved in April 2015 (to be enforced as of 1 September 2016) guaranteeing the rights of students to support measures in mainstream education. This specifies five broad, legal categories of special educational needs and the OECD review team was informed that the intention was to support this with a detailed catalogue of different educational needs that would fit into each broad category. While the OECD review team underlines the need to pay adequate attention to building professional capacity to implement this, the general approach has much merit. The basis of the categories in a legal

framework suits the general Czech educational context where there is much focus on compliance with laws. The detailed catalogue of different educational requirements enhances the focus on the student and his/her particular needs. The exercise of going through these finer classifications will be positive in familiarising educators with the diversity of educational needs. Indeed, representatives from inclusive education informed the OECD review team that already at the macro level the process of developing a catalogue had brought together diverse partners that had previously not collaborated, notably the engagement of the pedagogical advisory centres.

Platforms for collaboration exist for regions and municipalities

The OECD review team notes that there are different associations or umbrella organisations that offer a platform for collaboration and representation to different self-governing authorities. Membership of these associations is voluntary and representatives of such associations with whom the OECD review team met reported that they are apolitical. The Association of Regions enjoys full membership of all 14 Czech regions and was formed to represent the collective voice of regions. It plays an important role in discussion and design of national level steering documents. For example, the Association of Regions agreed on a list of fields of specialised vocational education that will guide future planning of each region's educational offer.

The OECD review team met with two different umbrella organisations for municipal authorities. The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic brings together approximately 2 500 municipalities and towns, which represent more than 70% of the total population of the Czech Republic. The Union aims to support and develop self-government democracy in the public administration, to participate in the preparation of laws and other measures impacting local authorities, and to enhance the economic independence of towns and municipalities. Representatives reported to the OECD review team that the Union was very much “an equal partner” in negotiations with the MŠMT and thus plays an influential role in national policy development. The Association of Local Autonomies brings together approximately 1 100 municipalities and towns and aims to support and protect its members' common interests, to create a platform for addressing issues and co-operation with non-governmental organisations.

Given the high level of municipal fragmentation in the Czech Republic, the existence of these umbrella organisations is a real strength. They provide a platform for collaboration, discussion and exchange of ideas on how to approach and address shared challenges.

High level of autonomy at school level with some checks and balances in place

The fact that Czech schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy to make decisions in core areas can support a more efficient educational provision. Schools can tailor their educational programmes and other activities to the needs of their students and community. Schools can develop a particular profile anchored against the Framework Education Programmes. Depending on how the school management and staff approach this, such an exercise can help focus staff on the educational offer and what really matters at that school. The development of the School Educational Programme, if linked to the school development plan, can also be linked to core strategic priorities for the students, staff and community. Schools also are free to choose textbooks – although there appear to be funding limits here. There was also an initial check of the School Educational Programmes by the ČŠI and a look

at a few sample inspection reports indicates that this is still a focus of school inspections. In this way, there is a good balance of autonomy and accountability in this area.

School principals enjoy the flexibility to directly recruit teachers who are the best fit for their school needs (Chapters 4 and 5). Similarly, teachers can apply to work in school settings suited to their skills and motivations. However this flexibility needs to be carefully monitored at a system level to ensure an equitable distribution of teachers (discussed in challenges in Chapter 4). Also, school principals are responsible for managing the professional development and performance of their own teaching staff, including an internal appraisal process. School inspections involve the checking of a school's approach to staff professional development, so again there is some system in place to monitor how schools use this autonomy.

Steering tools available at national level for the school network

Although not directly responsible for the operation of the majority of Czech schools, the ministry has several tools to steer the school network. Notably, the ministry designs and amends the general legal framework, e.g. the Education Act, including the setting of minimum class sizes and school sizes which set binding parameters for the organisation of schooling. One example of the impact of changes to the Education Act is the reduction of the number of private schools following a revision to the Education Act in 1995 that set stricter conditions for entry in the school registry and defined conditions for the removal of a school from the school registry (MŠMT, forthcoming). The school registry is a strong administrative instrument that gives the MŠMT a high degree of control in the otherwise highly decentralised school system. While regional authorities share responsibility for data entry and approval of schools entering or being removed from the school registry, the use of one centralised register supports the ministry's responsibility to guarantee "the relevant education at the level a specific school is designed for" in schools receiving core public funding (the "national normatives" or per student funding to cover teaching costs).

Another important steering tool is the Framework Education Programmes (FEP), that is, the national curricula based on which each school develops its School Educational Programme (SEP). The FEP provide a common framework to ensure that Czech children learn core knowledge, skills and competencies at particular stages of their education. If well designed and supported by adequate capacity building, this is, therefore, a powerful tool to manage the design of educational provision in different schools, municipalities and regions. However, the initial experience of implementing these was problematic (see Santiago et al., 2012; and also Shewbridge et al., 2013 for a similar experience in the Slovak Republic). During the OECD review, the NÚV reported that there were considerable challenges to combat the perception that the FEP had contributed to lowering the quality of education in basic schools and, very much in Prague, had fuelled greater competition from *gymnasia*. The continued evaluation and review of the FEP, including the knowledge and feedback gathered from the ČŠI individual school inspections and the NÚV via its ongoing development work and collaboration with schools are keys to strengthening the FEP as a steering tool. During the OECD review, the NÚV reported that it has productive collaborations with the trade unions, employer representatives and other non-governmental organisations, which all feed into ongoing review work of the FEP.

There is also great potential in the system of national normatives that allocates core funding for teaching costs to schools. In theory, this can allow the ministry to steer the further development of the school network by its funding allocation. Arguably, the setting

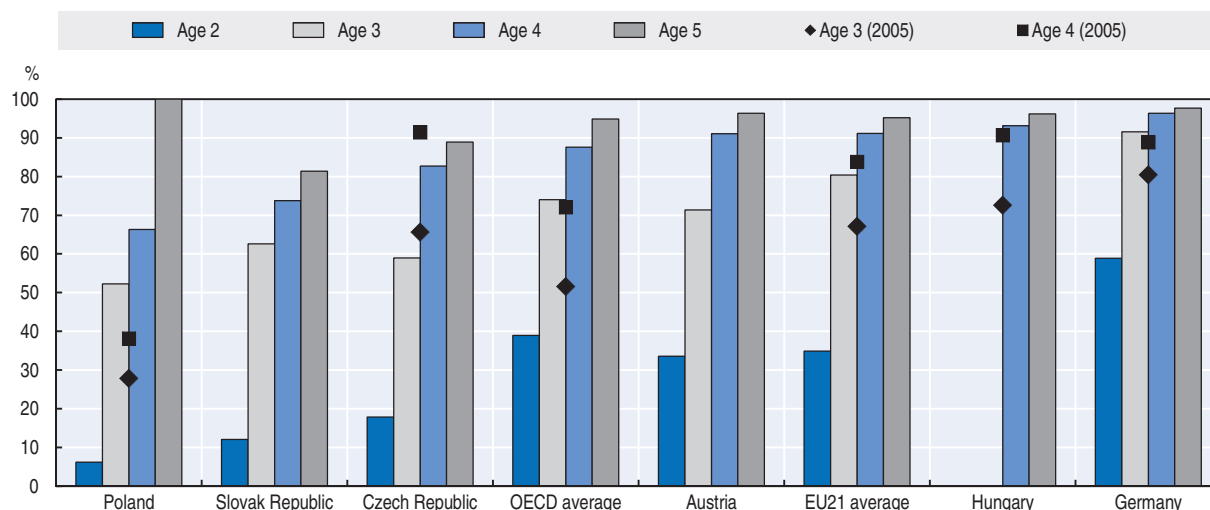
of a central per capita allocation put pressure on school founders to address efficiency challenges posed by the declining school age population from the early 1990s. However, the OECD review team notes that the system of national norms is not currently being used to address one of the greatest challenges in the Czech school system: the impact of social inequities on schooling (see Chapter 3).

The potential for the Czech Republic to draw on EU operational funding is also an important policy steering tool. For example, the new EU funding to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education for each child, from pre-school to upper secondary and higher education. With careful planning, these can be used to support optimisation of the upper secondary network.

Political support for strengthening the provision of pre-school

Czech children typically start their nine years of compulsory education at age 6. The MŠMT plans to introduce a mandatory year of pre-school (pre-primary education) in 2017 (MŠMT, forthcoming), i.e. to extend compulsory education to 10 years (the Chamber of Deputies approved the draft Amendment to the Education Act on 9 February 2016 [Eurydice, 2016]). International data show that 89% of Czech 5-year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2013 (Figure 2.9). This compares to 95% of 5-year-olds on average in the OECD, who are enrolled in either pre-primary or primary education. In the Czech Republic, enrolment rates for children aged 3 and 4 have actually decreased since 2005 (Figure 2.6). This reflects that municipalities have not been able to keep pace with the growing demand over recent years. In 2012, the MŠMT registered 59 000 rejected applications for kindergartens (including applications for more than one kindergarten). This confirms a continuing trend of increases in the number of rejected applications: 13 000 in 2007/08 and 49 000 in 2011/12 (MŠMT, n.d.). The weak provision of facilities enabling parenting to be combined with work has contributed to reduced credibility of the Czech government (Guastia et al., 2014).

