



Czech Republic

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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Summary

According to the cross-national comparison of developed OECD countries, the Czech Republic is ranked 15th among 21 countries in composite indicators of child poverty. The country is above average in terms of material wellbeing, health and safety, educational wellbeing and behaviour and risk, but quite low in family and peer relationships and subjective wellbeing. Relative to the national average poverty rate, which is comparatively very low, the exposure to poverty of children up to 17 is very high. According to the minimum living standard (see more on page 7), this is twice as high (7 %), and according to EU at-risk-of-poverty measurement, it is 18 %. Recent developments signal a slight increase in the at-risk-of-poverty rate for families with children, unlike a somewhat better perception of family affluence by children themselves. The two most powerful indicators of poverty risk of children are parents' unemployment and single parenthood.

The issue of child wellbeing is tackled within the general framework of family support. Policies involve services and financial support of families with children, creating conditions for the reconciliation of professional and family roles, and family policy at regional and local levels. Special measures are focused on children at the margins of society. The focus on the family and children in their own right is not very well balanced. In several recent legal cases concerning to whom a child after divorce will belong, the child was not informed and not heard about his/her preferences. Children's viewpoints are often not taken into account and specialised NGOs experienced in the field are excluded from being partners. In the area of misuse and maltreatment of children, there is no integrated system of services.

Monitoring and reporting on child poverty and its change is provided rather marginally in family policy documents. In spite of a decent amount of available data on household wellbeing and the country's participation in relevant international programmes, there has been no development of any special analytical or assessment efforts focused on this particular problem. This is also needed in other relevant areas. The *Report on the development of children's rights in the Czech Republic in 2003-2005* states that in spite of some positive steps, the situation is not satisfactory. There is no state concept on the care for children at risk. Various measures are assessed in a rather fragmentary way, instead of complex impact assessment.

The Government has a strong impetus to improve the situation of the family, particularly in helping families strike a balance between working and household life. Measures are to be implemented that provide more discretion for both mothers and fathers to actively decide which roles to take on as breadwinners and as parents. The proposed reform of public finance is also expected to enhance somewhat the financial position of families with children. Alternative programmes will be implemented, aiming to integrate children who are disabled and have special needs, and improvements are also planned in custody regulations.

1. The extent and nature of child poverty

1.1. Position of the country within the EU

Taking into account a complex view of the situation of children, the Czech Republic does not rank very high among relatively developed countries. According to Jonathan Bradshaw, Petra Hoelscher and Dominic Richardson, who compiled 51 indicators of child wellbeing in 23 domains

and 8 clusters, the Czech Republic ranks rather low among EU Member States. When using average ranks, the country is located near the middle at 14th place, just between Germany and Austria. When using z scores, it is even located at 19th place among the 25 countries, behind Poland and just before the Baltic states (Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson, 2007).

According to the *Innocenti Report Card No 7*, which is based on the same data sources and compares developed OECD countries, the Czech Republic is ranked 15th out of 21 countries, close to Poland and France. In contrast, Austria, Hungary, the United States and the United Kingdom all rank much lower. The Czech Republic is above average in terms of material wellbeing, health and safety, educational wellbeing and behaviour and risk, but quite low in family and peer relationships and subjective wellbeing. Nevertheless, as it is stressed, the country 'achieves a higher overall rank for child wellbeing than several much wealthier countries including France, Austria, the United States and the United Kingdom' (Unicef, 2007, p. 5). Using this study, we compare the Czech Republic with its neighbouring countries in Table 1 (as Slovakia is missing, Hungary is used for comparison).

The Czech Republic is among the EU Member States where inequality of household income is the smallest (similar to the Scandinavian countries) and the relative at-risk-of-poverty rate of the entire population is the lowest (similar, in particular, to Sweden and the Netherlands). However, children's poverty risk relatively to the population average is the highest of all EU Member States: children are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to the national average. This is despite the fact that the equalising effect of transfers is slightly above the EU average and the share of children living in jobless households is considerably below the EU average (JRSPSI, 2007, Annex 1C).¹ The *Family Affluence Scale* (FAS), based on questions regarding a household's possession of a car and computer, frequency of holidays, and whether the child has its own bedroom (see WHO, 2004 for its computation, reproduced in the footnote to Table 6) shows a much worse position, as it is at the bottom of the OECD countries along with Poland (Unicef, 2007, p. 8-10).

The outstanding figure is that Czech children score the highest (among all countries) in the availability of books. Only about 2 % of Czech 15-year olds reported having less than 10 books in the home, by far the lowest percentage among OECD countries (ibid, p. 10). This indicates not only a high level of cultural capital among the population but also reflects the legacy of communist times when modern information channels were limited (and thus traditional ones cherished). Regarding health issues, indicators are on a decent level, and immunisation is almost complete. In terms of education, school attendance of 15 to 19-year-olds is quite high and Czech pupils score high in mathematics and science literacy achievement, but below average in terms of reading literacy. Overall, '(t)he Czech Republic ranks comfortably above the majority of OECD countries, including many of its larger and wealthier European neighbours' (Unicef, 2007, p. 19). In subjective terms, Czech children declare more often that their health is fair or poor and feel that they are outsiders. In particular, they have highly negative relationships to school. Only Finland ranks higher in this indicator while Estonia and Croatia are on the same level.

A 2006 study by the Institute for Information on Education used a range of international achievement tests to assess Czech pupils' academic performance in detail. The study stressed that 'the Czech Republic is one of the countries with strongest dependence of results on the socioeconomic and cultural status of the family (Kelblova, 2006, p. 14).' For example, the

¹ In comparison to other countries, the proportion of children in the Czech Republic exposed to poverty is much higher than the proportion of pensioners in the same situation. This issue, otherwise rather neglected, was raised by the author in his articles published in the weekly magazine *EURO*, 'Demographic and pension abyss', (No 3/2005) and the economic daily *Hospodarske noviny*, 'Few poor in the country, but many children among them', (16/6/2005).

determination of social origin on reading literacy is the third highest (only after Germany and Switzerland) of the 30 countries compared. Aspirations play an important role in mediating the impact of social origin on educational attainment; while 98 % of pupils whose mothers have had university education also aspire to university education, the figure is only 74 % for pupils whose mothers have only basic education (ibid., p. 92-93). One reason for the strong determination of social origin on educational attainment overall is the highly stratified nature of the educational system, particularly the presence of multi-year *gymnasia* in which pupils are selected as early as 11 years old (OECD, 2006a; Mateju, Strakova et al., 2006).

As for social relationships, one should distinguish between the involvement of parents, who are quite active in the Czech Republic (though not as high as in Scandinavian and southern European countries). On the other hand, the helpfulness of peers is the lowest among all countries together with the United Kingdom. In terms of behaviour and risks, the overall score is good, particularly with regard to physical activity and the number of overweight children. On the other hand, Czech children reported a higher level of cannabis use and a very high level of smoking cigarettes (the latter being the second highest score of all countries, only after Germany). The summary exposure to violence is about average due to two contrasting figures: Czech children are often involved in fighting but are not often bullied. The report comments to this exceptional result that 'the distinction between bullying and fighting is, at the margins, an issue of perception, and the subtleties of the distinction may occasionally be eroded in translation' (Unicef, 2007, p. 32).²

1.2. Recent development

We can analyse the recent changes in child monetary poverty by making use of the results of Microcensus 2002 and the EU-SILC survey *Living conditions 2005* containing data on income in 2004. In Microcensus 2002, about 11 000 households were addressed and 7 678 successfully interviewed in early 2003, reporting on yearly income in 2002. In the 'Living Conditions 2005' survey, about 7 000 households were addressed and 4 351 successfully interviewed in early 2005, providing information about yearly income in 2004. While in 2002, some adjustment of declared incomes to other data sources was made, no adjustment was made for 2004. In both cases, weights were applied to provide a representative picture of the population.

There are some methodological caveats of the comparison. In fact, tables are presented with a 'break in series' mark by the Eurostat (JRSPSI, 2007, Annex 1C). The explanation is the following.

While the computation made by the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) on the Microcensus 2002 data was as close as possible to Eurostat's methodology, it was not identical. The difference concerns the definition of income (in Microcensus, this does not include in-kind benefits from employers, but does include transfers outside of households and non-regular 'other income' from the purchase of a car or house). Only the computations from the 2005 survey were fully identical to the Eurostat methodology. The resulting difference is not large for the entire population (Eurostat methodology produces a poverty rate 0.4 higher than the measure based on the national definition

² In contrast to the HBSC survey, other evidence indicates that bullying is quite frequent in the country. A survey of the Czech School Inspection among pupils in 8th and 9th grades indicated that 55% of respondents gave positive answers that they have experienced bullying at least one time per month. The Ministry of Education established a hot line for the purpose. The problem is that pupils are not encouraged enough to be open about such activities (Respekt 11/2007).

of income). In some breakdowns, the difference is larger (about 1 % by gender and 1.8 % regarding single parent families).

Two basic indicators of monetary poverty are important for comparison:

National threshold of 'legal' poverty. The minimum living standard, from which entitlements for social benefits are based, is composed of the amounts of money required to meet a person's basic needs and the amounts needed to meet household costs. The implicit equivalence scale of the calculation is very steep. Formally, no pensioner household should be included because the minimum pension benefits slightly exceed the minimum income according to the minimum living standard.

EU statistical measure of income poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is set at 60 % of the median equivalent income, where the first adult is calculated as 1.0, each additional adult as 0.5, and each child up to 13 years old as 0.3. The threshold does not establish any benefit entitlement but, as the main indicator commonly agreed to within the EU, has high informational and comparative value. The implicit equivalence scale is quite flat.

The change in poverty rate by the two indicators differed between 2002 and 2004, even if taking into account the methodological difference described above (Table 2). While there are fewer persons hit by the legal measurement of poverty, more of them are captured by the EU measurement. This is despite the fact that income inequality was rising (the Gini coefficient has increased from 0.25 in 2002 to 0.26 in 2004) as well as the depth of poverty (from 0.15 in 2002 to 0.18 in 2004). The likely reason is that amounts of the minimum living standard have not changed between 2002 and 2004 while the average household income rose by 12 % in the same period.

Consequently, a similar contradiction between the two measurements can also be seen with children up to 15 years old. According to the legal measurement, the share decreased by 1.4 percentage points while according to the EU measurement it rose by 3.1 percentage points. In both cases, the shares of children under poverty line are much higher than the share of the population at the average. According to the legal measurement, this is even twice as high. According to the EU measurement, the percentage of children living in households with income classified as at-risk-of-poverty are close to one fifth of all children up to 15 (the same concerns the percentage of children up to 17 as well).

There are no striking differences in the at-risk-of-poverty rate according to the age of children (Table 3). Relatively, the lowest rate is the proportion of older children at-risk-of-poverty; they also have the smallest poverty gap among them. By contrast, the highest poverty rate among children can be found with middle-aged children, whereas the highest poverty gap concerns smallest children. The greatest difference is between single-parent and two-parent families without regard for the age of children. If there is no economically active parent in the household, the risk of poverty rate can mount up to 90 %. The poverty rate is between 11 and 26 % for children living in a household with one EA member, depending on their age. Poverty is negligible or zero for almost 60 % of children living in households with two and more EA members.

