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Freedom House (Author)

Nations in Transit 2024 - Czechia

Consolidated Democracy

76

/ 100

Democracy Percentage 75.60 / 100

Democracy Score 5.54 / 7

Last Year's Democracy Percentage & Status

76 / 100 Consolidated Democracy

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The Democracy Percentage, introduced in 2020, is a translation of the Democracy Score to the 0-100 scale, where 0 equals least democratic and 100 equals most democratic. [See the methodology.](#)

Authors

- Albin Sybera

Changes in 2024

- No score changes in 2024

Executive Summary

Developments in 2023 show Czechia to be a stable democracy, but also underlined some chronic issues it continues to face. The major event in domestic politics took place in January when Petr Pavel's victory in the presidential election ended the 10-year tenure of his predecessor Miloš Zeman, whose term is remembered in Czechia for his antidemocratic tendencies. Zeman, a former social democrat, had adopted nationalist and populist rhetoric and, for most of his two terms in office, backed Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping.

Pavel's victory over billionaire Andrej Babiš, a populist former prime minister and Zeman's ally, was widely interpreted by liberal media and political analysts¹ as a demonstration of the continued appetite of much of the Czech population for a liberal democratic country in alignment with European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policies. Pavel, a former high-ranking NATO official, had conducted part of his campaign from Budapest late in 2022 where he was meeting with Hungarian dissidents, demonstrating his siding with the EU in a row over Hungary's poor rule of law record. Babiš and Zeman, in contrast, openly praised Hungary's increasingly authoritarian leader, Viktor Orbán, throughout the campaign. Although the president's powers are—with the exception of issuing pardons and making some key appointments—largely ceremonial, the office continues to wield symbolic power, and the presidential elections are more popular than the more consequential elections for the Senate—the upper house of Parliament—or for the European Parliament.²

In the leadup to Pavel's March inauguration, Zeman mulled preemptively appointing a new president of the Constitutional Court before the end of the current president's mandate. Legal experts warned the move would throw the country's judiciary into disarray, and Zeman ultimately withdrew his threat. Pavel's ascent signaled a clean break with Zeman, whom he criticized for overstepping the president's authority and engaging in corruption as the transfer of power approached.

The state of the country's judiciary continued to be criticized by anticorruption nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which have been calling for Minister of Justice Pavel Blažek, of Prime Minister Petr Fiala's Civic Democratic Party (ODS), to step down. Blažek's existing conflict of interest scandal was further exacerbated in 2023 after the media revealed that Blažek had continued to seek information from prosecutors into the Brno antigraft probes, in which a number of his party and municipal colleagues are implicated. Blažek also met with Zeman's controversial aide Martin Nejedlý, in a meeting political analysts described as an open act of defiance against his critics³ and yet another stumble for Fiala's increasingly unpopular center-right cabinet.

Fiala had risen to power after the 2021 parliamentary elections, uniting his pro-EU, center-right Together (SPOLU) alliance—consisting of ODS, the Christian Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU–ČSL), and the Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09 (TOP 09) party—with another pro-EU bloc, the so-called Pirates and Mayors alliance of the socially liberal Czech Pirate Party and the centrist Mayors and Independents (STAN) party. By the end of the year, the favorability rating of Fiala's cabinet had sunk to one of the lowest levels in Czechia's history, according to a survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM), an affiliate of the Czech Academy of Sciences.⁴ CVVM researchers attribute the downward trend in the Fiala government's popularity to the ongoing

crises around the cost of living and of energy. Other analysts point out that the current cabinet has had longstanding issues communicating with the public and has pursued inadequate domestic policies—particularly concerning social issues—that failed to address the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Meanwhile, the main opposition party, Babiš's populist Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) party, dominated national polls. Those polls also show that between 15 and 20 percent of the electorate support far-right and antiestablishment parties, although that landscape is splintered and some of those parties have not reached the 5-percent support threshold needed to sit in Parliament. If parliamentary elections were held in November, a poll found, ANO and the far-right, anti-EU Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party would win enough seats to form a government together.⁵ However, as the regional government formation process in the national capital of Prague showed in March, there is also a possibility for the ODS's conservative and Eurosceptic wing to seek a coalition with ANO in future elections.