Figure 2.5. **Enrolment rates for children aged 3, 4 and 5, 2013 and 2005**



Note: In 2013, in the OECD on average 2% of 4-year-olds and 14% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in primary education (ISCED 1). For countries shown in this graph, all 4 and 5 year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary education, with the exception of Poland where 8% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in primary education.

Source: OECD (2015b), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>, Table C2.1.

In this context, the state plans to allocate European funding to support the increase of capacity for pre-school. Although the organisation of pre-school remains a municipal responsibility, additional funding will provide welcome support to meet the growing demand for these services. If the provision of pre-school is aimed well it can help to prepare children from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds for basic education. This would be a key pillar in the overarching strategic goal to reduce inequities (see above). Furthermore, with careful planning, this could help to address some efficiency concerns in parts of the current school network, for example, by making use of existing infrastructure that is not fully used due to a reduced number of children of school age. The OECD review team cautions that without careful planning, investment in new infrastructure could create another network problem.

Evidence of consolidation in the network offering basic education

For the main part, municipalities are responsible for organising pre-primary and primary education (first stage of education in basic schools) and the majority of lower secondary education provision (second stage of education in basic schools), while regions are responsible for organising upper secondary education. While there are some caveats that complicate the distribution of responsibilities for basic education (i.e. the six- and eight-year *gymnasia* programmes and specialised educational provision), this broadly clear distribution of responsibilities in combination with the central per student funding system (the national normative) and the legal possibility to operate different kinds of schools and facilities under one legal entity appears to have supported an initial adjustment of the school network in basic education.

Notably, the process of merging schools intensified after 2003 (MŠMT, forthcoming) and these adjustments, at least at the macro level, appear reasonably well aligned with demographic changes. As the number of students dropped by 9.7% (10.3% in the public sector) between 2005/06 and 2013/14, the number of schools dropped by 8.5% (9.4% in the public sector) and the number of teachers decreased by 7.7% (8.5% in the public sector) (see Table 2.5). The greatest drop in number of schools occurred between 2005/06 and 2006/07 – this may well reflect the greater reorganisation of schools into legal entities combining different sites (national statistics counted the number of individual sites up until the 2005/06 data, but there may have been some lag in statistical adjustments). However, the drop in number of teachers occurred later. It is of note that, in the context of an overall decline in the number of students in basic education, there has been considerable expansion of the private sector.

A closer look at the provision of basic education in the public sector indicates that adjustments in number of teaching staff by municipalities and regions have broadly kept pace with declining numbers of students in their respective networks. Such adjustments have limited the impact on the student/teacher ratios in these networks. For example, assuming the number of teachers had remained constant since 2005/06, the student-teacher ratio in the municipal network would have dropped to 13.9 by 2013/14. These data illustrate the capacity of the decentralised system to reorganise and adapt to demographic changes.

Table 2.5. **Evolution in number of schools, students, teachers and classes in basic education**

Reference year 2005/06

	Number of schools					Percentage change compared to 2005/06		
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2013/14	2003/04	2006/07	2013/14
Total schools	4 838	4 765	4 474	4 197	4 095	8.1	-6.2	-8.5
Public schools	4 704	4 630	4 358	4 100	3 948	7.9	-5.9	-9.4
Private sector	92	92	80	61	105	15.0	-23.8	31.3
Total classes	49 740	47 620	45 769	44 527	42 334	8.7	-2.7	-7.5
Public schools	49 056	46 924	45 064	43 785	41 287	8.9	-2.8	-8.4
Private sector	416	418	424	447	650	-1.9	5.4	53.3
Total students	998 026	958 203	916 575	876 513	827 654	8.9	-4.4	-9.7
Public schools	988 847	948 893	907 257	866 951	813 940	9.0	-4.4	-10.3
Private sector	4 578	4 565	4 647	4 842	7 731	-1.5	4.2	66.4
Total teachers (FTE)	63 158	62 658	58 269	..	-0.8	-7.7
Public schools	62 190	61 630	56 886	..	-0.9	-8.5
Private sector	570	601	876	..	5.6	53.7

.. : Missing value or not available.

Note: In 2003/04 and 2004/05 the number of schools is based on individual work places/sites. From 2005/06, the number of schools is based on legal entities.

Source: MŠMT (2015), "File 02_Zs_13.xlsx, Table T2", Výkonová data o školách a školských zařízeních – 2003/04-2013/14 [Performance data for schools and educational establishments – 2003/04-2013/14 (database)], www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/statistika-skolstvi/vykonova-data-o-skolach-a-skolskych-zarizenich-2003-04-2013 and author calculations.Table 2.6. **Evolution in public sector network of schools offering basic education, 2005/06-2013/14**

	2005/06	2006/07	2013/14	Percentage change between 2013/14 and 2005/06
Ministry				
Schools	74	48	45	-39.2
Classes	259	281	245	-5.4
Students	1 522	1 522	1 315	-13.6
Teachers (FTE)	371.9	382.5	382.6	2.9
Number of students per teacher	4.1	4.0	3.4	
Municipality				
Schools	3 785	3 728	3 628	-4.1
Classes	41 672	40 454	38 571	-7.4
Students	879 090	839 736	792 805	-9.8
Teachers (FTE)	57 055.8	56 553.6	52 825.1	-7.4
Number of students per teacher	15.4	14.8	15.0	
Region				
Schools	499	324	275	-44.9
Classes	3 133	3 050	2 471	-21.1
Students	26 645	25 693	19 820	-25.6
Teachers (FTE)	4 762.1	4 694.3	3 678.1	-22.8
Number of students per teacher	5.6	5.5	5.4	

Source: MŠMT (2015), "File 02_Zs_13.xlsx, Table T2", Výkonová data o školách a školských zařízeních – 2003/04-2013/14 [Performance data for schools and educational establishments – 2003/04-2013/14 (database)], www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/statistika-skolstvi/vykonova-data-o-skolach-a-skolskych-zarizenich-2003-04-2013 and author calculations.

Challenges

Important concerns regarding regional and municipal strategic management

A previous OECD review found that the long-term policy objectives for the Czech regions vary considerably in scope and quality, and their alignment with the national-level objectives is not systematically monitored (Santiago et al., 2012). Discussions during the OECD review visit, did not contradict this earlier finding. Although officially each region has a regional development plan for schools, these were not referred to during discussions and did not appear to play the role of an important strategic guiding document. Subsequent to the OECD review, the team has looked at a sample of regional development plans. While they present core objectives, these often are vaguely defined and there appears to be minimal reporting on progress towards achieving these objectives (a lack of clear targets, little – if any – supporting data).

At the municipal level, the over fragmentation in the system (Figure 2.2 and Table 2.7) generally means weaker capacity at local levels and by default a continued strong role for the centre.

A striking finding that emerged during discussions with several stakeholders at national, regional, municipal and school levels was the overriding perception that the Czech School Inspectorate bears sole responsibility for the oversight of the quality of educational provision. Often the legal framework underlying the ČŠI's rights and responsibilities to evaluate school provision was cited as a barrier to any oversight or discussion between school organising bodies (regions or municipalities) and school principals and school councils. Equally, stakeholders would refer to the legal framework that stipulates that school organising bodies should focus on budget issues and financial compliancy.

At the same time, school organising bodies are responsible for selecting, hiring and dismissing school principals, who arguably carry the greatest responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in schools – although this is not yet sufficiently promoted through legal frameworks (see Chapter 5). But, an important legal basis does exist to support a regular documenting of school quality and strategic development: the requirement for schools to draw up a School Development Plan. During the OECD review, organising bodies and also school staff appeared not to perceive this as a useful tool for quality oversight and development. In this way, there appeared a disconnect between the management responsibilities of school organising bodies and their oversight of how school principals undertake their core professional duties, including unclear criteria on financial rewards for school principals (see Chapter 5).

Lag in introducing adequate mechanisms to monitor educational quality

As noted, Czech schools enjoy higher levels of autonomy than schools in other OECD countries. Much authority is also decentralised to the regional and municipal levels. Given these high levels of decentralisation, the OECD review team notes that there is an inadequate system of checks and balances in place. While the ČŠI is an important and authoritative mechanism for accountability, there are several reasons why this is not enough. First, the regularity of school inspections means that, on the current cycle, each school should be evaluated once every six years. There are clearly needs for more regular monitoring and oversight of key indicators of educational quality. Second, the OECD review notes that the ČŠI has a policy to move increasingly toward the oversight of the quality of the educational process (teaching and learning). The OECD review team would certainly support this as the

right direction of travel as recommended in an earlier OECD international policy review on evaluation and assessment (OECD, 2013). However, the current reality – and established perception – of the ČŠI's activities is that they remain largely focused on monitoring school compliance with legal requirements. It will take time to invest in building capacity within the regional inspectorates to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and pedagogical leadership. It will also take time to change the culture and to improve the usefulness of feedback for school improvement and the nature of follow-up to ensure improvements are being made.

