

**Commission :** Culture and Youth

**Problematic :** A cooperation for the creation of a cultural revival program for youth ?

**Author :** Czech Republic and Slovakia

The Czech Republic is a land-locked country in Central Europe, bordered by Germany to the West, Austria to the South, Slovakia to the East, and Poland to the North. On December 16, 1992, the Czech National Council adopted a new constitution, establishing the Czech Republic as a parliamentary democracy. As such, executive power is shared by the prime minister, Petr Fiala (current) and the president, Milo Zeman (current). Directly elected by popular vote for a five-year term, the president, who is also the head of state, appoints a prime minister, who heads the government and advises the president on the appointment of other members of the government. In the Czech Republic, culture is an important part of young people's lives as they are more creative and active in cultural issues compared to the older generation.

The most recent topics in the cultural field are linked to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Culture in the Czech Republic, professional and non-professional, has been hit very hard since March 2020. Due to the need for social distancing and diminishing people-to-people contacts, most of the opportunities for living culture were shut down by governmental decisions. Theatres, cinemas, shows, museums and galleries have seen a drop in visitors and revenue. In addition, young people studying online at universities have been cut off from their cultural life, which plays a very important role in their civic education and their openness to the world. This is why the European commission considers that it is essential to promote culture among Europeans, especially youth, through a European plan of cultural action for youth.

Cultural policies in the Czech Republic are harmonised with the international framework, especially of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union. The central state authority in the Czech Republic in the field of culture is the Ministry of Culture. Education for creativity and culture is also in the competence of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. There is no specific national strategy on creativity and culture for or for young people. However, this topic was one of the strategic goals of the National Youth Strategy and young people and their potential for culture and the creative cultural industry are recognised as well in the State Culture Policy 2021–2025. This policy, among others, aims to strengthen the creative education and use of digital and creative assets of the Czech cultural sector within education. It also wants to support the issue of youth unemployment due to the wider use of opportunities in the creative culture industry. The country is also part of the Creative Europe program, which is an EU program that supports the cultural and creative industries and the audio-visual industry all around the continent. Its purpose is to create a single framework for funding European projects in the performing arts, the visual arts, literature, film, television, music, interdisciplinary arts, cultural heritage, and video games, making maximum use of the synergy between various sectors and thereby increasing the effectiveness of the support provided.

In an attempt to promote culture and cultural participation, the Czech Republic has tried to reduce obstacles to young people's access to culture. Reducing obstacles by creating possibilities for participation in cultural life for young people can be seen in educational activities, programmes, competitions, and contests for children and young people organised by professionals as well as non-professionals. Among these possibilities are elementary art schools, which are targeted toward young people from an economically disadvantaged background, as there can be remissions on the school fees. The education is partially paid by the young people (or their families) themselves, but most of the expenses are covered by the founder of the school. From this perspective, it is a very accessible option for young people. In addition, information on cultural events and opportunities for children and young people (shows, exhibitions, etc.) is a decentralised field in the Czech Republic and is provided by NIPOS (National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture) and schools. Otherwise, there are many private sources, regional and local authorities' channels, and media coverage on culture for the whole population that are used by young people as well (magazines, web sites, etc.). A promotion week supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the National Institute of Education and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague is also dedicated to promoting culture and creativity. Every year, there are more than 200 registered activities during the week. Promotional materials are distributed to libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, and registered participants who show interest in them. Creative activities are the basis of general education and they help gain and develop creative and cultural competence. This is why art and music education are obligatory in Czech schools as separate subjects. Also, youth organizations are paying attention to cultural development and creativity. We can find cultural summer camps, music, art, dance, theatre projects and activities, which are usually the first steps in cultural life for children and youth in the Czech Republic. Teachers and educators participating in the system of further education of teachers are given special training and internships in order to broaden their knowledge when it comes to education strategies concerning culture and creativity. Moreover, heritage sites often provide student or youth discounts, which reduces obstacles to young people's access to culture. Finally, the Erasmus exchange program and scholarships are available in the fields of professional art, non-professional art, traditional folk culture, and literature.

Lately, cultural institutions all over the world have been adapting to the new situation as many offer part of their programs online and try to bring culture to the public and young people. In order for our youth and our cultural heritage and interests to remain and recover from the current crisis, European nations must work together. As such, the Czech Republic looks forward to offering its support, in whatever form possible, to nations firmly committed to achieving efficient cooperation in the process of creating a cultural revival program for youth.