There is some difference between data originating from various sources. MoLSA evidence of those in material need (entitled to social assistance benefits) reported that there were 206 000 poor households by the end of 2005 (22 000 less than the year before), which equals 5 % of Czech households. However, according to the survey *Living Conditions 2005*, there were only 124 000 households who declared their income below the minimum living standard. This is a surprising finding given the fact that income in statistical surveys is self-reported without any

possibility of verification, whereas there is some possibility of verification in the self-declaration of income for the purpose of social support.

The two most powerful factors of poverty risk are unemployment and single parenthood. Regarding the effect of unemployment, 40 % of children at-risk-of-poverty are in households with no unemployed person, 41 % in households with one unemployed person and 19 % in households with two or more unemployed persons. Among households with no person unemployed, 25 % of children at-risk-of-poverty were found in households with no economically active person, 59 % in households with one active person and 16 % in households with two or more active persons (*Living Conditions 2005*).

As a historical comparison, the share of single parent families among all families increased between 1991 and 2001 from 15 to 24 %, and the per cent of children living in single parent families increased from 13 to 21 %. It is important to note also the growing share of unmarried women among single mothers: from 9 to 16 % between 1991 and 2001. These families have mostly one child (65 %) and only rarely have three or more children (6 %). The highest proportion of single parent families (over 28 %) among all families is in the large cities (Praha Brno, Plzen, Ostrava) and in North-West Bohemia (1991 and 2001 Censuses of the Population). The comparison of 2002 and 2005 data suggests that there was a slight decline in the per cent of single parent families among all families from 24 to 21 % (Microcensus 2002 and *Living Conditions 2005*).

Not only are the dichotomies of employment/unemployment and double/single parenthood important, but so is the intensity of labour market (LM) participation. This can be analysed by an indicator of labour intensity (LI), measured by the share of months persons aged 16-64 years are in economic activity, categorised into four categories: 1. households not working at all (LI=0); 2. households rather not working ($0 < LI < 0.5$); 3. households rather working ($0.5 < LI < 1$); 4. households fully working (LI=1). The poverty risk of children up to 17 differs considerably among those categories: 81 %, 57 %, 5 % and 22 %. However, due to the uneven distribution of children among individual categories overall, the distribution of children at-risk-of-poverty is 39 %, 4 %, 17 % and 40 %.

Apparently, even the full LM participation is not a guarantee against poverty working status, since the same number of children exposed to poverty live in households entirely not working and in households fully working. Among children exposed to poverty living in fully working households, only 18 % are in single-parent families and 25 % in double-parent families with three and more children. The rest are 'small' families of couples with one to two children, in most cases with an intermediate level of education (at least one adult member has secondary education). In fully working families exposed to poverty, the share of social transfers in total disposable income is 33 % (against 75 % in households rather not working and 93 % in not working at all).³

Subjective poverty. The survey *Living Conditions 2005* also includes a standard question on the financial ease/difficulty of households. Of six categories, the lowest category includes households declaring great financial difficulties. This is about the same percentage as the at-risk-of-poverty rate measured by the EU indicator. The overlap between the two indicators is quite high: 35 % persons falling into the lowest subjective category are also indicated as living at risk of poverty

³ As the authors' analysis of the survey *Social Situation of Households 2001* demonstrated, labour income affects poverty exposure (in the EU measurement) more strongly than the number of economically active people. The number of children has a small effect in this measurement as well, unlike 'legal' poverty as measured by the living minimum threshold (Vecernik, 2004).

according to the EU indicator; similarly, 35 % of persons at-risk-of-poverty according to EU indicator belong to households declaring great financial difficulties.

If we examine the explanatory power of various measurements of income on the perception of financial ease/difficulty, income per capita is the best predictor, as it explains by itself 21 % of the variance in the individual perception of one's household's finances. We can also see a direct correlation between income per capita and the categories of financial ease: respondents belonging to each subsequent category of subjective financial ease declared income 20 % higher than the previous category. The only exception is the last (smallest) category, where respondents ranked themselves as having income 50 % higher in comparison with the preceding category.

If we examine the explanatory power of various measurements of poverty risk for indicators of deprivation, we encounter significant variability (Table 4). Overall, the subjective perception of financial ease/difficulty is the variable that most strongly differentiates between the poor and non-poor in various areas of housing, housekeeping, equipment and what the family can or cannot afford. The second strongest predictor of deprivation is the EU measurement. The two objective poverty indicators have, however, little in common with the quality of housing, unlike the subjective indicator which signals that people perceiving financial difficulties also consider their apartment often wet, dark and small. In contrast, the national threshold of assisted poverty is a very powerful indicator for the enforced lack of a personal computer and car and, in particular, for arrears in rent and energy payments.

According to the 2001 Census of the Population, a total of 6 143 families with children (with a total of 9 896 children) declared that they were living in emergency dwellings. In terms of sub-populations, Roma NGOs have argued that many Roma communities have poor housing conditions, as many of them struggle to pay their rent (again, no official data is available). As a result, Roma have suffered from the trend of forced evictions — most often by municipal governments themselves — as a result of their inability to pay rent, which forces them to stay in shelters, boarding-houses and other alternative housing. Many of those alternative housing facilities are in poor technical condition, lack adequate infrastructure, and are isolated from other populated areas. Forced evictions also reflect a tension between social inclusion policy, on the one hand, and the apparent desire of some municipalities to have Roma move out of their community, on the other.

As for healthcare, all Czech citizens and residents have the right to health insurance. Healthcare is a major problem for the homeless population, as many of such people lose their ID cards and health insurance cards necessary for access to healthcare. The European Roma Rights Centre's 2006 report on the problem of healthcare of Roma did not mention any outstanding problems with healthcare access for this community in the Czech Republic (ERRC, 2006). The above-mentioned Analysis of Socially Excluded Roma Communities mentioned that the poor health condition of Roma is related to their poor housing conditions, particularly poor hygienic conditions, the remote locations of some communities, and poor health practices, such as alcohol and cigarette use. Unfortunately, no concrete data is available, including data related to children.

The survey *Living Conditions 2005* also involved a special module for persons aged 25-67, asking them about their parents' education and occupation and their perceived financial situation of their family when the respondent was 12-16 years old. For comparing the financial situation in the family of origin and the respondent's current household, the following steps were made: 1. families with two parents were selected and two datasets were created for both partners of the current parental couple; 2. the two datasets were matched with the main dataset of households; 3. variables for the perceived financial situation of the two families of origin were created; 4. the

dataset was weighted by children up to 17. Some results of our computations are presented in Table 5.

The results are rather surprising in several regards. First, the financial situation of the family of origin is retrospectively perceived as much better than the current one (the wording of the two questions is not identical, however). While only about one quarter of respondents with dependent children declared that their family had financial troubles most of the time or often, some 38 % of them signalled that they currently face difficulties, one seventh of them even major difficulties. Second, there are no significant differences between age cohorts or generations indicating the slow but steady improvement of the standard of living since 1950s, when the situation was extremely bad. Third, there is no association between the financial situation in the past and today. Given the limitation of indicators and the survey, the data do not indicate any transmission of poverty between generations.

We can also compare some behavioural indicators of school children. A new survey on 'Health Behaviour in School-aged Children' (HBSC) was collected in May 2006 under the title, *Youth and Health* by the State Institute of Health, which is affiliated with the Third Faculty of Medicine of Charles University. A sample of 4 782 respondents between 10 and 16 years of age was collected. Due to some clarifications made with the Office for Personal Data Protection, the cleaning of the dataset took longer than expected and was finally completed only by the end of March 2007.⁴ Computations on the file showed several changes regarding children's behaviour and perceptions (Table 6).

In some respects, we see a substantial change over time which is not always consistent with expectations and common evidence, sometimes even raising some doubts about the reliability of respondents' declarations. The comparison indicates a substantial reduction of smoking and cannabis use, in contrast with a significant increase of heavy drinking. In other respects there is little observed change. This involves sexual activity, physical activities and eating habits. Also subjective perception of one's own health, satisfaction with school and overall satisfaction are reported to have remained stable. The composite indicator of reported family affluence (FAS) decreased by 10 percentage points and thus signals a significant improvement of material wellbeing of families with school children since 2001. In contrast, income surveys indicate a rather slight increase of the at-risk-of-poverty rate for such families.

In comparison with the FAS, the subjective perception of family wellbeing based on the question of whether the child's family is rich or not provides a much lower figure (8% instead of 30). There might be two explanations for this divergence. The first is that pupils might be ashamed to express that their family is not well-off. The second is that the FAS was constructed for the realities of rich societies, as even its lower grades are not necessarily perceived as 'not well-off' in poorer countries.

Despite the huge difference in amounts, the subjective indicator does not specify a section of poor families defined by the objective indicator. In fact, the association between the two variables is quite low (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.28). Only 15 % of pupils with a low FAS ranking perceive their family as not well-off and just 54 % of those perceiving that their family is not well-off are included into the low FAS category. Behavioural differences are more striking and provide quite expected results by the subjective indicator only. Subjectively 'poor' children smoke, drink and use cannabis more than their better-off peers. They report about the same frequency of

⁴ The dataset of the 2006 HBSC survey was provided by the courtesy of Ladislav Csemy, Prague Psychiatric Centre. Regarding 2001 data, we could use only published results (Unicef, 2007 and WHO, 2004).

fighting, but higher exposure to bullying. Their eating habits are less healthy and they also perceive their health status and overall life satisfaction as much worse. Surprisingly, there is no tremendous difference between 'poor' and 'non-poor' children in terms of whether or not they had their own bedroom (42 % against 52 %). The same is true about the availability of a personal computer (82 % against 92 %) as well as the number of computers.

Large statistical or sociological surveys do not cover cases of extreme poverty, however. One important case of extreme poverty of children concerns the problem of homelessness. According to the *National Report on Homelessness 2006*, in a census of the homeless in the city of Brno in 2006 (carried out by the NGO Nadeje with cooperation of the city), a total of 1 179 homeless were counted in the city on a given day, of which 10 % were youth (under the age of 25). In a similar census held in Prague in 2004, 3 096 homeless persons were counted, of which 14 % were less than 25 years old. The Report refers to MoLSA's estimation of a total of 1 403 utilised beds in various shelters for the homeless in February 2006 but comments that the estimate did not include beds in low-threshold night shelters for individuals or hostels for mothers (or fathers) with children (*National Report on Homelessness 2006*, p. 7). In any case, current facilities can accommodate only a small fraction of the total homeless population.

In addition, a large proportion of homeless people (30-40 %) have had experience with children's institutions. There are approximately 20 000 children under 18 years old in children's homes. According to the above mentioned report, the Ministry of Education (which runs these facilities) estimated that 1 208 children are to leave these facilities from October 2006 to September 2007 as they reach the age of 18. Children who leave these facilities struggle to become economically independent, and only a fraction of the children can find accommodation in halfway houses intended for youth aged 18-25, since such facilities can accommodate less than 500 applicants. There is no systematic government programme for the prevention of homelessness for this at-risk group, as cases are addressed individually and on an ad hoc basis.

In addition to the problem of homelessness, another area of extreme poverty concerns the situation of children in socially excluded Roma communities (though the problem is only estimated, as no official data exists). The August 2006 'Analysis of socially excluded Roma communities' warned that, in relation to the multiple forms of exclusion and long-term unemployment some Roma families live in, that 'almost an entire generation of children and youth are growing up, who in such communities in the course of their lives have not recognised the significance of employment' (Analysis 2006; p. 42), which increases the chances that the children will live in poverty as they become adults. However, the report did not provide figures on the number of Roma children in such communities.