An important mechanism for monitoring would be the regular assessment of students' core knowledge and skills at strategically important stages of their schooling. While there have been attempts to develop such assessment tools, interestingly parallel initiatives – one led by the ČŠI and another by the CERMAT, these are not yet agreed and implemented. The MŠMT does not benefit from any insight from pilot results to feed into core policy development. Also, existing indicators of student achievement, i.e. results of the *maturita*, may not be published by regions. National policy making is largely reliant on the aggregate outcomes of Czech students as measured in international assessments, but does not have any feedback on how well the Framework Education Programmes are being implemented in terms of demonstrated student outcomes against these. As noted above, the initial approach was for the ČŠI to inspect the School Educational Programmes, which provides an important mechanism for accountability. However, the major focus appeared to be on the content of written School Educational Programmes to ensure they aligned well with the Framework Education Programmes, with limited capacity for the ČŠI to thoroughly evaluate how these were being implemented in lessons.

The legal requirement for each school to have a school council is also a mechanism to ensure horizontal accountability, but the OECD review team gained the impression that these play a limited role. Of course, the capacity of each school council will vary enormously across schools and the building up of capacity remains a shared challenge in many OECD countries (OECD, 2013).

Information gaps and lack of transparency and reporting of available information

The Country Background Report prepared for the OECD review cites one of the great challenges ensuing from decentralisation, as a lack of relevant information making it possible to conduct a policy based on evidence (MŠMT, forthcoming). The OECD review team notes some important information gaps, for example, to support the monitoring of resource allocation and use. Currently it is not possible to fully determine the relative weight in funding allocated to general and vocational education (MŠMT, forthcoming). This is only available for secondary education and “general education” comprises a simple grouping of *gymnasia* and *lyceums*; all other school types are grouped under “vocational”.

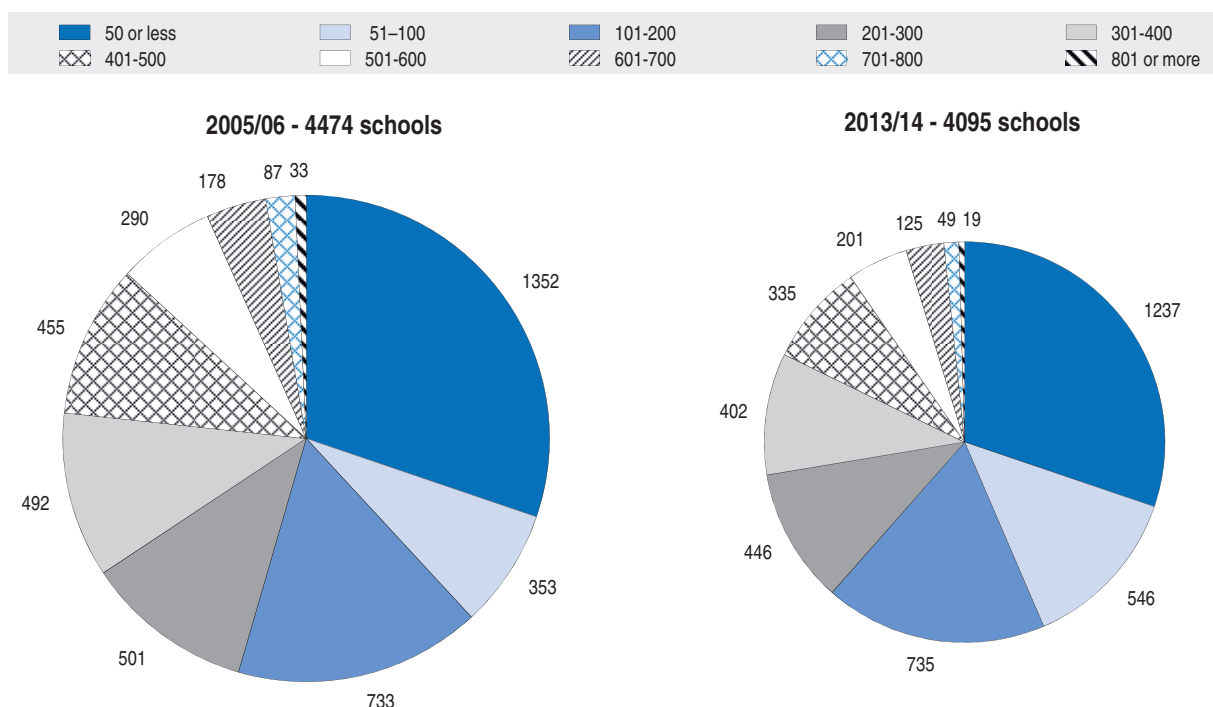
As noted above, there is limited information on educational outcomes. Also, the OECD review team notes important gaps in information to monitor equity, including comparative information across regions and basic indicators of socio-economic factors (also see OECD, 2012). This is ever more pressing given the strategic priority to reduce inequities over the period 2015-20.

However, the OECD review team notes that much information is collected and does exist, but there is a lack of co-ordination of these disparate information sources. This may not only be a technical or procedural challenge: in some cases, there is a lack of political will

to present and examine the available information. In this respect, the Education Act was recently amended to specify that the state and regional authorities are not obliged to share the results of the *maturita* – currently the only national measure available on educational outcomes.

Basic school network consolidation remains a challenge in certain regions

Figure 2.6. **Distribution of basic education schools, by school size, 2005/06 and 2013/14**



Source: MŠMT (2015), “Table 5 ZS - školy ve školním roce 2003/04-2013/14 – podle počtu žáků” [Schools in the academic years 2003/04-2013/14 – number of students], Výkonová data o školách a školských zařízeních – 2003/04-2013/14 [Performance data for schools and educational establishments – 2003/04-2013/14 (database)], www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/statistika-skolstvi/vykonova-data-o-skolach-a-skolskych-zarizenich-2003-04-2013.

Despite initial efforts to consolidate the basic school network, the proportion of smaller schools (those with 200 or less students) has increased from 54% to 61% since 2005/06 (as shown by the paler blue parts in Figure 2.6). On aggregate, this indicates persistent inefficiencies in basic education provision. In 2013/14, 72% of Czech schools offering basic education had 300 or fewer students (an increase from 66% in 2005/06) (Figure 2.6). These challenges are particularly pronounced in the Vysocina, Olomouc, Pardubice, Hradec Karlove, Liberec and Zlín regions (Figure 2.A1.2).

Of course, population density is an important consideration in judging the extent of feasibility for further school consolidation or mergers. Indeed, among the Czech regions (with the exception of Prague), there is a positive, albeit weak, correlation (0.32) between the average size of basic schools and the population density per square kilometre in the region. There is a similar correlation found with the size of the 0-15 year-old population in each region (0.33). As an example, the Zlín and Pilsen regions have a similar size population of 0-15 year-olds, but the average size of basic schools in Pilsen is around the Czech average, whereas it is well below average in Zlín (Table 2.7). At the same time, Pilsen has

Table 2.7. **Czech regions: average size of basic schools and number of municipalities with schools**

	0-15 year-old population (2012)	Average size of basic schools (2013)	Population density per km ² (2012)	Total number of municipalities	Data on municipalities within each region (2014)			
					With extended powers		With one or more schools	
					Number	Proportion (%)	Number	Proportion (%)
Vysocina	75 331	158.1	77	704	15	2.1	208	29.5
Olomouc	92 972	168.0	123	399	13	3.3	216	54.1
Pardubice	77 030	168.5	116	451	15	3.3	182	40.4
Hradec Kralove	81 441	169.4	118	448	15	3.3	181	40.4
Liberec	67 139	178.0	141	215	10	4.7	123	57.2
Zlin	83 903	182.6	151	307	13	4.2	182	59.3
South Moravia	168 031	189.8	166	673	21	3.1	334	49.6
Central Bohemia	203 393	197.2	118	1 145	26	2.3	393	34.3
South Bohemia	93 935	201.4	66	623	17	2.7	174	27.9
Pilsen	81 913	204.9	77	501	15	3.0	152	30.3
Karlovy Vary	44 616	218.2	93	132	7	5.3	65	49.2
Moravia-Silesia	178 888	222.0	232	300	22	7.3	214	71.3
Usti	127 990	254.3	158	354	16	4.5	136	38.4
Prague	164 659	327.7	2 558	1	x	x	x	x
Czech Republic average	x	202.1	136	x	x	3.3	x	40.9
Czech Republic total	1 541 241	x	x	6 253	205	x	2 560	x

Note: Regions are listed in ascending order of average size of basic schools.

x: not applicable.

Source: Czech Statistical Office (2015b), Public database, <https://vdb.czso.cz/vdbvo2/faces/en/index.jsf>.

one of the lowest population densities in the Czech Republic and its surface area (7 561 km²) is nearly twice as big as in the Zlin region (3 963 km²) (Czech Statistical Office, 2015, Table 2.3).