The more conservative members of Fiala's coalition, most notably from the aforementioned Eurosceptic wing of ODS and the Christian Democrats, already united in 2023 to oppose bills aiming to improve women's and LGBT+ rights, casting doubt on that legislation's prospects in Parliament. This was also underscored by the protracted and uncertain ratification process that has faced the Istanbul Convention (officially known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence) in Czechia. A landmark case implicating former politician Dominik Feri, who was sentenced in November to three years in prison for two rapes and one attempted rape, renewed efforts to adopt legislation that would redefine rape and set a more effective punishment for sexual crimes. The existing legislative framework does not provide sufficient support or protection to the victims—primarily women and girls—of these widespread crimes, Czech NGOs argue.

The rights of Romany Czechs and of disabled Czechs were singled out as in dire need of addressing in a Council of Europe report issued in February, which highlighted that Czech Roma continue to face discrimination in every area of life, including education, housing, employment, and interactions with police.⁶ This followed a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) the previous month, which highlighted the unequal position of Czech Roma in society and violence against women as among the pressing issues facing Czechia. Physical clashes between Czech Roma and Ukrainian communities also brought minority issues to the fore. Czechia has been one of the largest per capita recipient of refugees fleeing the war that engulfed Ukraine following Russia's 2022, but migration-focused NGOs warn that Ukrainians sheltering in Czechia experience inadequate living conditions that will worsen if measures

directed at more effectively including Ukrainians in Czech society are not implemented to make up for decreasing state aid.⁷

Although two important bills were passed in 2023 to strengthen media independence—one tightening media ownership regulations for politicians and another raising license fees paid by residents to fund the public broadcasters—publishers and media observers point out that financial instability and the concentration of media ownership in business conglomerates with interests outside of the media sector remain a serious concern. It is worth noting that Věra Jourová, the Czech vice president of the European Commission for values and transparency and an ANO member, criticized a new tax hike on print media introduced as part of an austerity package pushed by the Fiala cabinet, as it threatened the financial stability of smaller but high-quality outlets. Media analysts interpreted the exchange of the Mafra publishing house's ownership on the sidelines of a major industrial deal as a continuation of an oligarchic model.⁸ This was also echoed by reports of editorial meddling at outlets owned by another media house, Czech News Center (CNC), which was controlled by energy tycoon Daniel Křetínský.

Finally, corruption continues to be one of the country's most endemic issues, and the problem was highlighted in 2023 by several regional and national scandals, including the reopening of the fraud case involving the populist opposition leader Babiš. Ongoing corruption affairs, such as the Dozimetr scandal and the Brno antigraft probes, as well as new scandals which erupted during 2023, show that corruption touches both parties in the ruling coalition and opposition parties, and regional as well as national administrations. Czechia has not made substantial improvements in combatting corruption under Fiala's government, which took power in 2021 after campaigning on an anticorruption ticket in 2021, though the administration has overseen the adoption of whistleblower legislation after a drawn-out process. Czech authorities often only take action against assets controlled by sanctioned Kremlin-linked individuals as a result of pressure from the public and investigative organizations.

Community energy bill developments and the pursuit of large-scale nuclear investment signal that Czechia's energy strategy continues to be aligned with CEZ, the majority-state-owned energy utility. The approval of the community energy bill at the end of December paves the way for increased access to renewable energy for villages, small companies, and residential communities, an area where Czechia has lagged behind the rest of Europe. Living standards in Czechia's coal regions continue to lag behind those in rich metropolitan centers.

At-A-Glance

Czechia is a stable democracy with a vibrant civil society and democratic institutions. Politics continues to be plagued by corruption, and the

country's minorities—in particular the Czech Roma population—still suffer from inequality. Other concerns include regional gaps in living standards, the concentration of media outlets under an increasingly small number of owners with extensive nonmedia interests, and the continued popularity of political parties with critical attitude towards liberal democracy.