Lastly, it seems that extreme poverty is not a major concern for the population of immigrants. As discussed in the Expert's Third Report for 2006, most non-European immigrants (particularly the Vietnamese) work in the Czech Republic on the basis of business licences, while many immigrants from Eastern Europe have been able to economically integrate and find work in the construction and related sectors. Unlike the Roma, there is yet no evidence of large numbers of immigrants living in impoverished or ghetto-like conditions.

1.3 Research on child poverty

Unlike the problems faced by families as a whole, child poverty is not specifically focused in research or in political documents. Neither the relevant MoLSA departments, nor RILSA devote broad attention to this topic. In the last *National Report on the Family* released in 2004, the issue of poverty is tackled only sporadically, arguing that 'cases of extreme poverty risk are exceptional' (p. 62). Specifically, the Roma population is described as the most exposed to poverty due to extreme unemployment (over 40 %), low employability and welfare dependency. The Report refers to the NAPSI regarding the issue. Only basic figures can be found in relevant documents.

Nevertheless, there are several research projects focusing on various aspects of children exposed to the risks of poverty.

The efficiency of social transfers in poverty elimination has been analysed on the basis of individual social benefits. Computations based on the Microcensus 2002 data showed that the reduction of poverty (by the EU measure) is considerable compared to the situation before the transfers: the at-risk-of-poverty rate is 39 %, but is only 8 % after all transfers are included (a 80 % reduction). Nevertheless, the situation was found to be different depending on age categories, to the disadvantage of children up to age 15, where the reduction is only 60 % and the resulting at-risk-of-poverty rate thus remains at 15 % (RILSA, 2006a). However, the 2004 data signals an even worse scenario, with the at-risk-of-poverty rate 34 % and 18 % before and after transfers, respectively, a reduction of only 47 % (JRSPSI, 2007, Annex 1C).

The *Generations and Gender Survey* of 2005 showed that, although small, there are categories where factors negatively affecting the situation of children accumulate: low income, material deprivation, stress and difficulties in harmonising parents' roles in work and family. Material poverty is not a cause of the problematic performance of parental roles as such. Nevertheless, material poverty reduces the prospects of a child's development by limiting access to important resources such as healthcare, education, social relationships and community networks. If preventive methods are not applied, the number of such cases could increase simultaneously with the regional concentration of social exclusion and the intergenerational transfer of poverty risk (Kucharova, 2006).

Several research projects have been developed by the Institute for research on social reproduction and integration established at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University in Brno with support of the Ministry of Education. Among them, the research project 'Discourses on childhood: case studies on civic initiatives helping children at risk' (investigated by Igor Nosal) analyses poverty risk at the individual level. Another, at the same research institution, is the 'Concepts of social exclusion/inclusion and social cohesion in the discourse of social policy, dimensions of social exclusion and the situation of the excluded,' project which is based on the analysis of household surveys (investigated by Petr Mares and Tomas Sirovatka). These projects are currently running.

The 'Protection and support measures for street children of third country nationals in EU Member States: The case of Prague,' project which is financed by the EC within the Daphne project (RILSA, 2006c), studied problems of street children from third countries living in Prague. Prague has so far not become a target place for unaccompanied minors from third countries, as they tend to move to other countries where they have either a family or ethnic background. However, such a situation might prevail in the future. A consistent government policy is missing, which would differentiate between those for whom integration is sought and those who are targeted for repatriation. In practice, the actions of governmental institutions work in opposite directions. The

legal status of streetworkers is not consistent with respect to minors and adolescent foreigners; on the one hand streetworkers should help them, on the other hand they should report them, thus being exposed to a conflict of interests.

Finally, the study 'Roma in the system of special school education and institutional education from the perspective of professionals: Ethnicity as one of the hidden parameters of selection into deviant populations' by Karel Cervenka, analyses how social control mechanisms, particularly the role of professionals in special education, unintentionally contribute to the production and maintenance of the social problems that Roma face. He cites a number of studies that indicate that the presence of Roma in special schools is much greater than their share in the Czech population, that the ratio of Roma to non-Roma in institutional care is as high as 1:2, and that Roma have a 15 times greater chance of going to a special school than their Czech counterparts. The author finds that professionals play a significant role in influencing who goes to these institutions and in what ways. The project is currently running.

Despite of the number of projects focused on the family and children, current analyses are not sufficient. There has been little analysis or policy assessments relating to the large percentage of children exposed to poverty observed in the standard income surveys. The 2004 *National Report on the Family* paid little attention to the relative standard of living of families with children in their variety. Income surveys were not used to thoroughly analyse the situation and its determinants regarding LM participation, the wage structure, social benefits, or taxes and contributions. While official documents often stress the fact that the Czech Republic has the lowest at-risk-of-poverty rate of all EU Member States, the other reality that children's specific at-risk-of-poverty rate relative to the population mean is the highest in the EU was never mentioned nor analysed. This refers not only to the situation of present children, but also to the low birth rate in the country. The potential for comparison between the two main sources on families' living standard — income surveys and family expenditure surveys — for such an analysis was never utilised. A synthesis based on the *National Report on the Family* and the *Report on the development of children's rights*, but going beyond them in range and depth, is thus needed.

2. Policy framework and main policies

2.1. Policy framework

The ISG/SPC 'Questionnaire on existing tools to monitor child poverty and social exclusion on the national level' states that 'there is no specific strategy of combating child poverty and social exclusion in the social and legal protection system' and refers to the State social support scheme. It also refers to 'a complex system of local social and legal protection bodies and offices in the country' and states that 'social workers work with the families in terms of prevention of social exclusion.' If children are not in families, 'they are placed into foster care, placed for adoption or placed in institutional care. The occurrence of homeless children is usually temporary.'

Indeed, the issue of child poverty is tackled within the general framework of family support. Family support is certainly a priority, but its main rationale is to promote demographic growth and the balance among generations, not to solve child poverty. The reason is that child poverty is rather limited and thus not seen as an acute problem. There are several basic documents where the future tasks of family support have been established. The 'National concept of family policy' was elaborated and approved by the Government already in October 2005. In July 2006, the

'Action plan of supporting families with children 2006-2009' was approved by the Government. This action plan involves four basic areas of support:

1. Services for families with children. Parental competencies should be enhanced and services for families developed in cooperation between the state and NGOs. Therefore, the network of services should be first mapped out. The MoLSA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, are elaborating a proposal for quality standards of services and the development of various services, which should be ready for the Government in mid-2008.
2. Reconciliation of professional and family roles. This should be enhanced by supporting and motivating employers to allow employees with preschool and school children to better manage the two roles. The MoLSA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, is working on such a proposal. Also, public education and consulting should be supportive of the involvement of fathers in childcare from the birth of the child, such as the problem of enhancing the attractiveness of parental leave for men.
3. Family policy on the level of regions and localities. This will be supported by methodical documents the MoLSA is currently working on, which will serve as a recommendation for the development of regional family policy and a draft regional concept, including financial coverage. This should have been finalised by the end of 2007.
4. Manifold financial support of families with children. Financial support has an indirect component, through tax allowances as well as the joint taxation of couples with children (introduced only in 2006), and a direct component through social protection, which proceeds via social insurance, state social support and social assistance. The system was established in the mid-1990s and was revised in 2007 (see more below).

The tasks regarding family policy were newly outlined in the *Programming declaration of the Government*, issued in January 2007. The social-legal protection of children will be transformed so that family care will be preferred before institutional care. The entire family-related agenda of the State administration will be concentrated in the MoLSA, which will be transformed into the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family. Conditions for strengthening the cohesion of the family and inter-generational solidarity will be established through the tax and transfer system. Maternal and paternal leave will be made more flexible and the role of fathers in childcare will be strengthened. Mechanisms for motivating employers to employ parents are again mentioned, as well as better services for families. Specifically, elementary schools in small localities will be supported and alternative programmes implemented, aiming to integrate children who are disabled, socially excluded and have special needs.

Of importance is that the new 'Law on social services' went into force in January 2007. It calls for the registration of providers of social services, the introduction of quality standards and the establishment of abilities required for performing social work. Monitoring of these conditions is to be ensured by the Inspection of Social Services. Regions and municipalities are obliged to support the necessary network of social services on their territories, regulated together with the providers and subsidised financially by the state. For the first time, people living in socially excluded communities are identified as vulnerable groups to be addressed with social assistance. In terms of children at risk of social exclusion, the Law applies (among other facilities) to low-threshold centres that provide immediate care to children and youth at risk of social exclusion. Such services are oriented towards children with socio-pathological traits or lifestyles deemed unacceptable to the majority of society, and usually involve the provision of leisure activities, counselling, and the protection of their rights and interests. According to the Our Child

Foundation, there are 20 000 to 40 000 children abused in the Czech Republic every year, and over 20 000 children rely on orphanages, children's homes, diagnostic institutions and social care institutions.

Regarding the balance between a universal and preventative approach aimed at promoting the wellbeing of all children and a targeted approach aimed at alleviating poverty and social exclusion amongst particular groups of children at high risk, the universal and preventative approach is the solution of first resort. This is rooted in the threefold system of social protection, conceived in the early 1990s. Employment-related social insurance accommodates foreseeable situations, such as unemployment, illness and old age. Family benefits under the State social support scheme address situations of financial need associated with maternity, child rearing and disability. The social assistance scheme addresses individual situations of material need, administered by local authorities.

Obviously, universal state benefits prevail over targeted assistance benefits. As the survey *Living Conditions 2005* reported, 76 % of families with dependent children (of all ages) are entitled to child benefits (which is the most frequent benefit of the State social support scheme) against 7 % of families declaring that they have received 'benefits of social need,' which corresponds to social assistance. We should note here that only means-tested benefits are reported by households interviewed, while situation- and income-tested benefits of the State social support scheme are imputed into the survey dataset by the CSO (not considering their actual take-up). In financial terms, the percentages are 6.8 % and 0.8 % of disposable income in households with children (*Living Conditions 2005*).

The coverage of those in need of social benefits appears to be quite high in the country. Of respondents in the survey conducted by RILSA-Brno, about a half of those financially deprived (both 'objectively' and 'subjectively') have received social assistance benefits — 30 % in fully employed households and 70 % in households with unemployed or inactive persons. However, data on take-up are based on estimates rather than observations. Nonetheless, those authors considered that the non-take-up of benefits was not particularly exceptional. The reasons for not taking benefits are that the procedure is seen as too complicated (46 %) and that the probability of being refused benefits is too high (also 46 %). One third of respondents feared being stigmatised by taking benefits and declared that they would hide this fact from their friends (RILSA, 2006a).

There are many outstanding problems in the area of children's rights. The NGO League of Human Rights has developed a special programme for the legal protection of children, which provides legal and social work services, monitors children's rights protection in the country, informs the public of the situation with regard to the protection of children's rights, and educates other service providers about children's rights. The programme team is composed of a lawyer, a social worker and a psychologist. The interests of the child are paramount in terms of deciding whether to cooperate with a family and what sort of services to provide. The programme provides its services only in cases of serious breaches of a child's rights. In terms of monitoring and lobbying, the League focuses mainly on the issue of preventing the institutionalisation of children.