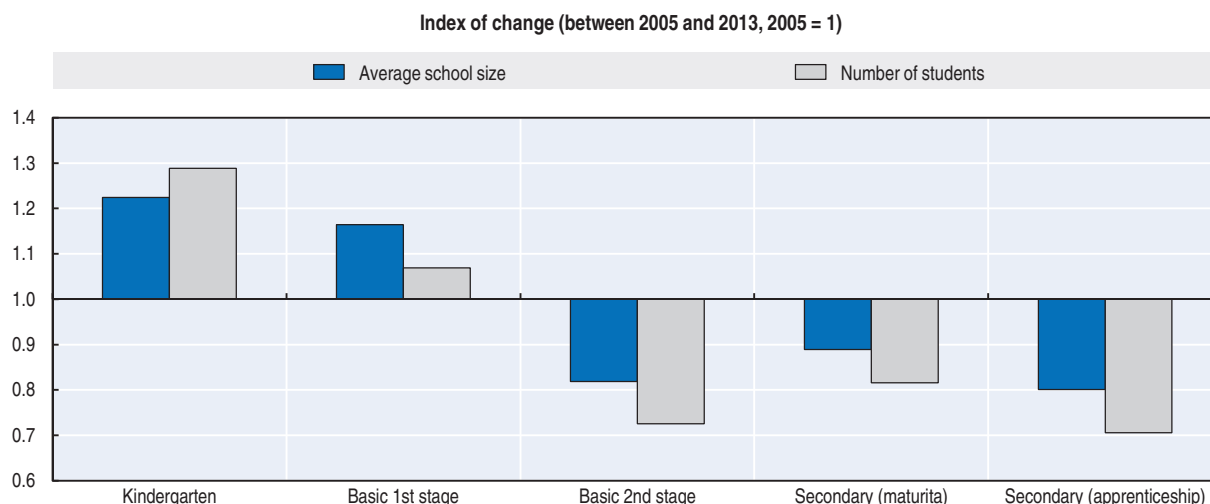
However, national data show that the organisation of the school network has a far greater impact on the average size of basic schools. Not all municipalities operate a basic school. It is of note that both the total number of municipalities and the proportion of municipalities within a region that operate at least one school varies considerably among the Czech regions (Table 2.7). For example, the number of municipalities operating at least one school is similar in the Vysocina and Moravian-Silesian regions, but these represent only 29.5% of municipalities in Vysocina and 71.3% in Moravia-Silesia (Table 2.7). Among the Czech regions (with the exception of Prague), there is a very clear correlation (0.94) between the average size of basic schools and the average number of 0-15 year-olds per municipality with a school. These data suggest, therefore, that in those regions with a comparatively low average size of basic schools, there is room to reduce further the number of municipalities with schools.

Of course, there is acute political sensitivity surrounding any school mergers – and especially closures – and strong will to keep a school open in the case that it is the only municipal school. While the current minor increase in the population aged four years or younger will ease some of this pressure on the first stage of basic school (primary education), the OECD review team notes that this is not forecast to continue (Chapter 1) and is not of the same magnitude across the different Czech regions. In fact, between 2010 and 2014 the size of the population aged four years or younger has declined in the Northwest, the Northeast, Moravia-Silesia, Central Moravia and to a lesser extent in the Southwest (Table 2.A1.2).

Lower secondary education offer is fragmented and enhances inequities

The OECD review team notes a particular challenge for the provision of lower secondary education. The demographic pressures are compounded by the existence of competition between different providers within the public sector. Regional schools (*gymnasia* with eight-year and six-year programmes) compete with municipal basic schools. The decline in both number of students and the average school size at the second stage of basic education is particularly stark (Figure 2.7). Currently, the eight-year *gymnasium* takes over 10% of the lower secondary cohort (Figure 2.1). At the system level, an early age of selection is consistently associated with more pronounced inequities system-wide in the OECD PISA results. National data indicate that the *gymnasia* are not only competing with municipalities for the best students, but rather those from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Chapter 1). There are also offers of specialised education by regions in the *conservatoires*. Therefore, at the lower secondary level there is a particularly complex mix of responsibilities for educational provision.

Figure 2.7. **Evolution in average school size and number of students, 2005-13**



Source: MŠMT (forthcoming), OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools National Background Report: Czech Republic, Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Prague.

Several barriers remain a challenge to greater levels of inclusion

While it is challenging to compare the provision of special education across countries due to different national definitions and categories of special educational needs, European data indicate that the proportion of children in compulsory education with special educational needs is comparatively high in the Czech Republic (EADSNE, 2012). Also, the proportion of students with special educational needs attending special schools is high compared to in other European countries (EADSNE, 2012). In 2013/14, 9% of all Czech children in basic education were classified as having special educational needs, of which 5.2% were integrated in mainstream classes and 3.7% were educated in special classes. Although there has been some progress in mainstreaming children with special educational needs in basic education (for example, in 2007/08, the proportion of children classified as having special educational needs was also 9.0%, but 4.8% were educated in special classes), the overall level of students diagnosed with special educational needs and the proportion in separate, specialised provision remain high. Since the education of students with special educational

needs, by its nature, is expensive, the way categories of special needs are defined, the way actual decisions to place individual students into these categories are taken and also the forms special education provision can take are among the greatest efficiency challenges in all school systems (Santiago et al., 2016).

The OECD review team gained the impression that there remain several barriers to achieving the policy objective of greater inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education. Discussions with stakeholders during the OECD review gave the review team the impression that there were also some perverse incentives to protect the provision of a network of special education schools. There is an “attitudinal barrier”, in as much as, there is a well-established culture and institutional prejudice of segregated education provision. The OECD review team noted a perception that special education schools help to support the quality of education in regular schools. To the extent that this perception is valid, this would require strong and high-level political courage to overcome such prejudice.

It would also be useful to analyse data on the enrolment in special education schools and classes at the upper secondary level and if/how this is impacted by the sharp decline in the population of 15-19 year-olds. Ministry data appear to show that the proportion of students diagnosed with special educational needs at the upper secondary level is increasing (from 3.8% in 2009/10 to 4.8% in 2014/15). Given the steep decline in number of students in upper secondary education, these aggregate data suggest there may be a tendency for regions to protect the enrolment rates in the special education schools they manage. However, it would be necessary to more thoroughly analyse regional-level data. One factor that would support this hypothesis is the fact that the staff at special education schools holds specific pedagogical qualifications. Such qualifications present a structural barrier to reallocating staff from special education schools to mainstream schools.

Vocational education and training offer has many inefficiencies

An earlier OECD review in 2010 focused on the vocational education and training sector. One of the main findings was the rigidity of the vocational offer, which appeared to support the structure of an inherited school system and was largely driven by vocational school capacity. As is the case currently, the vocational specialisations that are offered are limited by a designated number of places which individual schools are permitted to fill. These numbers originated historically and essentially reflect the available human resources and physical equipment in a given school, i.e. the existing structure. The OECD (2010) found that regions tended to adjust the number of places only marginally although they had the authority to do so. The OECD review team’s discussions with stakeholders and analysis of regional funding formulae (see Chapter 3) support this finding. The examples of two different regional funding mechanisms illustrate that these are designed to keep existing programmes in place. For example, there is little or no impact on funding if student numbers reduce in a particular programme.

The rigid system of finance (the central normatives and regional normatives for teaching costs) limits regional ability to steer toward a more efficient use of resources, as they need to provide normatives for each educational field. The discussions during the OECD review indicated that there is limited or no attempt by regions to steer this and to co-ordinate a more efficient provision. Such a rigid system also entails high administrative costs, as the MŠMT takes responsibility to document all educational fields. The OECD review team would

argue that this also runs contrary to experimentation and innovation in different educational fields.

In sum, the OECD review team finds that there are too many, disparate fields of vocational education and training. There is the need for more flexibility in this system and in particular to modify and change the structure of educational fields offered.

There remains limited work-based training in vocational education, with no mechanisms to involve small companies in the provision of apprenticeships. As noted in OECD (2010), given that a substantial part of practical training is provided in schools, changes in provision impose extra costs on schools (related to the cost of new equipment and physical infrastructure). This also runs contrary to experimentation and innovation. However, available national data appear to cry out for the need to update the vocational education offer to ensure this is more relevant and meets requirements in the labour market. While the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic remains lower than in the OECD on average, there is greater risk of unemployment for youth and this remains high relative to the average (Chapter 1). A high number of graduates from vocational education are among the unemployed. Also, national data indicate greater risk of unemployment in certain fields (Table 2.A1.1). These appear to indicate fields where educational provision should be reduced. The OECD (2014) had previously recommended the modification of financing to better match vocational programmes with labour market demands. Another indicator of inefficiency in Czech vocational education is provided by Montt (2015) in his analysis of international data from the OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences, where he demonstrates a comparatively high mismatch between fields of study and occupation (OECD, 2016).