National Democratic Governance 1.00-7.00 pts

Considers the democratic character of the governmental system; and the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of the legislative and executive branches. 4.75 / 7.00

- The ODS-led center-right government of Prime Minister Fiala used its parliamentary majority to survive a no-confidence vote held in January.⁹ The vote came less than two weeks before the second-round runoff of the presidential elections between Pavel, a retired Czech Army chief of staff and former head of the NATO Military Committee, and Babiš, the populist leader, billionaire, and former prime minister.
- The opposition ANO party said that it had instigated the no-confidence vote in response to the ruling coalition scrapping discussions of ANO's agenda during the Parliament session, but many political analysts interpreted the move as an attempt to turn the spotlight on ANO and its leader Babiš ahead of the presidential runoff. ANO and Babiš have adopted what they described as a "pro-people" stance, capitalizing on popular discontent over the high cost of living.¹⁰
- Pavel was elected president in January and was inaugurated in March, succeeding the outgoing nationalist and populist president Zeman in March. Pavel promised a clean break with Zeman's administration and has been critical of outgoing members of the previous administration for their links to Kremlin officials and involvement in several high-profile corruption affairs¹¹. Pavel also asked the country's Supreme Audit Office (NKU) to carry out an in-depth audit of the presidential office and its operations under Zeman's staff. Pavel has vowed to bring the office of the president closer to the spirit of the Czech constitution by avoiding meddling with cabinet or judicial appointments, a practice for which Zeman was criticized.
- President Pavel did not intervene in any appointments to Fiala's cabinet in 2023, in contrast to Zeman, who went beyond his presidential authority in by interfering with cabinet appointments while in office. Shortly after Pavel's inauguration in March, the new president appointed Petr Hladík of the KDU-ČSL, whose nomination was shelved by Zeman in December 2022, as minister of the environment. He then processed other cabinet changes without obstruction, marking an approach which commentators and analysts assess as more in line with the formal role the president is assigned

in the constitution.¹² Pavel thus made cabinet swaps less contentious in 2023 and contributed to a more stable functioning of individual ministries. Prior to Hladík's appointment, for example, the ministry of the environment had been functioning without a permanent minister since October 2022.¹³

- Another no-confidence vote was triggered by the opposition in October over Minister of the Interior Vit Rakušan's alleged links to the Dozimetr corruption scandal.¹⁴ The Dozimetr scandal, which broke in 2022, affected several political parties, including Rakušan's STAN party and the opposition ANO. While the no-confidence motion ultimately failed, the opposition used the marathon vote to criticize the cabinet over the austerity measures passed a month earlier.
- Fiala's cabinet has one of the lowest government approval ratings in Czechia's history according to CVVM surveys, which pointed to the soaring cost of living as a major factor.¹⁵ In June, Pavel criticized Fiala's cabinet for insufficient public outreach and communication about its policies. ANO has dominated national polls throughout 2023, while far-right parties together commanded the support of between 15 percent and 20 percent of the population. In October, Babiš announced his intention to lead ANO beyond the 2025 parliamentary elections, which he reiterated early in 2024¹⁶ as ANO eyes a return to the government. Over 2023, several politicians from a more conservative wing of ODS, including member of the European Parliament (MEP) Jan Zahradil and Senator Tomáš Jirsa, described ANO as ODS's natural political ally along conservative lines.¹⁷
- Inflation remained high throughout the year, contributing to the ongoing cost of living and energy crises. The year-on-year rate eased over the course of 2023, from 17.5 percent in January to 7.3 percent in November, but remained well above the 2 percent target set by the Czech National Bank. The country also registered the steepest drop in real wages in the European Union. The Czech economy is the only one in the EU that has yet to recover to its pre-pandemic level, and gross domestic product (GDP) has been in decline through 2023. To combat the ballooning state budget deficit, the cabinet approved a series of austerity measures, passed by Parliament in October, which analysts warn are poised to severely impact state employees, low-income families, and the media market (see Independent Media). These measures are projected to slow down the economic recovery, which has already been under pressure throughout 2023 from low household spending.¹⁸

Electoral Process 1.00-7.00 pts

Examines national executive and legislative elections, the electoral framework, the functioning of multiparty systems, and popular participation in the political process. 6.75 / 7.00

- Pavel narrowly won the first round of president elections on January 13–14, with 35.4 percent of the vote compared to Babiš's 35 percent.

Third and fourth place went to Danuše Nerudová, the former president of the Mendel University in Brno, with 13.9 percent, and Senator Pavel Fischer with 6.75 percent.¹⁹ Voter turnout was 68.24 percent.