The *Report on the development of children's rights*, issued in January 2006 by the NGO League of Human Rights' 'Programme for legal protection of children', states that the situation, in spite of some positive steps (the law on judiciary regarding the youth), is not satisfactory and there has been no progress made since the last recommendations announced three years prior (in 2003) by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The reason for the poor situation is that the issue of the rights of the child is divided among various ministries, which mostly treat it as a rather

marginal issue. There is no state concept on the care for children at risk. Giving preference to the issue of the rights of the child and immediate reform steps are required.

In terms of legal developments in the area of the family, the NGO White Circle of Safety drafted and lobbied for a Law for Protection against Domestic Violence, which was passed by Parliament in spring 2006 and went into force on January 1, 2007. The law takes a neutral stand with regard to the gender of the perpetrator and victim (whether male or female), and instead defines domestic violence in terms of the repetition of violent behaviour targeted against the life, health, freedom and dignity in the home of the violent person and the victim. The most important new feature of the law, requiring numerous changes in laws relating to police and judiciary procedures, is its emphasis on intervention. Previously, the police could intervene in domestic violence cases only in the moment of serious attack and injury. The law now makes it possible to intervene in cases by enabling the police to impose a restraining order on the accused attacker from the home for 10 days so that the victim can work through the situation and make plans without physical or other pressure from the attacker. The law also calls for support from intervention centres for psychological, social, legal and other assistance for the victims of domestic violence. Insofar as children are direct or indirect victims of domestic violence as well, the law moves in a positive direction in enabling the resolution of problematic family situations that affect their wellbeing.

The focus on the family and on children in their own right is not very well balanced. In legal cases, the right of a child for information is neglected, children's viewpoints are often not taken into account and specialised NGOs experienced in the field are excluded from being partners. In the area of the misuse and maltreatment of children, there is no integrated system of services, and thus NGOs are compelled to provide such services on their own. Corporal punishment is quite frequent in the country, according to small surveys. There are too few workers in the field of the social-legal protection of children, who are often even not well qualified or systematically trained (*Report on the development of children's rights 2005*). Regarding Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN), MoLSA evidence reports that the number of cases announced by social workers amounted to 1 028 in 2004 and 1 319 in 2005 (against 884 in 2001). From that, the number of cases reported to police was 202 in 2005 and 164 in 2006, of which were clarified 185 and 145 respectively (against 131 in 2003).

In early 2007, several controversial cases of the international abduction of children by their mothers (who sought to escape child abuse by the fathers), received significant media and public interest. The Office for the International Legal Protection of Children was blamed to be idle and engaged in only formal procedures in the cases when children were extradited to their fathers, despite the fact that they were unable to communicate with them, due to language barriers. Media reports accused the Office of not taking the interests and rights of the child into account in some cases, which should be the Office's primary task. In one of the controversial cases, a new court ruling has allowed an extradited child to be returned to the care of her mother in the Czech Republic. The director of the Office was recalled by the MoLSA and the agenda of the Office is expected to be integrated into the MoLSA further on.

Because of contradictory information from the media and State authorities on a controversial case of child abduction, in 2006 the Czech Ombudsman initiated an inquiry into whether the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is being properly applied by the courts and bodies of social and legal protection of children. The Ombudsman found that, in the case in question, the requirement for prompt decision-making and hence for decision-making and acting in the child's interest had not been met. Because of the difficulty of applying the Hague Convention, in October 2006 the Ombudsman organised a workshop in Brno on the issue, which

was attended by judges, experts from the ministries concerned, regional authorities and NGOs (*Report for the Fourth Quarter of 2006*). The workshop produced a number of partial measures to improve the current state of affairs:

- The Ministry of Justice will produce an information leaflet for the general public explaining the legal problems covered by the Hague Convention; the Ministry also incorporated the Hague Convention in a workshop for judges in 2007;
- The MoLSA incorporated aspects of the Hague Convention as one of the test questions for civil servants' professional and competence examination;
- The Ministry of Justice incorporated the suspension of extraordinary remedies in proceedings under the Hague Convention into the most recently drafted amendment to the Rules of Civil Procedure. A six-week deadline will be applied in line with EC regulations;
- A list of lawyers able to provide legal assistance to plaintiffs asking for the return of a child to the original place of residence is to be compiled. This would help reduce the need of the Office for the International Legal Protection of Children to serve as the plaintiff's representative, which may expose the Office to a potential conflict of interest (*Report for the Fourth Quarter of 2006*).

One of the most important organs for policy development in the area of child poverty is the Committee for the Rights of the Child, a part of the Government Council for Human Rights. The Committee has participated in the development of the 'Analysis of the current situation of institutional provision of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.' One of its recommendations, which it also made in 2003, is that a central body of the State administration needs to be assigned with the coordination of the implementation of the Convention. In May 2005, the Government finally assigned the coordination of the agenda for implementing the Convention to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. The Committee also developed a proposal to ensure children who are separated from one or both of their parents have the right to maintain personal contact with them (*Report of the activities of the Government Council for Human Rights 2005*).

Nonetheless, arrangements for mainstreaming the issue of child poverty are complicated due to the fact that the issue is divided among the various ministries, particularly the MoLSA and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, which largely see it as a marginal issue within their respective resorts. Similar to the issue of the rights of the child, the issue of child poverty also needs better coordination and focus, which may take place through the planned restructuring of the MoLSA into the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family. However, the above analyses indicate that better coordination also needs to be complemented by better and more analyses dedicated to the issue of child poverty, including government reports that would integrate different approaches to the issue. Currently, there is no State concept on the care of children at risk, which would also be needed if the issue is to be tackled effectively, particularly in terms of the coordination between the national and local levels.

2.2. Analysis of main policies

The position of families with children on the labour market reflects the general situation on the labour market as a whole, which in recent years has had favourable trends. The unemployment rate was 6.9 % in February (against 7.7 % in the EU Member States). Last year's decline in the number of unemployed was the largest in the entire history of registered unemployment. Some decrease has been reported by all 77 district labour offices. The reason is the good performance of the economy as well as the exceptionally warm winter of 2006/07, which enabled the continuation of construction projects. There are many more vacancies than before (108 000, against 430 500 registered unemployed in March 2007).

Nevertheless, in spite of the declining general unemployment, the level of long-term unemployment remains high. Only small positive changes have occurred. The amendment of the Act on Employment in force since January 2006 newly defines, as suitable employment, part-time jobs (50 %) and fixed-term jobs for less than three months. Between the end of 2005 and the end of 2006, the number of people unemployed for 12-24 months decreased from 80 000 to 63 000 (from 15.6 to 14 % of all unemployed) and the number of people unemployed for more than 24 months decreased from 133 000 to 122 000 (from 26.1 to 27.2 %). In total, the percentage of long-term unemployed decreased only negligibly from 41.7 to 41.2 % from the total number of job seekers (Analysis of the development of employment and unemployment in 2006).

Regarding unemployed women, their number also decreased, but more slowly than men. The share of women among all unemployed increased from 52 to 53.2 % between the end of 2005 and the end of 2006. Women's participation in the labour force is lower, particularly among women up to 34, which is caused by frequent childcare and the problem of more difficult job searches due to related time constraints. They cannot perform shift work or commute. In terms of concrete projects oriented towards families, within the 'Single programming document for Prague', Objective 3 (SPD3), the Measure 2.2 'Reconciliation of family and working life', 12 projects were approved relating to the objective of 'Support of equal opportunities of women and men on the labour market.'

Policies for income support are well developed in the country (see the summary of absolute and relative amounts in Table 5).

The minimum wage (instituted in 1991) has increased significantly in recent years. Since January 2007, it has amounted to CZK 8 000 monthly and the ratio of the net minimum wage to the minimum living standard of the individual is 152 %. Approximately 2 % of all employees receive minimum wages after the inclusion of smaller employers, according to the qualified estimate of the MoLSA.

Since October 1999, the unemployment benefit (instituted in 1990) has been arranged so that a jobseeker receives 50 % of previous earnings during the first three months and 40 % for the second three months (60 % during retraining). The ceiling of financial support has also increased since then and is now 2.5 times the corresponding minimum subsistence amount in general (compared to 1.5 times previously) and 2.8 times for job seekers in retraining (1.8 times previously). For older job seekers, a longer period of entitlement for unemployment benefits has been set by the last Employment Act.

The minimum living standard was enacted in 1991 and its amounts were valorised following the price index. If the income of a household, after claiming all the income-tested benefits of State social support, does not reach the given threshold, the household is entitled to request from the

municipality 'benefits for reason of social need' (which are income and means tested). The minimum living standard consisted of amounts for individuals (specified for children according to their age) and a lump-sum amount for households depending on their size.

As the amounts of the minimum living standard have remained stable between 2001 and 2004 (due to very low inflation, and thus the legal conditions for its increase were not met), their levels relative to the average wage have sharply decreased over time. In spite of that, the replacement rate of social benefits by wages remains on a low level: for unemployed persons in 2004, it was 78 % for a one-earner couple with two children on the level of 67 % of APW and 65 % for a two-earner couple with two children on the same level for both earners. For inactive persons, it was also 78 % for one-earner couples but only 39 % for two-earner couples. Comparatively, the figures are quite low, although not the lowest (JRSPSI, 2007, Context tables 9a and 9c).

In order to reconcile social and employment policies, new legislation was introduced in January 2007. The minimum living standard was reconstructed by the 'Act on the Living and Existence Minimum' and material assistance is newly ensured by the 'Act on Assistance in Cases of Material Need.' Only personal costs will be considered in the calculation of the minimum living standard, and housing support will be treated separately. Along the previous living minimum standard, a so-called 'existence minimum' was introduced on a lower level (currently CZK 2 020 monthly for a single person). Unemployed persons deemed uncooperative (in terms of job seeking and temporarily taking a worse job) are expected to receive the support at the 'existence' level only and in extreme cases even deprived of any support. In contrast, those working for the minimum wage will be further entitled for social benefits. For calculating benefits, only 70 % of earnings will be counted for consideration of material need.

In the sphere of taxation, the situation of low-income categories was improved by the reduction of personal income tax rates for the two lowest income bands and the newly introduced tax credits, which advantage working persons over those not working. For families with dependent children, the joint taxation of couples is already in force and was largely used in taxing income of natural persons of 2006 (350 000 couples actually used it).

Before the minimum income schemes are applied, benefits of the State social support scheme are incorporated into family income. According to the survey *Living Conditions 2005*, various benefits of this scheme were 6.5 % of disposable income in two-parent nuclear families and 16 % in single-parent nuclear families. The most important is the child benefit. Its calculation is based on two criteria: family income relatively to the minimum living standard and age of the child in originally four (but newly only three) categories differentiated in calculation of this standard. The calculation has changed along with the new method for calculating the minimum living standard as of January 2007.

Up until 2006, child benefit was provided to families not having income higher than three times the minimum living standard, with three levels of the benefits: an increased amount for families having income up to 1.1 times the minimum living standard, a basic amount for those between 1.1 and 1.8, and reduced amount for those between 1.8 and 3.0. As the amounts decrease, coefficient-setting thresholds should change. Since January 2007, instead of three times it will be four times, with new thresholds of 1.5, 2.4 and 4.0 times the minimum living standard of a child of a given age. The change is advantageous for couples with children but disadvantageous for single parent families. The effect was also uneven across various age categories of children — while the category of children aged 6-10 improved the most, those aged 10-15 worsened. Nevertheless, changes are rather negligible in terms of their purchasing power.