A need to improve the effective use of European funding

As noted, the availability of European funding can be a helpful support to further progress toward efficiency objectives, including core school network challenges, i.e. significantly consolidating upper secondary provision (in line with regional action plans supported by European Structural and Investment Funds) and supporting increased capacity for pre-school and basic education in certain regions with strong demographic growth in these age groups (European Regional Development Fund). All Czech regions qualify to benefit from European funding and these have proved to be an important resource for development of the education system. A report by the Czech School Inspectorate in 2013 identifies improvements in teaching methods, particularly in relation to reading literacy, mathematics and a wider use of ICT in schools. This likely reflects the impact of European Structural Funds to support quality of initial education, quality assurance and the education of pedagogical staff. The vast majority (90%) of Czech primary and secondary schools benefited from the ESF programme focusing on improving the quality of education through the innovative scheme “EU money for schools” using simplified unit cost options which makes access to the funds easier for smaller institutions. Also, the project “Quality assurance in initial education” significantly improved participating schools’ understanding of self-assessment tools.

However, there were clear concerns on how European funding was used in previous periods. For 2007-13, the main problems were in particular: late approval of the relevant Operational Programmes; complex implementation structure; existing public procurement legislation; lack of solid monitoring indicators concerning overall achievement; and lack of evaluation capacity (including poorly defined objectives; inefficient implementation and monitoring of individual projects; unrealistic risk assessment; no previous experience with

using evaluation outputs to make policy changes). Many administrative errors were caused by fragmented rules and their frequent changes and also by the frequent turnover of political and administrative staff at the MŠMT (Guastia et al., 2014 also point to political instability). The Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness will not use almost 10% of its initial allocation, due in main to problems at the start of the implementation period. During the OECD review, MŠMT representatives noted that the low absorption rate of EU funds was in large part due to a lack of technical capacity to undertake projects. In recognition of these problems, the new generation of EU funding has been designed to avoid these problems in future and to make better use of the available funding (see Chapter 3). The challenge remains to pay adequate attention to this and to build stronger technical capacity at regional, local and school levels.

Policy recommendations

Note that with the policy recommendations below, the OECD review team aims to recognise that the existing Czech school system governance structure is both relatively recent and complex. The public administration system has undergone major changes in the last fifteen years in the Czech Republic, with the emergence of politically autonomous municipal and regional self-governments which play a major role in shaping the provision of education services, the school network and in assuring appropriate conditions for the daily operation of schools.

In the context of relatively recent governance changes, the way responsibilities are shared between the municipalities or self-governing regions and the national authorities is still in a state of development. The self-governing regions are the most recent significant governance development and are still developing capacity and political weight. There is a high degree of fragmentation at the municipal level, but with a number of municipalities having extended powers. In addition to their authority over the general regulatory framework, the central authorities also hold some strong administrative instruments, notably the school registry. The OECD review team notes the need for caution when analysing the current and possible future public administrative context of educational governance.

However, in Chapter 1 and the present chapter, the OECD review team has presented compelling evidence on the different nature of challenges and opportunities facing each region's education system. Within the existing governance structure, the OECD review team notes some barriers to greater efficiency and more effective planning. It does see merit in providing regions with more room and flexibility to perform their strategic functions. At the same time, there is one suggested change to remove the funding allocation from regions to the municipal school network in favour of a direct allocation to municipalities (see Chapter 3).

The major thread of the OECD review team's recommendations is, therefore, to deepen collaboration within the governance structures, while at the same time strengthening accountability mechanisms (including transparent reporting of key information – notably with a focus on quality – and a greater role for school councils). The analysis of the education policy practice of the most effective education systems suggests that the combination of extended local and institutional autonomy with strong accountability mechanisms, continuous capacity building and the use of effective system steering instruments offers the highest chances to create a high performing education system (Mourshed et al., 2010). In most cases the legal frameworks are in place, but it is a matter of providing models, positive

examples and building capacity at local levels in quality assurance as a key part of resource management. At the same time, greater freedom is suggested for school organising bodies in the educational offer, as part of their network responsibilities.

Build support for and ensure effective implementation of the Strategy 2020

The OECD review team's analysis of the international and national evidence on the quality, equity and efficiency of the Czech school system (Chapter 1), confirms the pertinence of the three overarching objectives within the Strategy 2020. The major task for the MŠMT is now to raise awareness of these objectives and to engage key stakeholders in concrete steps toward achieving them. While the OECD review team has not had the opportunity to analyse the implementation plan (the Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for the Period 2015-20), a number of arguments support the broad objectives.

A clear challenge in moving toward the Strategy 2020 objectives will be to secure adequate funding for full and continued implementation. The discontinuity of European funding, for example, had reportedly posed challenges at the central and regional levels in how to continue certain initiatives, regardless of how popular or effective (evaluation studies available in Czech at www.op-vk.cz/cs/siroka-verejnost/studie-a-analyzy/) they had proven to be. This underlines the need to better align national funding to ensure the sustainability of effective initiatives that have been supported by EU funding. A major step toward the objective to reduce inequities will be to secure funding to build adequate capacity in pre-school – notably in the regions where expansion of this age cohort is steady. Much international evidence on the importance of early intervention would support the extension of early childhood education and care services, in particular to less advantaged children. Also, to the extent that limited capacity in pre-school education was a barrier to children's participation, the provision of high quality services could see a greater participation of Czech women in the labour market (the low participation of highly educated women stands out internationally).

Develop and implement strategic plan for data collection/compilation to strengthen system monitoring

As noted in an earlier OECD review (Santiago et al., 2012), the Czech Republic needs to strengthen its capacity to monitor the school system. This may be due to limited availability or accessibility of data. A systematic mapping out of key information against the major goals for the school system – as presented in the Strategy 2020 – will allow an identification of existing data, key information gaps and also potential sources for missing information. This will also allow the planning of priorities in future data compilation or collection. The OECD review team also strongly recommends that this “strategic plan for data collection/compilation” underlies all new policy initiatives to the greatest extent possible.

For example, the current work on the new teacher career system (Chapter 4) may allow to fill existing data gaps, such as information on teacher qualifications. A robust, stable and authoritative national “strategic plan for data collection/compilation” can support the focus on the most relevant information for monitoring to feed into policy development and limit the overburden of data reporting and processing. Given the prominent – and the OECD review team would argue, the correct – focus on teaching quality that was part of the previous strategy as well as the current Strategy 2020, this would seem to be a priority area for data collection. Regions could, also benefit from data that would help predict the

number of teachers in different subject and support more strategic planning of the teaching workforce in their school networks (see Chapter 4).

The goal to reduce inequities in the Strategy 2020 redoubles the need to build an information base on children and students' socio-economic background, including data on the Roma minority. The Ministry of Social Affairs may have some information available that could be compiled for analysis.

Particular attention should be paid to better supporting the information needs of regions and municipalities. The availability of geographically disaggregated data can be an important tool for local empowerment and decentralisation (European Union, 2012). It can help schools, community organisations and government at all levels to engage in evidence-based planning and policy (European Union, 2012).

The Czech regions should lead the development of models to strengthen strategic reporting

Each region currently draws up and publishes its regional development plan. The OECD review team sees a strong role for the Association of Czech Regions, possibly with the collaboration of the ČŠI, the CERMAT and the MŠMT to develop models of how information should be published. There is clearly room here for the Czech regions to take the lead in making this regular reporting requirement a useful – and also authoritative and comparable – strategic instrument to engage their broader community, including all other school organising bodies within the region. Regional development plans include major objectives for the region. Against these objectives, there could be a set of clear goals – in some cases, where feasible, including targets to be achieved – and subsequent reports would present a clear report of progress against each of these goals. Obvious areas that are current strategic challenges for many Czech regions include the need to consolidate the provision of both lower and upper secondary education. For upper secondary education, the Czech regions are directly responsible for many of the schools and also play an important role in agreeing the regular normative funding for private providers (typically vocational education).

The Association of Czech Regions will also be able to draw on collective experience of how to communicate and report on the results of student final examinations (*maturita*) in their regions. Here the CERMAT could offer some technical advice on reporting concerns, caveats and providing enough supporting analysis to allow a responsible and meaningful interpretation of the results. A more proactive role and regular reporting of results by the Czech regions would build trust in the broader community. Regularity, timeliness, transparency and accessibility are important guidelines in the reporting and use of results (OECD, 2013).

Provide models for regional and municipal oversight of school resources

The current distribution of responsibilities for oversight of school principals and school monitoring by the school organising body provide the conditions for stronger local accountability. Oversight at the local level can foster important relationships between school principals and the local government, which would otherwise be impossible in a situation where direct responsibility lies at a higher level. However, in the Czech system there is room to significantly increase the oversight of educational quality at the local level. This can be done by making a more effective use of existing processes and documents that are underpinned by national legislation. Notably, the OECD review team recommends:

- a prominent role for the school strategic development plan (SDP)

- the monitoring of the school principal's work and progress to achieving SDP goals
- adequate follow-up at local level and also by the ČŠI (point below also).