- The two weeks leading up to the second round of the presidential elections was marked by an increased proliferation of disinformation on digital channels, including a hoax that Pavel died.²⁰ In another instance, fake text messages allegedly from Pavel told recipients to mobilize for war in Ukraine.
- Babiš hardened his campaign rhetoric ahead of the second round of voting in an attempt to mobilize the far-right electorate and tap into unease over the ongoing war in Ukraine. He made increasingly aggressive attempts on social networks—mainly Facebook—to depict Pavel as a warmonger, tapping into narratives already circulating in disinformation channels. His Facebook page shows a steady stream of posts resonating with this image of his opponent, including block-letter messages such as “I am the only one who seeks peace” and “I don’t want the war to spread. I am not a general. I am a diplomat.”²¹ The Babiš campaign also placed billboards along the Czech highways proclaiming, “I won’t drag Czechia into a war. I am a diplomat. Not a soldier. Babiš for president,” and, “The general does not believe in peace. Vote for peace. Vote Babiš.” Pavel accused Babiš of resorting to lies and polarization and called for restraint. He also described his own campaign as a “defense of values.”²²
- Pavel decisively won the second-round runoff held on January 27–28, with 58.3 percent of the vote to Babiš’s 41.7 percent, and at a record turnout of 70.2 percent. A campaign which analysts described as polarizing²³ rallied voters to back Pavel, who also distanced himself from the outgoing president Zeman, who openly backed his political ally Babiš. The vote showed that a decisive part of the electorate backed the more pro-EU candidate; Pavel led part of his campaign from Budapest, where he met with critics of the Orbán government and signaled his alignment with European criticisms of Hungary’s current orientation. However, political analysts also pointed out that Babiš was able to increase his party’s electoral base and gain supporters from the far-right by adopting more aggressive rhetoric than had been seen in previous campaigns.²⁴
- Campaigns for the European Parliament elections scheduled for June 2024 began to take off towards the end of 2023. Parties, including the members of the ruling SPOLU alliance, started forming coalition lists to increase their electoral chances amid national political trends that see ANO dominating polls while the popularity of ruling coalition parties is stagnating or falling (see National Democratic Governance).

Civil Society 1.00-7.00 pts

Assesses the organizational capacity and financial sustainability of the civic sector; the legal and political

6.25 / 7.00

environment in which it operates; the functioning of trade unions; interest group participation in the policy process; and the threat posed by antidemocratic extremist groups.

- Czechia has a vibrant and robust civil society sector that has played a significant role in shaping country's policies and defending the rights of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. In 2023, the role of NGOs active in helping the victims of sexual and domestic violence, such as Konsent and proFem, stood out amid several high-profile cases of sexual violence that drew nationwide coverage and public attention²⁵.
- Authorities still have not mustered an adequate response to sexual assault and violence against women and minors, NGOs argue,²⁶ in part due to the prevalence of "rape culture" in Czech institutions. This official indifference, including the failure to pass legislation widening the scope of what is considered rape and low conviction rates for sex crimes, contributes to an environment of impunity.²⁷ Consequently, many victims feel deterred from reporting cases of rape. After a landmark court case in November where Dominik Feri, a former TOP 09 member of Parliament (MP) who had previously been a rising star on the political scene, was sentenced to three years of prison time for two counts of rape and one attempted rape—with five more instances under investigation²⁸—efforts to redefine rape in Czech legislation were reinvigorated (see Judicial Framework and Independence).²⁹
- In August, the head of the Czech police, Martin Vondrášek, made insulting comments stating that rape cases are "very often" based on made-up claims. Vondrášek was forced to apologize amid public criticism, but he did not face any serious calls for his resignation from the government and remained in his position.³⁰ Similarly, in October, Petr Angyalossy, the president of Czechia's Supreme Court, was criticized for circulating a presentation about judicial ethics in which he had included derogatory rape jokes.³¹
- The exclusion of Czechia's Romany minority from mainstream society was highlighted following Council of Europe commissioner Dunja Mijatović's visit in February. Mijatović described the rights of Roma, as well as those of people with disabilities, as "a constant focus of her office" over the past two decades.³² Recent data from the Roma Survey 2021, conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, showed that in 2020, 77% of Czech Roma were at risk of poverty—meaning they resided in a household with an income less than 60% of the median national income—while the national at-risk rate was just 10%. In addition, while 80% of the general population reported being engaged in "paid work," just 45% of Czech Roma reported the same.³³
- Tensions rose between Czech Roma and Ukrainian refugees, stoked by online disinformation and hoaxes, as well as by the challenging