Child benefits: effect of changes introduced by January 2007

Age of child	Change in CZK monthly			Change in per cent		
	increased	basic	reduced	increased	basic	reduced
Up to 6	16	6	11	102.9	101.2	104.5
6-10	82	62	41	113.1	111.4	115.0
10-15	-34	-39	-10	95.4	94.0	96.9
15-26	0	-11	5	100.0	98.4	101.4

Source:??

To reconcile better work and family roles, the parental benefit has been nearly doubled since January 2007. It now stands at 40 % of the public sector average wage (CZK 7 600 as of January 2007 from the previous CZK 3 696). Recipients of parental benefit can earn it regardless of their income or work status (though they cannot receive it during maternity leave). Any parent caring fully for at least one child up to four years old can be entitled (seven years if the child is disabled). While the law presumes that the recipient of the parental benefit takes care of his or her children all day and properly, the recipient may secure childcare by other, non-institutional means (e.g. grandparents or a nanny), and thus improve their financial situation by means of both the benefit as well as gainful activity. A key condition of the benefit is that a child younger than three cannot make use of nursery schools or similar facilities for more than five calendar days each month, whereas children who have turned three years old can attend preschool up to four hours a day, without the paternal benefit being withdrawn.

In terms of the needs of long-term disabled children, parents caring for such children can receive the parental benefit up to the child's age of seven. A number of exceptions to the parental benefit are made so that disabled children are able to receive educational and healthcare while the parent receives the benefit. A child can, for example, visit a health rehabilitation facility up to four hours a day, and a disabled child can visit a crèche or similar facility, also for up to four hours a day.

Parents of children born after 1st April 2006 also receive a higher birth contribution in the amount of CZK 17 500, which is double the previous amount of CZK 8 750 (currently 11.1 times the minimum subsistence amount for a child, compared to 5.0 times previously). The contribution is even more for cases of twins or triplets. Pupils entering the first year of elementary school will also receive a CZK 1 000 benefit for learning aids. To avoid income insufficiency for people in default, not all amounts of social support benefits (such as the parental benefit) could be seized since April 2006, as was the case previously. It should be noted that the Czech government is currently planning a reform of both the parental benefit and the birth contribution (which will likely involve changing the structure of the benefits as well as reducing the overall amounts) in light of the burden of social expenditures on the State budget.

Services for children up to three years of age have undergone significant changes over time. According to a RILSA study, the capacity of State-supported childcare facilities for children up to 3 years (crèches) has been significantly reduced from 53 000 places in 1989 to 18 000 in 2000 (RILSA, 2004b). According to a 2006 OECD report, only 60 crèches remained in the country as of

2004, providing care for 0.5 % of 0-3-year-olds (OECD, 2006b). The decline in the number of these facilities has been offset somewhat by the increase in private, for-profit daycare facilities (often quite expensive), particularly in Prague. Given that social policy is supportive of long-term maternity leave, the great majority of children in this age category are cared for either by their parents or by informal babysitters. The RILSA study from 2004 commented that daycare facilities overall are too inaccessible and expensive, and thus concluded that 'formal care of children to three years of age, which is a key element in an active approach in balancing carrier and family, does not exist in systematic form in the Czech Republic' (RILSA, 2004b, p. 54).

For children 3-6 years old, public preschool facilities are the predominant form of service. As many as 76 % of 3-year-olds attend public preschools, which are all-day facilities administered by municipalities and cost a fee (which can be waived for low-income families). Attendance of 5-6-year-olds at these facilities reaches 95 % (OECD, 2006b). The qualifications of personnel working at these preschools are considered to be at a high level. In the 2005/2006 school year, the Czech School Inspectorate received only 23 complaints (mainly from parents) about an issue at these schools, which represents 5 complaints for every 1 000 schools.

There is not a clear concept of social housing in the country. Legally, the term was used for institutional housing only. Regarding standard housing, rent regulation was applied in former State-owned apartments (750 000 apartments in total, of which 300 000 are in private hands) which were originally allocated mostly to persons of importance for the communist regime, only rarely to those in need. The regulation biased the emerging rental market and indirectly supported a large black housing market. After political and legal conflicts and a three-year long legislative vacuum, the Act on the Unilateral Increase of Rents from Apartments entered into force: rent should rise by an average of 14.2 % (differently based on the size of the municipality) each year for four years beginning in January 2007. Recently, the term 'social housing' has appeared in connection with the debate about the planned increase in the VAT rate on housing construction and reconstruction beginning in January 2008, when the current reduced rate of 5 % is set to rise to 19 %. Within the discretion given to EU member states, the Government has decided to make social housing exempt from the VAT increase, and has defined social housing as any apartment up to 120 m² and family houses up to 350 m². Thus the definition will embrace practically all housing in the country.

Support for housing costs is twofold. Within the State social support scheme, a housing benefit is accorded if housing costs exceed 30 % of family income (35 % in Prague) and, simultaneously, this amount of 30 % (35 %) is lower than normative costs set by the law. After applying entitlements, the housing supplement can also be given along with social assistance. Municipalities are responsible for implementing social assistance in accordance with local conditions and customs. The benefits are paid by local authorities, who receive the relevant funds from the State. Municipalities also participate in the construction of new apartments for low-income families, which is made possible by grants from the Ministry for Regional Development and the State Fund of Housing Development. Municipalities can also offer no-interest loans to targeted groups or provide funds for the integration of minorities.

Municipal housing policies are not very consistently designed. The privatisation or sale of municipal-owned flats often takes place without regard for the socioeconomic condition of their tenants. Also, in many towns and villages, social housing remains taboo or is degraded to 'naked apartments' (*holobyty*), a very low-category flat in which tenants often do not have statutory health and other safeguards. People whose rent is in arrears are often evicted to a 'naked apartment,' which can result in the formation of ghettos for municipalities with high levels of unemployment. A project on the possibility of preventing spatial segregation was conducted in

2005, which should result in a concise publication that would discuss methods of prevention and be addressed to the larger public.

Regarding policies aimed at the protection of children at risk of social exclusion, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport developed a 'Concept of the early care of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds in the area of education', which the government adopted on 11 May 2005. One of the goals of the concept is to increase the number of Roma pupils in the main educational track (i.e. in basic schools), increase their academic success, and provide support to parents and children towards their social integration. On the basis of the Government's decision, the Ministry has, among other things, the responsibility to:

- realise programmes and measures aimed at increasing the number of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds that will complete preschool education in preschools or in preparatory classes for children from such backgrounds;
- develop programmes and measures for the training of teachers who work with preschool children from 3 years of age from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds;
- realise pilot projects on the early care of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds by creating centres for early care through or at the preschools or basic schools at which the pupils will study.

More specifically, a grant programme as well as two main nationwide educational programmes are aimed at providing early care to children at risk of social exclusion. The 'Programme of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport for the support of the integration of the Roma community' focuses on the early preparation of Roma children by providing grants for:

- support for increasing the participation of Roma children in preschool education, and for increasing the chances of Roma children to successfully enter basic school;
- support for basic and secondary schools with a large number of Roma pupils, so as to further their integration in the main educational track;
- support for the further education and pedagogical training of teachers working with Roma children in preschools and basic schools, with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of educating them;
- After-school and interest-based activities for Roma children and youth, so as to support their educational needs; and other areas.

In 2006, the grant programme provided CZK 9.63 million in two rounds of funding, roughly constant with the allocation for 2005. The predominant recipients of the funding are schools and Roma NGOs.

Preparatory classes for children of socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds were established on the basis of the 2004 Law on Schools and are administered by municipalities and regions. The classes take place in the year before the first year of compulsory education and are intended to provide more even conditions for those children to enter basic schools. Much of the education in the preparatory classes focuses on learning the Czech language and on mental development, but they also include creative activities to motivate Roma pupils to attend them. By law, free preparatory classes can be established if at least seven pupils will attend, but can have at most 15 pupils. The principal of a basic school decides whether a child should attend preparatory

classes, which it does on the request of the child's parents and on the basis of a written recommendation by the school counsellor. As of September 2005 there were 123 preparatory classes for 1 441 Roma pupils. The 79 of those classes took place in regular basic schools. While these classes have been very successful in mainstreaming children from disadvantaged backgrounds into the mainstream educational system, the number of such classes and children enrolled has been declining: compared to the 2005 figures above, in 2004 there were 126 classes for 1 779 children, while in 2003 there were 137 classes for 1 824 pupils (2004 and 2005 Reports on the Roma Community).

The second main programme for providing timely educational care to children at risk is the programme of curriculum reform, which enables preschools to create school educational programmes on the basis of the 'Framework education programme'. The programme is supposed to be binding, but the curriculum reform promotes a decentralisation of curriculum development, providing more scope for teachers and schools. While the programme mentions multicultural education and socio-culturally disadvantaged pupils, this is a marginal issue in relation to the programme's goal of increasing school autonomy. It is also too early to assess whether or how preschools or other schools have adjusted curriculum to meet the needs of children at risk of social inclusion.

Another educational programme aimed to meet the needs of at-risk children are the 'Teacher assistants' (formerly known as Roma assistants). The assistants are usually recruited from the Roma community and help prevent adaptation and communication difficulties and other educational problems experienced by Roma pupils. They also communicate with Roma parents, monitor that pupils do their homework, help with individualised lessons, and also help other pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Importantly, schools requesting teacher assistants do not need to have a minimum number of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The increase of the number of assistants from 150 in 1999 to 306 in 2006 (according to the most recent report on the Roma Community) can be seen as a positive development. Of the 306 assistants, only 16 of them work in preschools.

For alleviating child poverty, significant focus needs to be placed on the education of Roma children so that they can overcome the negative headwinds created by their socially disadvantaged situation. While a number of educational programmes have been launched, most notably the preparatory classes and teacher assistants, the emphasis now needs to be placed on their expansion and accessibility. Preparatory classes rely on the initiative of Roma parents and on enrolment rates, whereas a more accessible approach would be to make them generally available in schools located in communities with a large number of Roma residents. Targeted job retraining programmes that specifically seek to address the problem of Roma unemployment would also be desirable. The current government has been making some strides in terms of Roma issues (there is a new Minister without Portfolio who focuses on the Roma problem) as well as in terms of the rights of the child.

As for policies to promote the participation of children in social, cultural, and sporting life, the measures in place are significantly bolstered by the fact that the Czech Republic has a long tradition of youth-oriented summer and educational camps, which were even promoted by the previous regime. Policy in this area is guided by the 'Concept of State Policy for the Area of Children and Youth to 2007,' which was adopted by the Government in April 2003 and was formulated on the basis of contributions by numerous ministries and the involvement of NGOs, such as the Czech Council of Children and Youth and the Circle of Associations of Children and Youth. The concept was developed as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities

and threats) in the area of youth policy, including youth and the labour market, youth and political participation, youth and health, youth and free time, etc.