The legal framework exists to support these mechanisms. It is a matter of communicating how to join these up to be used more effectively. Importantly, it will be of utmost importance that regional, municipal and school leaders proactively work toward shaping these instruments to better suit their needs (see also Chapter 4). An important piece of glue to join these elements should be the new set of evaluation criteria being developed by the ČŠI (see below). This should become an authoritative set of quality criteria to underpin regular school self-evaluation (although leaving room for local criteria to be added for specific development goals), feeding into school development planning and in turn school councils and school organising bodies can use these instruments to discuss progress and challenge and recognise achievements of school management where necessary.

Significantly increase the focus on educational quality in monitoring and resource management

A set of clear criteria is of fundamental importance in defining common expectations of “quality” (OECD, 2013). School principals and school councils would benefit from the development of different benchmarks, guidance and goals to monitor the quality of their students’ learning progress.

Provide clear guidelines to educators in basic education on learning goals at different stages

As noted above, the Framework Education Programmes remain a strong steering tool for the MŠMT. There are also channels of collaboration and feedback in place to inform the further evolution and refinement of these. The OECD review team understands that these provide a set of core minimum content requirements. A general lesson learned from an international review of evaluation and assessment practices (OECD, 2013) was the importance of providing clear standards as guidelines for schools. These should be aligned with the FEP and serve as supports for educators in assessing the progress of their students’ learning and the planning of their teaching approach. A set of key learning expectations (or goals or standards) at different stages (e.g. every three years) helps support more regular and formative feedback to students on their learning progress and can also support more effective self-evaluation processes within schools. The analysis of results in school self-evaluation should feed into future priorities for improvement in the School Development Plan. This should be a core pillar of discussion between school management, the school council and the organising body on where to allocate necessary resources to support identified needs for improvement. In this way, “educational quality”, i.e. the learning progress of children within the school is at the heart of resource decisions. For an overview of different approaches implemented in OECD countries and some examples of learning goals or standards see OECD, 2013.

Implement a common component of final examinations in vocational education

At the time of the OECD review, the MŠMT was overseeing the preparation of a single assignment of the final examinations in vocational education. The goal of this is to heighten the focus on the quality of vocational education outcomes. While the OECD review team has no detailed information on the form these examinations would take, it would seem an important initiative in building prestige in the vocational sector. This

would support a stronger focus on quality and efficiency in vocational education provision in the future. With this aim, the OECD review team recommends the piloting and evaluation of this single assignment toward the implementation of a common component in vocational final examinations.

Strengthen and sustain efforts to focus external school evaluation on the quality of teaching and learning

The OECD review team commends the direction of travel set by the chief school inspector and the ČŠI. While the ČŠI has a set of objective criteria for evaluation, at the time of the OECD review the ČŠI was trying to elaborate these into a vision of a high quality school. The main vision is the improvement of educational quality of each child in the school. The aim was for a set of indicators describing four levels with instruments attached to measure each indicator. The ČŠI's ambition is to promote the use of these criteria and instruments by schools for their self-evaluation and by organising bodies to evaluate other areas than just budget and financial compliance. An OECD review of evaluation and assessment found that the use of common set of evaluation indicators and criteria could better align regular self-evaluation efforts with the external evaluation, thereby promoting a common vision of what matters most for student learning and progress (OECD, 2013).

The OECD (2013) also underlined the need for external school evaluators (i.e. the ČŠI in the Czech Republic) to pay adequate attention to building capacity within their own staff to work with quality criteria and to heighten the objectivity of professional evaluation judgements. The evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning should be at the core of the external school evaluation process. These challenges are understood by the ČŠI, especially the importance of getting this right with the roll out of a new set of evaluation criteria. Also, for the past two years, the ČŠI includes recommendation in specific school inspection reports on how to build on strengths identified during inspections and also to address challenges. This aims to provide more helpful feedback to schools for their further development and quality improvement. The OECD review team would also underline the need to pay attention to adequate follow-up mechanisms to see how the school has worked on these, including through a monitoring and short report by the school council in the school annual report. This would give a more prominent and active role to the school council on quality oversight and should not be limited to reaction to comments in ČŠI inspections, but rather a more regular commenting on the school's progress toward goals and objectives specified in its school development plan.

Continue to work toward implementation of common assessment instruments at key stages of schooling

As noted in Santiago et al. (2012), the lack of national information on outcomes is a significant barrier to school self-evaluation. During an interview with the CERMAT, the OECD review team noted progress on the further development of school-leaving (*maturitní zkouška*) examinations to increase the objectivity of these, notably with the planned correction of students' written work external to the school. Given the high stakes nature of these examinations for individual students, increased objectivity should support greater equity and fairness for access to further educational opportunities and to the labour market (OECD, 2013). However, such examinations are not well suited to measuring the school system as a whole (OECD, 2013). This is equally true of the admission tests being piloted for students' access to *gymnasia* (four-, six- and eight-year programmes). In May 2015, the Czech School

Inspectorate conducted a sample survey testing students' knowledge in social studies and natural sciences, as aligned with the national Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (Eurydice, 2016). The results of such tests would be useful feedback for school self-evaluation, if they provide authoritative benchmark data for schools to compare their students' results with. In the interest of increased efficiency, future efforts of the CERMAT and the Czech School Inspectorate should be combined to ensure sustainable central capacity for student assessment development.

Carefully evaluate the implementation of the new approach to classification of special educational needs

As noted above, the OECD review team commends the exercise in establishing five new broad categories of special educational needs, supported by a more detailed listing of different educational needs. This aims to be an authoritative framework to support the provision of more individualised support measures to children with special educational needs. However, paying adequate attention to how this is implemented will be of key importance.

First, it will be necessary to provide sufficient capacity building and familiarisation with the new categories for all professionals working in pedagogical advisory centres. Supporting measures for Categories 2 to 5 would be officially assigned by the centres (Categories 0 and 1 would be managed at the school level). Beyond the implications for the educational welfare of the individual child, there will also be costs assigned to offer support to children in these categories. The OECD review team notes that representatives of inclusive education reported that the MŠMT has commissioned two parallel projects to develop a catalogue of special educational needs. The NÚV was charged with developing a catalogue that would be used by the pedagogical advisory centres, while representatives from the centres had participated in development of the other project. It will of course be essential to ensure the use of an official and authoritative catalogue to support the categorisation judgements. There will also need to be adequate opportunity for professionals across the fourteen centres to collaborate and exchange feedback on their experience with implementing the new categories. These professional exchanges will heighten coherence of judgement throughout the Czech Republic's different regions.

The implementation of the categories will also require adequate professional development at the school level – for school leadership to monitor this and for teachers to diagnose and work with children to address their specific learning needs. The catalogue – whatever its final form – could serve as an important methodological tool for educators. Schools will be responsible for diagnosing children with special educational needs in Category 1. The objective of this is to familiarise educators more with different learning needs and to stimulate earlier intervention to address these needs. There will be a need here to offer professional development support, for example, teacher collaboration across different schools. Notably, the four regional pedagogical advisory centres are based in major towns and there is less support to schools located further away from these centres and especially those in more remote locations.

Third, the OECD review team underlines the need to conduct an independent evaluation of the funding implications. The official agreement with the Ministry of Finance is that this would be introduced on a no-additional-cost basis. At the time of the OECD review work was being completed on compiling estimated cost implications of introducing the new five category classification system. Representatives of inclusive education

informed the OECD review team that they had piloted the assessment tool with the five new categories to around 4 000 educators. The results indicated that there would be a clear increase in the numbers of students included in the categories assigned with specific cost requirements, that is, increased funding would be needed overall. It is of note, that the OECD review team does not have the results of the official evaluation, however.

In the Slovak Republic, there was a significant increase of students categorised as having special educational needs following the introduction of a funding formula with a funding premium for special needs students (Santiago et al., 2016). This raised concerns about the potential limited transparency of the decision processes to determine whether or not a student has special educational needs and underlines the importance of paying adequate attention to all parts of implementation. The OECD review team suggests there could be a stronger role here for the ČŠI – currently it can monitor diagnosis from mainstream to special education and vice versa during school inspections – by giving the ČŠI the legal basis to challenge a diagnosis by the pedagogical advisory centres and to order an independent re-diagnosis where judged appropriate. National statistics use a unique – and then anonymised – student identification number, so there is an initial monitoring that there is no duplication in diagnosis.

Develop guiding principles for school network planning with a focus on educational stages

Every school system has its complexities, including strong traditions, inherited structures, vested interests and differing degrees of overlapping or conflicting governance and responsibilities. The Czech Republic is no exception. However, there exist good channels for policy discussion among the central, regional and municipal levels, as well as representative bodies for private and church schools and employers; objective demographic data and statistical forecasts for the coming years with regional breakdowns; plus a very strong administrative tool (the school registry), which includes a comprehensive listing of different educational fields and capacities. With active collaboration and strong political will, these can collectively form a strong basis to plan a more efficient organisation of the regional education systems (that is, education provided by all schools including those with specialised provision within a region, regardless of the founder).

