



Submission to the Universal Periodic
Review of the United Nations Human
Rights Council

4th Cycle – 42nd Session

Country Review: Czech Republic

June 2022
by Ivan Evstatiev

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and focused on raising awareness and minimizing human rights violations in the educational field.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquillity in society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarization, and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Investment in education.....	3
Technology in education.....	3
Equality and non-discrimination.....	4
Recommendations.....	5
References.....	5

Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organization with one main goal - To protect human rights in the world of education. The organization started with a website and articles and is currently working on multiple projects, each aiming to fight human rights violations in the educational sphere. As the UPR is related to human rights violations, inequalities, human trafficking, and other violations, Broken Chalk prepares this article for the fourth Cycle and the specific country – the Czech Republic.
2. During the last Cycle, the delegation put forward 201 recommendations, the Czech Republic supported 178 of them, and the rest they noted. Section B32 is the one that stands out as it is related to "Racial discrimination", and the Czech Republic supported all of the recommendations given. The recommendations propose different approaches to how the European country can deal with racism. The recommendations given in 2017 will help Broken Chalk evaluate the performance of the specific country. This report will provide an update on the previous issues related to education, plus recommendations on how to deal with new ones.

Investment in education

3. According to data from the Czech statistical office, in 1965, the state was funding 90% of the total school expenses, while in 2015, it was only 70%. The rest of the money should be covered by the parents. The trend is continuing, and currently, the country covers only 60% of all expenses. Parents who have fewer opportunities will be challenged to support their children in pursuing their educational path. (2022b) Furthermore, the Czech Republic faces a dilemma of how much money of the GDP they should invest in education. They currently invest around 5% of the entire GDP in the educational sphere. As already mentioned, this covers a declining percentage of all student needs, which might become a problem. If the country wants to maintain its status as the European country with the lowest unemployment rate, investment in good education shall continue and maybe even increase. On the other hand, investment in retraining teachers has decreased, putting the country in 27th place among E.U. members, preconditioning declining results in the educational sphere.

Technology in education

4. In recent years there has been an ongoing debate on whether or not technology should be involved in education. Technology in an early stage might influence concentration, memory and will, but on the other hand, our world is getting more technology-friendly every day. There is a discussion if tablets can replace paper books. Who will pay for this "upgrade", and how will kids with fewer opportunities adapt to this modern technology? Another essential section of this discussion is whether teachers are ready to use technology in class. A survey shows that even teachers with sufficient technical knowledge feel uncomfortable integrating technology in the

classroom. Technology can help teachers communicate better with children and their parents and stimulate them to be proactive and work more outside of school. (Mynaříková, 2021)

5. Digital competencies are becoming more critical with every generation, and there is no debate if subjects educating children in computer knowledge are necessary. Compared to Western European countries, Central and Eastern European countries have a slower implementation of ICT in education. There is a lack of organization for technical education for teachers, which also stops the development of kids in the sphere. When kids graduate with technical education lower than the average required on the market, most of them will not be able to find jobs, and the unemployment rate might increase. (Mynaříková, 2021)

Equality and non-discrimination

6. Even though education is the most important feature for one kid to develop and grow as a human being, there are still numerous cases of discrimination and segregation against specific ethnic groups, and the Czech Republic is no exclusion. The widespread segregation is a horrifying example of prejudice against some children and should be dealt with. The children mainly discriminated against are also known as "Roma". Since 2016, children with "mild mental disabilities" can learn under the curriculum for mainstream schools, and since 2017 all five-year-olds have a compulsory one year of free pre-school education. This is very intuitive and helpful, but a lot can still be done regarding discrimination and equality. (European Liberties Platform, 2018)
7. Due to Covid-19 and schools moving to a complete online form of education, inequalities became even more visible. Only 50% of all teachers were prepared to teach remotely, which is below the average rate of OECD countries. Even though it may seem like a low percentage, 6% of all Czech households lack technical equipment, and around 3% do not have an internet connection. This group of pupils often falls into another group, which is not receiving help from their parents. As many as 16% of the disadvantaged pupils do not receive support from their parents to learn or help with homework compared to 8% in the households with higher socioeconomic status. If new obstacles prevent kids from going to school for a more extended period, all learners should be provided with the needed equipment to participate meaningfully in online education. Otherwise, it may lead to kids falling behind schedule and losing the will to attend school. According to OECD, schools were fully closed on an average of 28 days which is lower than other countries in the OECD. (OECD, 2021)
8. In the Czech Republic, 0.8% of students in lower secondary and 8.2% in upper secondary initial education repeated a grade in 2019, compared to 1.9% and 3%, respectively, across OECD countries. At the upper secondary level, boys repeating a class is 64% compared to an average of 57% in the OECD countries.

Recommendations

9. Broken Chalk recognizes the improvements in the educational sphere of the Czech Republic but would like to recommend the following steps in improving their education:
10. Accountability for the financing spent on education.
11. Higher investments should be made in the educational sector to maintain a high level of education
12. Support the learners with lower social status with extra funding.
13. Have serious investment in retraining teachers.
14. Educate all teachers on implementing technology in schools.
15. Aim towards absolute equality among learners.
16. Funds should include education and teacher training.
17. Fight segregation and treat all ethnicities the same.
18. Take precautions in case of another pandemic wave.
19. Try to minimize the number of class repeaters, as the percentage is higher than the average.

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