The main policy goals of the concept in terms of free-time activities include the coordination of free-time activities through the cooperation of the State, the regions, municipalities and civic associations; the development of facilities for free-time activities, such as school clubs; the training of people who work with children and youth in order to improve the quality of free-time activities; and an increase in youth mobility, such as to study or work in the EU. The concept mentions that programmes should give special attention to socially or otherwise disadvantaged children, as well as those with exceptional talent. The concept does not explicitly mention the prevention of child poverty as one of its main objectives, though it could be argued that that goal can be addressed through the range of policy objectives discussed.

The promotion of the participation of children in free-time activities is largely based on grants made to civic associations, sporting clubs, schools and other centres of free-time activity. According to one study evaluating the concept (ISEA, 2005), the Government spends approximately CZK 200 million to NGOs working with youth. It could be said in general that grants to NGOs with youth-related programs are the main mechanism through which policy is implemented in this area. Activity is now governed by the programmatic document 'Programmes of state support of work with children and youth for non-governmental non-profit organisations for the years 2007-2010', which sets out funding criteria on the basis of the concept.

Support for free-time activities for Roma youth is made on the basis of the above-mentioned programme for the support of the integration of the Roma community. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport also updated its programme for 'Sports by the physically handicapped' in November 2006. To qualify for State funding, a civic association applying has to be constituted of a membership of least 90 % long-term physically handicapped persons. Approximately half of all funds should go towards getting handicapped youth involved in sports activities.

In addition to government policy, NGOs also play an active role in offering educational activities and programmes for at-risk or abused children and their teachers. The Educational Institute for Child Protection, for example, launched a nationwide project to offer educational seminars and training programs for teachers on the issue of the prevention of child abuse and neglect. It started with cooperation on two-year EU project supported by Johnson and Johnson — 'Support of children rights'. For the third year of this large national project, the NGO Safety line and Johnson and Johnson agreed to set up the Educational Institute mainly to coordinate educational seminars for both State and non-profit sectors using an interdisciplinary, multi-agency approach.

NGOs are suitable for supporting specific target categories of population at a local level. In particular, they help people in difficulties such as abused and neglected children, youths exposed to various risks, single-parent families. Target categories are also those exposed to social exclusion such as handicapped children, children in foster parenthood, seniors, Roma, foreigners and refugees. There is a great variety of assistance — consulting, therapy, educational programmes, material aid and temporary accommodation. Services provided are not expensive, often free of charge. In the survey among 64 NGOs providing services for families, 75 % of NGOs declared financial problems, in particular for employees and the costs of running. The granting process is difficult, State support is provided on a yearly basis only and periods of financial insecurity when waiting on resources are long and disturbing. Tax allowances for NGOs and granters would be helpful (RILSA, 2006b).

For example, the NGO White Circle of Safety provides free and confidential assistance to victims and witnesses of crimes, such as domestic violence. The NGO has drafted legislative proposals for tackling domestic violence, particularly with regard to the wellbeing of children and youth. In a similar vein, the Children's Crisis Centre has focused since 1992 on the problem of child abuse and neglect in field of prevention, diagnosis and therapy. The NGO has a team of psychologists, social workers, legal counsellors and a medical department. Lastly, the Our Child Foundation is one of the leading organisations in the country focusing on support to abused, neglected, handicapped and abandoned children. Professional estimates state that there are 20 000-40 000 children abused in the country every year, of which about 50 die each year as a consequence of child abuse. The NGO has a very visible media campaign, has received large donations from the public to support at risk children, and has been active in the area of the rights of the child.

3. Arrangements in place

As for the monitoring and reporting on child poverty and its change, the MoLSA provided the following responses to the ISG/SPC 'Questionnaire on existing tools to monitor child poverty and social exclusion on national level':

- On the question regarding the main bodies involved, it was stated that 'Bodies of social and legal protection are generally responsible for monitoring of the development of the social conditions of the children in the families.' In the field of family income, Microcensus surveys continued after 1989 and were collected in 1992, 1996 and 2002. The follow-up to these surveys are now surveys on 'Living Conditions,' conceived more broadly to social conditions and developed within the EU-SILC programme managed by Eurostat. The first round was collected in April/May 2005 and its results were published by the Czech Statistical Office in January 2007. The survey involved also a special module for persons born between 1938 and 1980, which asked questions on their background family. The other rounds were collected in April/May 2006 and 2007 on partial rotated panel samples.
- On the question regarding the key reporting tools, reports, websites, databases, etc., it was stated that 'Social and legal protection bodies are obligated to share relevant information with the social support system bodies. The usual manner is through the integrated reports'.
- On the question regarding the areas of child wellbeing covered, it was stated that 'From the point of view of social and legal protection, general living conditions of children are measured. Children's wellbeing is evaluated by the quality of housing, health, nutrition, education, social deprivation and social development.'

The question regarding the assessment of the impact of a policy measures and the links between the policy objectives/priorities, the targets possibly set in this context (and related indicators) and the actual policy measures (and related indicators) remained unanswered.

Regarding other relevant data sources (existing or planned surveys, administration of data, child/youth panels) it was stated that the 'Social and legal protection of children is monitored through regular evaluations of statistical monitoring. The data produce information on the number of families and children at risk from the point of view of their social and legal protection. The data also give a regional and time progress overview of the issue.'

We can go beyond these general statements and be more concrete in several regards.

The main bodies involved are the MoLSA and its Department of family policy and equality between women and men, which elaborates the 'National concept of family policy' (the last of 2005) and 'Action plan of supporting families with children' (the latest of which is from mid 2006 for 2006-09). Four working groups focus on individual fields: services for families with children, reconciliation of work and family roles, family policy at regional and local level, financial issues. The Ministry also distributes financial support to NGOs in the field of family support. The focus is on the family in the broad sense.

Regarding the key reports, the most extensive document on the situation of children — the *Report on the development of children's rights in the Czech Republic in 2003-2005* — was issued in January 2006 by the NGO League of Human Rights, 'Programme for legal protection of children'. The report was published mid-term between the last recommendations (January 2003) of the UN HCHR Committee on the Rights of the Child for the implementation of the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' in the Czech Republic, and the date of the next periodical implementation report (to be submitted by mid 2008).

Regarding research programmes, we should mention the RILSA-Brno has had an ongoing project 'Monitoring of poverty in the Czech Republic,' which started in 2001 and continued until 2006. The study used income data from Microcensuses, the survey *Living conditions of households 2001* (pilot survey for the EU-SILC programme) and MoLSA's database on recipients of social benefits. The project focused on poverty in the society in the whole, with proportionate attention given to families at risk of poverty. Its results were published in RILSA working paper series (see RILSA, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2005, 2006a).

Regarding data sources, surveys useful for the study of child poverty include the following:

- In the field of family income, Microcensus surveys continued after 1989 and were collected in 1992, 1996 and 2002. The follow-up to these surveys are now surveys on living conditions, conceived more broadly to social conditions and developed within the EU-SILC programme managed by Eurostat. The first round was collected in April/May 2005 and its results were published by the Czech Statistical Office in January 2007. The survey also involved a special module for persons born between 1938 and 1980, which asked questions on their background family. The other rounds were collected in April/May 2006 and 2007 on partial rotated panel samples.
- Regarding consumption and housing, 'Family expenditures' surveys are collected on quota samples of about 3 000 households of employees, self-employed, farmers and pensioners. Besides this 'basic' sample, a complementary sample of about 400 households with low income is collected. In this complementary sample, also households of unemployed, mothers living alone, and disabled pensioners with children are represented. The criterion for respondents is that their household income should not be higher than 1.4 times the minimum living standard. The reason for establishing the complementary sample was to get better representative data of low-income families.
- In the field of demographic behaviour, the Czech Republic participates in the 'Generations and gender programme' (GGP) developed by the UN Economic Commission for Europe. The programme aims at improving the understanding of demographic and social development and of the factors that influence these developments, with a particular attention towards relationships between children and

parents (generations) and relationships between partners (gender). The programme includes the 'Generations and gender survey' (GGS) collected in 2005 on 10 006 respondents aged 18-79. The head of the project is Jitka Rychtarikova of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Charles University in Prague.

- In the field of education, the Czech Republic participates in the OECD's 'Programme for international student assessment' (PISA) which has been used to extensively study the problem of educational inequalities, the aspirations of pupils, and the role and views of parents. The Czech Republic has participated in the 2000, 2003 and 2006 waves. It also participates in the longitudinal component (PISA-L), which will be used to compare pupils' aspirations with their actual educational and occupational destinations, a key component in the analysis of intra-generational mobility and inequality. The national project manager is Jana Paleckova, at the Institute for Information on Education.
- In the field of health situation and behaviour, the country participates in the WHO's collaborative cross-national study, HBSC. Surveys were collected in 1993/94, 1997/98, 2001/02 and 2006, headed by the national coordinator Ladislav Csemy, Prague Psychiatric Centre. The project 'Structural equation modelling of the effect of the family context on variability of wellbeing and problem behaviour' supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic was running in 2005-07.

There is a decent amount of data available for understanding the situation of children and the problem of poverty in the Czech Republic. However, despite this and the quite large percentage of children exposed to poverty according to both the EU measure and the national minimum living standard, there has not been any special analytical or assessment efforts developed that focus on this problem. Ex ante evaluations have been applied in the area of human resources (mostly using the experience of other countries) but not in the area of poverty and social exclusion. A single ex ante analysis of the last reform of the social benefits system was made by Jurajda and Zubricky (2005). The analysis assessed the system in terms of the possible financial gain of persons on welfare taking a job. The analysis did not pay any attention to the real implementation of the programme under given conditions, e.g. the real performance of the State and local authorities to implement the system thoroughly.

Regulatory impact assessment (RIA) has been developed in the area of the legal environment and State bureaucracy. A 'Directive for regulatory impact assessment' was released in March 2005 in relation to the planned reform of State administration (which was not accomplished). The Government also adopted a resolution in April 2005 to apply RIA into the legislative process. Within the Ministry of Interior, the Department of Regulatory Reform and Public Administration Quality includes the Unit of Regulatory Impact Assessment. The Department was established in November 2006 with the aim of transferring some agendas, among them the Regulatory Reform and Central State Administration Reform from the Government Office to the Ministry of Interior and integrate them 'under one roof.' According to the announcement, the Unit's activities are focused on the impact of existing or proposed legal measures in economic, social and environmental areas, including assessment of their impact on various economic and social groups. Seminars have been organised and a newsletter entitled *Efficient Administration* is being published.

Even less development seems to be the case in the area of poverty impact assessment (PIA). This is defined as 'the process by which government departments, local authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design, implementation and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which

are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction' (Guidelines, 2006, p. 10). The Czech Republic is a participant in the OECD Development Co-ordination Directorate's (DAC) Network on Poverty Reduction (POVNET), which is developing the PIA approach. Besides that, no publicly available evidence could be found regarding its application in the Czech Republic.

The insufficient use of the impact assessment approach can be illustrated with the recent reform of public finance 2007-2010, presented by the Government on 3 April 2007. The reform was motivated by the gloomy outlook for public finance and the rapid rise of public debt and mandatory expenditures. Taxation should be shifted from direct to indirect taxes and working status should be preferred before non-working status overall. Financial support in parenthood should differentiate according to the length of its expected provision, obligatorily fixed in advance by the recipient. The child benefit should be differentiated according to the age of the child and the threshold for taking the child benefit will be 2.4 times the minimum living standard instead of current level of 4 times the standard. Automatic valorisation schemes of the living and existence minimum, following the CPI, should be removed. The same is also the case with the parental benefit. Social benefits will be provided only up to 2.0 times of the minimum living standard. Also, the threshold for social benefits will be lowered. The birth contribution (recently doubled) should be reduced and the benefit for learning aids (negligible anyway) should be eliminated.