As a collaborative exercise, the OECD review team recommends that the MŠMT initiate work towards establishing a set of authoritative guiding principles, rules and even target quotas for capacity at different stages for the collective regional school systems. The stages of educational provision facing urgent pressures to further consolidate – and importantly to improve quality – are lower secondary education and upper secondary education. These two major stages implicate the five main founders: the ministry, the regions, the municipalities, private providers and the church. Within the school registry, the OECD review team learned that agreed capacities greatly exceed the current demand (although exact data were not provided).

The focus on educational stage as opposed to school type is important. For example, the fact that basic schools traditionally offer both primary and lower secondary level classes, means that lower secondary education is seen as part of a basic service to be provided as close as possible to where the children live, that is, even in small villages. This structural feature of the system makes it difficult to create school units of appropriate “size efficiency” and some areas with severe demographic pressures may face significant cost-efficiency and organisational problems in a system of per capita funding (an analysis of

how many basic schools only offer the first stage of basic education would be informative here). This shift away from thinking of “basic schools” will also be helpful in optimising the provision of the proposed compulsory pre-primary year for introduction in 2017/18. For example, within existing capacities, there may be ways to combine the offer of pre-primary and primary education, while reorganising the lower secondary education offer.

While it would be up to the collaborative working group to establish specific principles, analysis presented in this chapter leads the OECD review team to suggest a couple of indicators that would highlight initial efficiency and organisational challenges. A leading and objective indicator to guide collective discussion on reorganising a more efficient educational offer would be each region’s demographic profile. A first step toward consolidation would be to set actual and forecast (next 1-5 years, next 6-10 years) capacities for each major stage of education, i.e. capacity for lower secondary education in Zlín, capacity for upper secondary education in Zlín, and so on for each region. (It is of note that the existing national normatives take this approach for the upper secondary level, that is, they link directly to the actual number of individuals in the age group 15 to 18, but currently group together primary and lower secondary education [age group 6 to 14], which is mapped to the typical structure of a basic school.)

These regional actual and forecast capacity indicators for lower secondary education and upper secondary education would serve as the basic efficiency comparator for the current legal capacity in the school registry in each region (identified by summing up the capacity of each school offering lower secondary education and so forth). Such information can be used to guide considerations for setting principles or even quotas for reorganisation, including rules for the opening of new schools or new educational programmes.

At the upper secondary level, a second indicator would be the current labour market needs (as measured by the proxy of employment and unemployment of recent graduates). The future labour market needs is a more challenging area and would require the active collaboration of employer representatives, chambers of commerce and industry. However, the OECD review team would strongly recommend that the principle be that to the greatest extent possible the planning of upper secondary education fields would be linked to forecast labour market needs. Ideally, in the future Czech statistics could collect information on individual graduates on their employment and how well this matches their field of study.

Harmonise vocational education fields to support a more strategic consolidation at regional level

The OECD review team has noted a number of challenges in the Czech vocational education sector. The importance of industry in the Czech economy emphasises the need to ensure excellence in the vocational educational offer and to ensure that graduates from vocational education have the necessary skills to transfer successfully to the labour market. Representatives of Czech employers report concerns on the quality of graduates and their need to invest in retraining new recruits. While there will always be a degree of specialisation in any job, the OECD review team notes the demand for more flexibility in graduates and stronger transferable skills.

One major barrier to achieving more flexible graduates is the rigidity of the current vocational offer. The provision of many, disparate and highly specialised fields appear to need a serious overhaul. The OECD review team strongly recommends a thorough review

of the fields of vocational education. These also have major implications for the regional funding mechanisms and hinder the ability for regions to more strategically plan the provision of vocational education. By a more strategic planning, we mean at the very least ensuring to the greatest extent possible that there is a much better match of graduates' skills to jobs on offer in the labour market. The national data appear to present worrying disparities here. As a matter of urgency, the MŠMT, the Association of Czech Regions and employer representatives need to agree on a set of broader vocational fields to be included in the school registry – and of critical importance – on limiting capacity to ensure the necessary consolidation. There are obvious inefficiencies at the macro level, as well as great individual cost (unemployment), in continuing to provide education in fields where there is limited or low demand from employers.

During the OECD review, NÚV reported that in particular, European funding had supported the setting up of “sector councils” bringing together representatives from schools and employers to contribute to development work in different vocational fields. This was to work toward the development of an overall vocational qualifications framework. Such conceptual and development work can feed into the broader grouping of vocational fields, which could be a useful basis for giving a higher degree of flexibility at the regional level. However, this is challenging work and will need to overcome the well-established culture of a high degree of fragmentation and specialisation, with strong lobbying from particular employers.

Note that this revision of vocational education fields will allow the regions to make more strategic use of their funding formula to reshape a more effective and efficient vocational sector. As discussed in Chapter 3, the current need for regions to tie normatives to each field or programme of study is in itself a cumbersome and inefficient exercise.

The World Bank (2006) identified several inefficiencies in the typical Central and Eastern European model of vocational education and skills development: vocational education is relatively isolated from the world of work (especially when compared to work-based or company-based skills development forms); there are often high drop-out rates; and a relatively high proportion of graduates find jobs in areas that are different the profile of their formal vocational qualification. In this context, the Slovak Republic has recently (2015) introduced a new Act on Vocational Education and Training (VET). This new legislation strongly supports work-based learning as schools are now encouraged to establish partnerships with companies for providing practical training in accordance to their needs. According to Cedefop, the new school-company partnerships may gradually change the nature of initial VET, “transforming the traditional school-based supply-driven system to a demand-driven work-based learning system” (Cedefop, 2015). A recent amendment to the School Act is also linking the state funding of VET schools to the labour market relevance of their programmes. Since 2012 the Slovak ministry has also been publishing lists of study fields with a lack of/surplus of graduates compared to the needs on the labour market. See Santiago et al. (2016) for more details.

Notes

1. These data were collected in 2011 on decision making at the lower secondary level of education. This indicator shows where key decisions are made in public institutions at the lower secondary level of education. The indicator does not capture the totality of decisions made within a school system.

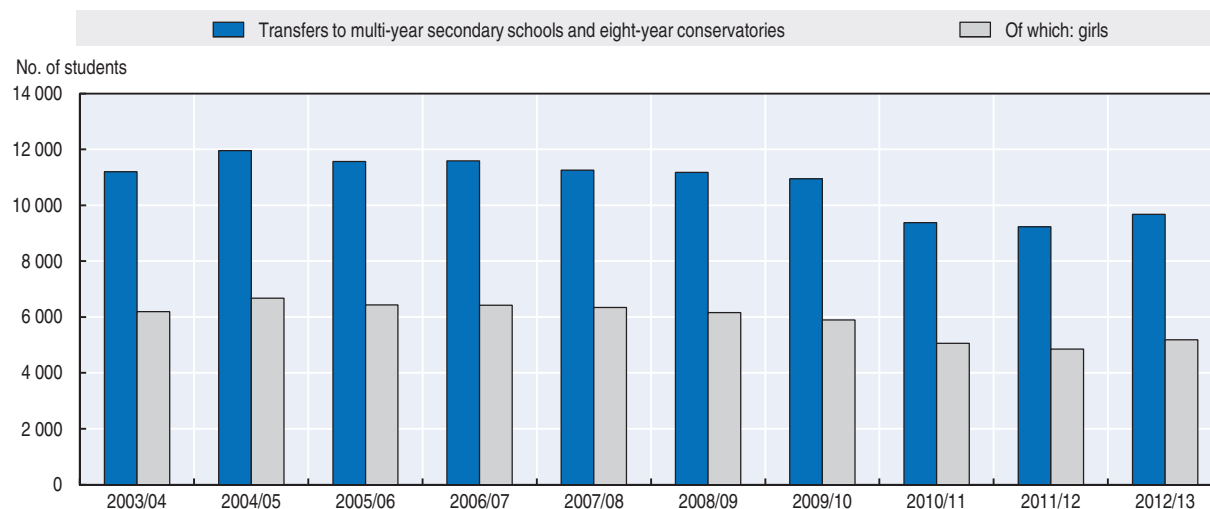
2. The four domains of decision-making defined by the OECD (2012) comprise the following areas: **Organisation of instruction:** student admissions; student careers; instruction time; choice of textbooks; choice of software/learningware; grouping of students; additional support for students; teaching methods; day-to-day student assessment. **Personnel management:** hiring and dismissal of principals, teaching and non-teaching staff; duties and conditions of service of staff; salary scales of staff; influence over the careers of staff. **Planning and structures:** opening or closure of schools; creation or abolition of a grade level; design of programmes of study; selection of programmes of study taught in a particular school; choice of subjects taught in a particular school; definition of course content; setting of qualifying examinations for a certificate or diploma; accreditation (examination content, marking and administration). **Resource management:** allocation and use of resources for teaching staff, non-teaching staff, capital and operating expenditure, professional development of principals and teachers.

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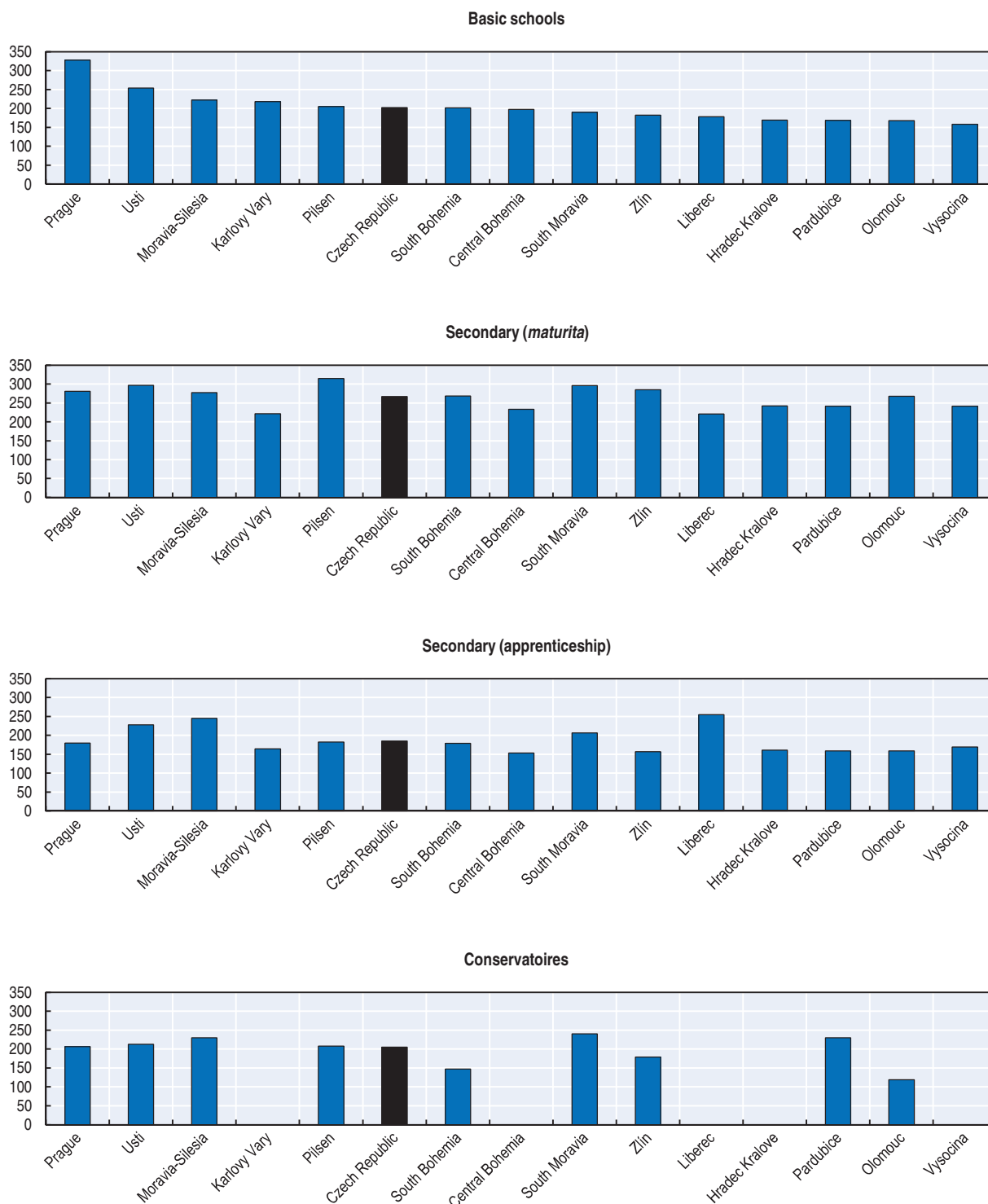
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ANNEX 2.A1

*Data for Chapter 2*Figure 2.A1.1. **Transfers of students from basic schools to gymnasias or conservatoires**

Source: Provided to the review team by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Figure 2.A1.2. **Regional variations in average school sizes for different educational programmes, 2013**

Note: Karlovy Vary, Central Bohemia, Liberec, Hradec Králové and Vysocina regions do not have any conservatoires.

Source: MŠMT (forthcoming), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools National Background Report: Czech Republic*, Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Prague.

Table 2.A1.1. **Unemployment rates of new graduates by field of study and educational level**

	Lower upper secondary education – apprenticeship (%)	Upper secondary education – apprenticeship (%)	Upper secondary education – <i>maturita</i> + apprenticeship (%)	Upper secondary education with <i>maturita</i> (continuing VET) (%)	Upper secondary education with <i>maturita</i> (%)
TOTAL ALL FIELDS OF STUDY	21.7	12.6	13.2	15.2	9.6
Personal and operational services	30.9	16.6	21.6	x	x
Construction engineering, geodesy and cartography	26.4	13.8	x	7.6	8.9
Electrotechnics, telecommunications and ICT	25.8	7.3	10.3	8.9	7.7
Gastronomy, hotel industry and tourism	23.1	15.6	16.2	22.8	13.7
Textile production and clothing	21.7	17.4	16.7	x	21.1
Trade	21.6	15.6	19.7	18.0	7.5
Engineering and machine-building	21.4	9.7	7.4	8.9	6.4
Pedagogy, teaching and social services	21.1	x	x	x	8.1
Polygraphy, paper processing, film, photography	20.0	9.4	16.2	27.3	12.7
Food and food chemistry	19.5	12.5	x	x	16.9
Woodwork and musical instruments making	17.3	11.3	10.1	22.4	10.9
Agriculture and forestry	16.3	12.3	4.5	22.2	12.1
Technical chemistry and chemical silicates	5.3	12.7	11.1	x	9.8
Leatherworks, shoemaking, plastic making and processing	x	x	x	x	66.7
Special and interdisciplinary fields	x	23.8	10.0	8.2	11.2
Healthcare	x	13.2	x	x	6.6
Transportation and logistics	x	12.9	x	26.7	9.9
Arts and applied arts	x	12.8	14.2	10.5	10.8
Mining, metallurgy and foundry	x	2.4	3.8	x	x
Law, legal and public administration	x	x	x	40.0	11.3
Entrepreneurship	x	x	x	15.5	x
Press, libraries and informatics	x	x	x	x	14.3
Ecology and environmental protection	x	x	x	x	12.5
Veterinary and veterinary prevention	x	x	x	x	11.8
Economics and administration	x	x	x	x	10.5
ICT	x	x	x	x	10.2
General vocational training	x	x	x	x	6.9

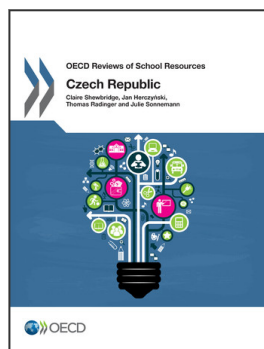
x: not applicable.

Source: Provided to the review team by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Table 2.A1.2. **Population aged 0 to 4 years in Czech regions, 2001-14**

	Number of children aged 0 to 4 years				Absolute change in number of children aged 0 to 4 years between:			Population aged 0 to 4 years in 2014 relative to 2001 (ratio)
	2001	2005	2010	2014	2005 and 2001	2010 and 2005	2014 and 2010	
Czech Republic	450 118	465 611	564 545	566 262	15 493	98 934	1 717	1.26
Prague	44 068	49 020	65 793	71 328	4 952	16 773	5 535	1.62
Central Bohemia	48 967	54 146	74 938	79 130	5 179	20 792	4 192	1.62
Southwest	51 437	53 347	64 259	63 606	1 910	10 912	-653	1.24
South Bohemia	27 968	28 681	33 812	33 713	713	5 131	-99	1.21
Pilsen	23 469	24 666	30 447	29 893	1 197	5 781	-554	1.27
Northwest	53 201	55 603	63 349	59 151	2 402	7 746	-4 198	1.11
Karlovy Vary	14 103	14 545	16 518	15 258	442	1 973	-1 260	1.08
Ústí	39 098	41 058	46 831	43 893	1 960	5 773	-2 938	1.12
Northeast	68 338	68 729	81 244	80 215	391	12 515	-1 029	1.17
Liberec	20 018	20 513	24 289	24 205	495	3 776	-84	1.21
Hradec Kralove	24 814	24 989	29 588	28 679	175	4 599	-909	1.16
Pardubice	23 506	23 227	27 367	27 331	-279	4 140	-36	1.16
Southeast	72 204	73 465	87 661	89 673	1 261	14 196	2 012	1.24
Vysocina	23 758	23 348	26 627	25 891	-410	3 279	-736	1.09
South Moravia	48 446	50 117	61 034	63 782	1 671	10 917	2 748	1.32
Central Moravia	54 232	54 683	63 269	61 897	451	8 586	-1 372	1.14
Olomouc	28 244	28 729	33 628	32 966	485	4 899	-662	1.17
Zlín	25 988	25 954	29 641	28 931	-34	3 687	-710	1.11
Moravia-Silesia	57 671	56 618	64 032	61 262	-1 053	7 414	-2 770	1.06

Source: OECD (2015d), OECD Regional Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.



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