The debate about proposed reform has been controversial but not supported by an impact assessment from any side. On the one hand, many consider the reform as quite limited, implying that a 'true,' more radical reform is required that would limit mandatory expenditures more substantially, simplify the system and solve upcoming problems in a more comprehensive and strategic fashion. On the other hand, others consider the (although small) economising measures in budgetary spending as unnecessary and stress that the reform is advantageous only for the most well off. In the perception of trade unions, the reform will negatively affect the position of low-income categories and, in particular, the material situation of unemployed and welfare dependent households (Analysis CMKOS, 2007). The reform has thus received criticism not only by the parliamentary opposition but also by members of coalition parties. The media argued that the 'middle class' should presumably benefit the least from the reform.

Unfortunately, the Government's presentation so far about the reform's impact has been rather fragmentary, lacking assessment approach regarding its impact on various categories of the population. Macroeconomic figures are not paralleled by microeconomic figures on households in a homogeneous form. The impact of the reform on households is demonstrated on 'typical family situations,' without placing such situations in a representative context of the real structure of the population in terms of household and income. While the change in income tax is related to the (imaginary) distribution of personal wages, the change in VAT is related to all households distributed by their per capita income — the composite impact of both taxes and social benefits is demonstrated by examples only. The same 'typological approach' is applied by trade unions, which have published a great variety of 'family situations' differentiated by earnings of both spouses, the number and age of children (Analysis CMKOS, 2007).

In fact, the more examples provided, the harder it is to clearly assess the main tendencies of the reform. The fragmentary presentation of separate effects does not enable the overall evaluation of the possible impact on this or that category of the population (including children) and opens the door to rather ideological disputes, instead of sober criticism and objective debate. The presentation of the reform does not differ materially from the ways similar proposals were introduced in the past, also relying on 'typical family situations' and the lack of thorough analytical assessments. In sum, the development and application of impact assessments combining various methods and using also simulation models on households is thus needed.

The current government has a strong impetus to strengthen the position of the family, improve its wellbeing and support the ability of parents to balance work and family responsibilities. A complex analysis should be thus done to discern the problems in family policy, particularly by specifying the individual phases of the life cycle. Currently, the focus is on supporting birth and early stages of parental life (except for the rather neglected provision of housing, however). Later stages of the life cycle should also be focused on with the same degree of attention and within a broader point of view. If the situation of Czech children is satisfactory — although far from outstanding — we have to also think about the reasons why the population takes a rather defensive strategy towards procreation.

Here, a counterfact should be considered, i.e. how different (concretely speaking much worse) the situation of children might be in income and monetary poverty terms, if their relative numbers in the population would be the same as about 15 years ago. In fact, between 1988/89 and 2004/05, the percentage of children in the population shrunk from 24 to 17 %. At the same time, children's risk-of-poverty in EU terms increased from 2.5 to 17 %. By way of comparison, we can state that the share of pensioners increased from 18 to 22 % in the same period while their risk-of-poverty shrunk from 32 to 6 %.⁵

There are many more reasons for the decreasing fertility rate — in particular changing lifestyles of the youth and their reorientation towards individual human development and much more equality between women and men. The average age of women at the birth of their first child increased from 22 in 1989 to 26 in 2005 (which is still lower than in the Scandinavian countries, Ireland or Switzerland). Nevertheless, material issues are certainly not negligible, particularly in terms of peoples' much higher career, consumer and lifestyle expectations generated by the new economic conditions. The assessment of the situation should thus involve not only various dimensions but also a long-term (intra-generational and inter-generational) perspective.

⁵ The figures are computed on Microcensus 1989 (data on income of 1988) and Living Conditions 2005 (data on income of 2004). The use of the EU poverty measure has an orientation value only. The reason is that the implicit equivalence scale applied in its calculation does not correspond to Czech reality of the late 1980s, as housing costs were much lower and spending for food much higher within family budgets. In reality, the contrast between poverty rates of children and pensioners would be thus less striking if the appropriate equivalence scales would be used. Also the underestimation of reported income might be higher in economically active households than in pensioners' households. In any case, as stated in the text, we use the comparison for informative purposes only, not according any political relevance to it. Regarding the changing socio-political status of pensioners during the transition, see more in Vecernik, 2006.

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Tables

Table 1 Child wellbeing in selected EU countries

Indicator	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Germany
<i>Material wellbeing:</i>					
% children in homes with equivalent incomes below 50 % of the national median	7.2	13.1	14.5	13.3	10.9
percentage of children reporting low family affluence, aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	40.2	38.7	43.1	16.8	16.4
Percentage of children age 15 reporting less than six educational possessions	27.8	44.1	42.5	16.7	17.6
percentage of children reporting fewer than 10 books in the home	1.9	4.1	8.4	9.3	6.9
percentage of children in families without an employed adult	7.2	11.3	9.3	2.1	8.8
<i>Health and safety:</i>					
Infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	3.9	7.3	7.0	4.5	4.2
Low birth rate (% births less than 2 500g)	6.6	8.7	5.9	7.1	6.8
Measles: % children immunised aged 12-23 months: 2003	99	99	97	79	92
DPT3: % children immunised aged 12-23 months: 2002	98	99	99	83	89
Polio 3: % children immunised aged 12-23 months: 2002	97	99	98	82	95
Deaths from accidents and injuries per 100 000 under 19, average of latest three years available	18.7	16.1	18.3	15.0	13.4
<i>Educational wellbeing:</i>					
Reading literacy achievement aged 15: 2003	489	482	497	491	491
Mathematics literacy achievement aged 15: 2003	516	490	490	506	503
Science literacy achievement aged 15: 2003	523	503	498	491	502
Full-time and part-time students in public and private educational institutions aged 15-19 in % 2003	90.1	83.4	88.2	77.3	89.0

CZECH REPUBLIC

Indicator	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Germany
Percentage of 15 to 19-year-olds not in education or employment: 2003	5.8	6.8	3.3	10.2	4.7
Percentage of pupils aged 15 years aspiring to low skilled work: 2003	39.3	30.7	17.1	33.1	34.1
<i>Peer and family relationships:</i>					
% of young people living in single parent family, aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	13.4	13.4	10.2	12.5	12.8
% of young people living in step family structure, aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	12.2	7.0	2.4	7.5	9.2
% of students whose parents eat their main meal with them around a table several times a week, aged 15: 2000	72.9	74.7	78.4	68.2	81.5
% of students whose parents spend time just talking to them several times per week, aged 15: 2000	72.0	90.2	49.7	47.1	42.5
% of young people finding their peers 'kind and helpful', aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	43.4	64.9	60.2	77.2	76.1

Table 1 (continuation) Child wellbeing in selected EU countries

Indicator	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Germany
<i>Behaviours and risks:</i>					
Percentage smoking cigarettes at least once per week, aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	14.3	12.6	11.2	13.2	16.4
Percentage of young people who have been drunk two or more times, aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	14.7	16.4	15.2	15.1	17.7
Percentage of young people who have used cannabis in the last 12 months, aged 15: 2001	27.1	12.4	15.1	11.7	18.5
Adolescent fertility rate, births per 1 000 women aged 15-19: 2003.	23.0	27.0	16.0	22.0	14.0
Percentage of young people who have had sexual intercourse, aged 15: 2001	18.3	21.0	15.1	20.6	28.0
Percentage of young people who used a condom during their last sexual intercourse, aged 15: 2001		78.2	73.0	81.9	70.0

CZECH REPUBLIC

Indicator	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Germany
Percentage of young people involved in physical fighting in previous 12 months, aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	47.9	48.0	38.7	38.9	28.1
Percentage of young people who were bullied at least once in the last 2 months, aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	16.1	23.0	30.2	44.0	36.5
% of young people who eat fruit every day, aged 11, 13, 15 years: 2001	42.2	31.3	46.1	37.4	42.4
Percentage of young people who eat breakfast every school day, aged 11, 13, 15 years: 2001	51.8	53.4	69.0	57.4	67.0
Mean number of days when young people are physically active for one hour or more aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	4.3	3.7	4.0	4.2	3.6
Percentage of young people who are overweight according to BMI, aged 13 and 15: 2001	9.4	12.8	7.1	11.9	11.3
<i>Subjective wellbeing:</i>					
Percentage of young people rating their health as 'fair or poor', aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	11.8	14.9	14.4	15.6	14.9
Percentage of young people with scores above the middle of the life satisfaction scale, aged 11, 13 and 15: 2001	83.4	84.4	80.0	88.1	85.4
Percentage of students who agree with the statement 'I feel like an outsider or left out of things', aged 15: 2003	9.7	9.3	8.2	5.8	6.1
Percentage of students who agree with the statement 'I feel awkward and out of place', aged 15: 2003	6.4	7.6	9.9	8.2	11.4
Percentage of students who agree with the statement 'I feel lonely', aged 15: 2003	7.0	7.3	8.4	7.2	6.2
Percentage of young people 'liking school a lot', aged 11, 13, 15: 2001	11.6	26.3	17.3	36.1	29.5

Source: Unicef 2007.

Table 2 Indicators of poverty in 2002 and 2004 (all persons)

Breakdown	2002		2004		
	EU threshold	Living Minimum	EU threshold	Living Minimum	Subjective
<i>By age category:</i>					
Up to 15	14.57	8.6	17.68	7.3	14.5
16-24	8.91		12.03	4.3	15.1
25-49	7.92		10.93	4.0	11.3
50-64	4.74		6.10	1.7	7.8
65 and more	4.37		5.31	0.2	5.6
<i>By economic status:</i>					
Employees	2.05	0.8	3.29	0.8	8.0
Self-employed	6.50	4.7	4.38	1.4	10.2
Unemployed	36.04	35.1	51.37	41.2	47.9
Pensioners	3.78	1.6	6.07	0.5	7.2
<i>By type of household:</i>					
Without children		1.5	6.71	2.3	8.5
Of which: one person		2.0	16.39	2.7	10.1
With children		6.5	13.77	4.4	12.2
Of which:					
One parent	29.46	16.8	40.95	18.3	30.8
2 adults, 1 child	6.46	2.9	8.87	0.3	13.2
2 adults, 2 children	7.06	4.2	10.97	2.8	9.0
2 adults, 3 and more children	19.38	12.3	23.92	2.6	22.4
Total	8.13	3.9	10.36	3.5	10.6
Income gap	15.26		18.20		
Gini	24.79		26.0		

Source: Microcensus 2002 and *Living Conditions 2005* (CSO computations in italics).

Table 3 Child poverty by their age in 2004 by EU measurement (children up to 17)

Age of the child	Total poverty and poverty gap		The number of parents		The number of active members			
	Total	Gap	One	Two	No	One	Two	Three and four
0-5	15.8	25.2	57.5	11.8	66.8	11.4	4.0	0.0
6-10	18.0	20.4	54.8	14.0	89.5	22.9	1.6	0.0
11-17	13.8	18.2	40.3	13.8	78.9	26.1	4.4	0.0
Total	17.6		45.2	13.7	77.5	20.3	3.5	0.0
Average no. of children	1.85		1.67	1.88	1.95	1.92	1.81	1.36
Composition of households			11.2	88.8	10.1	37.7	48.2	11.0

Source: *Living Conditions 2005* (own computations).

Table 4 Indicators of deprivation in 2005 (children up to 17)

Indicator	EU threshold			Minimum living standard			Subjective		
	Poor	Non-poor	Eta	Poor	Non-poor	Eta	Poor	Non-poor	Eta
<i>Could not afford (if wanted to):</i>									
To keep home adequately warm	20.4	7.9	.147	17.8	9.0	.076	30.2	6.0	.293
A meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day	37.8	16.3	.187	37.9	17.9	.129	54.0	13.2	.367
New clothing instead of second-hand	55.0	27.8	.202	59.7	29.5	.166	66.4	25.5	.313
One week annual holiday away from home	78.3	35.4	.300	81.9	38.3	.226	94.9	31.9	.455
<i>Enforced lack of:</i>									
Washing machine	0.5	0.4	.015	1.0	0.3	.026	2.6	0.0	.148
Colour TV	3.0	0.2	.083	5.1	0.2	.167	3.0	0.12	.133
Personal computer	44.1	14.7	.142	56.0	16.0	.261	61.2	11.3	.455
Telephone	7.1	0.8	.104	10.4	1.0	.185	8.6	0.5	.225
Personal car	46.6	12.1	.277	53.0	14.1	.265	51.2	10.8	.384
<i>Arrears during last 12 months:</i>									
Rent	25.9	5.9	.007	34.5	6.8	.250	33.3	4.4	.365
Energies	30.5	7.0	.128	42.0	7.9	.286	37.2	5.6	.371
Mortgage	1.0	1.7	.259	0.0	1.7	.035	3.1	1.3	.053
Other instalments of loans and credits	10.8	5.9	.167	19.4	5.6	.141	20.5	4.2	.234
<i>Bad housing:</i>									
Wet	33.0	21.5	.094	30.9	22.5	.051	35.7	20.9	.125
Dark	11.8	8.0	.047	10.7	8.4	.021	16.1	7.2	.113
Small	30.7	22.6	.066	36.6	22.7	.083	37.8	21.2	.139
Noisy	24.5	21.8	.022	20.0	22.4	.014	28.3	21.2	.061
Dirty	25.0	20.9	.034	22.2	21.5	.004	27.6	20.4	.062

Source: *Living Conditions 2005* (own computations).

Table 5 Financial difficulties in current family and in families of origin of father and mother (children up to 17, two parents only)

Age of children	Current family			Family of father			Family of mother		
	big difficulties	difficulties	all together	problems always	problems often	all together	problems always	problems often	all together
0-5	11.5	24.9	36.3	8.1	16.4	24.5	11.7	9.0	20.7
6-10	14.0	20.5	34.5	8.3	14.8	23.1	13.8	11.3	25.1
11-17	17.9	21.7	39.6	12.0	10.9	22.9	12.6	15.2	27.8
Total	15.2	22.4	37.6	10.1	13.3	23.5	12.6	12.6	25.2
<i>Pearson correlation coefficients</i>									
0-5						.116			-.009
6-10						-.027			-.012
11-17						-.059			.002
Total						-.003			.000

Source: *Living Conditions 2005* (own computations).

Pearson correlation coefficients measure the association between perceived financial situation of individual families of origin and the household under observation. All coefficient except those marked by * are significant at the 0.000 level.

Table 6 Behavioural and subjective indicators of school children in 2001 and 2006

Indicator	2001 all	2006				
		All	Boys	Girls	FAS score low*	Family not well off**
<i>Behaviours and risks</i>						
Percentage smoking cigarettes at least once per week, aged 11, 13, 15	14.3	10.7	10.0	11.5	12.2	14.5
Percentage of young people who have been drunk two or more times, aged 11, 13, 15	14.7	17.1	18.9	15.1	16.7	22.2
Percentage of young people who have used cannabis in the last 12 months, aged 15	27.1	19.3	20.2	18.3	19.2	22.1
Percentage of young people who have had sexual intercourse, aged 15	18.3	17.6	16.9	18.2	15.2	16.7
Percentage of young people involved in physical fighting in previous 12 months, aged 11, 13, 15	47.9	49.3	67.4	30.8	45.9	47.5
Percentage of young people who were bullied at least once in the last 2 months, aged 11, 13, 15	16.1	16.2	17.0	15.5	17.6	22.8
% of young people who eat fruit every day, aged 11, 13, 15 years	42.2	38.7	32.9	44.6	34.6	32.2
Percentage of young people who eat breakfast every school day, aged 11, 13, 15 years	51.8	47.9	73.4	66.6	44.8	63.2
Mean number of days when young people are physically active for one hour or more aged 11, 13, 15	4.3	4.2	4.5	3.8	3.8	3.9
<i>Subjective wellbeing</i>						
Percentage of children reporting low family affluence (FAS), aged 11, 13 and 15	40.2	29.8	27.4	32.2	100.0	54.3
family not well off	..	8.2	6.9	9.4	14.9	100.0
Percentage of young people rating their health as 'fair or poor', aged 11, 13 and 15	11.8	12.1	9.7	14.5	15.0	21.5
Percentage of young people with scores above the middle of the life satisfaction scale, aged 11, 13 and 15	83.4	81.2	84.5	77.9	62.5	61.9
Percentage of young people 'liking school a lot', aged 11, 13, 15	11.6	11.8	10.6	13.0	11.2	11.4

Sources: Unicef 2007, 'Youth and Health' 2006 (own computations).

- * The Family Affluence Score (FAS) is calculated the following way (see WHO 2004):
- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| The number of cars | • recode CAR (1 = 0) (2 = 1) (3 = 2); |
| Having bedroom of his/her own | • recode BEDROOM (1 = 0) (2 = 1); |
| The number of holidays in common | • recode HOLIDAY (1 = 0) (2 = 1) (3,4 = 2); |
| The number of computers | • recode COMPUTER (1 = 0) (2 = 1) (3,4 = 2); |
| Summary | • compute FAS = CAR+BEDROOM+HOLIDAY+COMPUTER; |
| Categorization | • recode FAS (0, 1, 2, 3 = 1) (4, 5 = 2) (6, 7 = 3). |

- ** Those declaring their family is not very well of or not well of at all regarding its richness.

Table 7 Wage, income and benefits levels (CZK monthly and percent of the average wage)

Indicator	1994 **	1996 **	1998 **	2000 **	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<i>In CZK monthly:</i>									
Gross average wage	7 004	9 825	11 801	13 614	15 866	16 917	18 041	18 985	20 211
Net average wage	5 484	7 654	9 217	10 660	12 439	13 212	14 036	14 366	15 628
Minimum wage	2 200	2 500	2 650	4 250	5 700	6 200	6 700	7 185	8 000
Net minimum wage	1 878	2 187	2 318	3 583	4 702	5 080	5 457	5 806	6 720
Unemployment benefit	1 804	2 275	2 320	2 781	3 164	3 324	3 562	4 215	4 491
Minimum living standard for single adult	2 143	2 718	3 333	3 685	4 100	4 100	4 100	4 300	4 420
Minimum living standard for family of four*	7 005	8 623	10 245	10 988	11 980	11 980	11 980	12 400	12 680
Average pension benefit	3 059	4 213	5 367	5 962	6 830	7 071	7 256	7 728	8 200
<i>In percent of average wage:***</i>									
Minimum wage	31.4	25.4	22.5	31.2	35.9	36.6	37.1	37.8	39.6
Unemployment benefit	32.9	28.6	25.2	26.1	25.4	25.2	25.4	29.3	28.7
Minimum living standard for single adult	39.1	35.5	36.2	34.6	33.0	31.0	29.2	29.9	28.3
Minimum living standard for family of four***	127.7	112.7	111.2	103.1	96.3	90.7	85.4	86.3	81.1
Average pension benefit	55.8	55.0	58.2	55.9	54.9	53.5	51.7	53.8	52.5
Net minimum wage in % of minimum living standard for single adult	87.6	80.5	69.6	97.2	114.9	123.9	133.1	135.0	152.0

Sources: Statistical Yearbooks of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

* Two adults and two children 10-15 years old.

** The weighted value used for the adjustment of the minimum living standard or minimum wage during the year.

*** Only the minimum wage is related to gross average wage, all other items are related to the estimated net wage. The estimate is made on family expenditures data by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

ANNEX

Organisations with nationwide field programmes and/or crisis centres (Source: Daphne Project and NGO websites)

Czech Association Streetwork (CAS) is an association that represents a wide range of streetworkers, organisations and others offering low-threshold social services, such as youth clubs, field programmes and contact centres. CAS lobbies for the interests of its members and the field of streetwork, seeks to create an environment for the development and professionalisation of streetwork including standards for quality service provision, carries out projects for the expert community, such as educational and training programmes, and organises professional meetings, seminars, etc. In terms of the list of low-threshold clubs that provide social services for children and youth, CAS's website lists approximately 123 such centres in the Czech Republic, 23 of which are in Prague. Social workers and others can use the website to gain information about each of the clubs as well as learn about other developments in the field.

Safety Line (Linka bezpečí) is a civic association that operates one of the leading free crisis hotlines for children and youths in the Czech Republic. The telephone hotlines are operational 24 hours a day, work across the country, and children or others can call anonymously. The NGO has a number of different lines depending on the issue in question: a crisis line for a wide range of issues, a child crisis intervention line designed for child runaways, as well as similar anonymous crisis lines over the internet. Safety Line also mediates contact with school and psychiatric counsellors, asylum homes and crisis centres.

The White Circle of Safety (Bílý kruh bezpečí) provides professional, free and discrete assistance to victims and witnesses of domestic violence across the country, including legal and emotional support. Clients can contact the NGO through their crisis hotline as well as at their drop-in centres. The NGO also engages in legislative work and public awareness of the issue of domestic violence. The NGO was pivotal in the drafting a new law on domestic violence, which was passed by Parliament in 2006 and went into force on January 1, 2007 (see the discussion above). It is now promoting awareness of that law through a new media campaign that it launched in April 2007. Lastly, the NGO has six counselling centres in the Czech Republic, 142 volunteers (counsellors and assistants) and three employees.

The Children's Crisis Centre (Dětské krizové centrum) was the first crisis centre of its kind in the Czech Republic, operating since 1992 (formerly called Association against violence on children). The main goal of the Centre is to prevent child abuse and neglect, diagnose cases of child abuse and carry out therapy for victims. The Centre provides long-term care through its team of psychologists, social workers and psychotherapists. The Centre also tries to assist parents in solving problems with rearing their children, organises lecturers and courses on child protection, and maintains facilities for the immediate care of children.

The Our Child Foundation (Náš dítě) provides grants and financial assistance for the operation of free crisis hotlines, such as those operated by Safety Line. In 2006, it provided financial assistance of over CZK 7 million to child abuse organisations and children in crisis situations. Since 2005 it has broadened its operations to provide additional support for abused, neglected and violated, handicapped and abandoned children. In April 2007, it launched, with the cooperation of the Police of the Czech Republic, an internet hotline that can be used to report cases of child pornography, child prostitution, and associations of paedophiles on the internet.

The hotline was established with support of the EU through the combined two-year CZESICON project (Czech Safer Internet Combined Node), a part of the EC Safer Internet Programme.