living conditions faced by both groups.³⁴

- In May, President Pavel attended commemorations of the Romany victims of the Holocaust at the site of the Lety concentration camp built during the Nazi German occupation during World War II, becoming only the second Czech president to visit the site.³⁵
- Parliament debated legalizing same-sex marriage in May 2023.³⁶ Currently, people in same-sex couples could register their partnerships but still would lack rights equivalent to those of married couples, including the ability to jointly adopt children, jointly own property, or access their deceased spouses' pensions. A marriage equality bill passed its first reading in the Chamber of Deputies—the lower house of Parliament—in June,³⁷ but a parliamentary committee considering the issue adjourned in November without approving either the original legislation or a modification that would provide same-sex couples access to a partnership that carried the same rights as marriage but not the title.³⁸
- NGOS warn that Ukrainians in Czechia face marginalization.³⁹ Czechia tops the list of EU host countries of Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression per capita.⁴⁰ Most of the refugees are largely women, children and elderly. Although two-thirds have obtained jobs, most work below their qualifications, leaving families with children particularly exposed.
- NGOs working with people migrating to Czechia also warned⁴¹ against persistent antimigration rhetoric spread by actors across the political spectrum and by disinformation outlets,⁴² particularly targeting refugees from Syria, as well as migrants from the rest of the greater Middle East and Africa.

Independent Media 1.00-7.00 pts

Examines the current state of press freedom, including libel laws, harassment of journalists, and editorial independence; 5.00 / the operation of a financially viable and independent private 7.00 press; and the functioning of the public media.

- Concern over the intense concentration of media ownership in the hands of private companies whose main business was outside the media sector has been voiced by international watchdogs and analysts for years.⁴³ Developments in 2023 further highlighted the risks of quality media falling prey to affluent oligarchs, especially given the financial pressures media face at a time of increasing digitalization.⁴⁴
- In October, Parliament approved a set of austerity measures which were introduced back in May by Fiala's cabinet. The measures included a tax hike on print media, moving it from the 10-percent to the 21-percent tax category and establishing the highest levy on print media in the EU. The move was criticized by country's leading liberal dailies, which expressed fears that it will undermine their financial

stability,⁴⁵ and Jourová, the European Commission vice president from Czechia, warned about the impact on regional press outlets in particular.⁴⁶ The government subsequently softened the print media tax increase, raising the taxes to which these outlets were subjected to 12 percent instead,⁴⁷ but the controversy reinvigorated discussion of the insufficient media financing that already poses a serious risk.⁴⁸

- In June, Parliament approved legislation tightening rules regulating conflicts of interest and ownership of media by politicians, and President Pavel signed it into law in August.⁴⁹ The bill has been widely dubbed "lex Babiš" as it directly affects links between Babiš and Agrofert, a conglomerate he founded that was one of Czechia's largest companies.⁵⁰ The bill restricts legislators, cabinet members, and the president from owning or operating television, radio, or print media outlets—although it does not affect online media—and introduces fines for violations.⁵¹ The Senate has asked the government to draft a follow-up law that would define online media and restrict the influence of politicians over online outlets as well.⁵²
- A new bill aimed at boosting the financial stability of public media was unveiled in September. Under the new legislation, the Czech Television (ČT) license fee paid by households would increase by 25 Czech koruna (\$1.10) to 160 koruna per month by 2025, and the Czech Radio (ČRo) fee would increase by 10 koruna to 55 koruna per month. Once adopted, the law would secure an additional 1.4 billion for ČT (which had a 5.7 billion koruna budget in 2023) and 600 million for ČRo (which had a 2 billion budget). Still, some observers point out the move won't be sufficient, since ČT license fees have not been raised for the past 15 years while ČRo's fees have been the same for 18 years⁵³. For financial reasons, ČT had to sell some of its lucrative sports streaming rights to private competition in 2022, in a move which jeopardizes ČT's viewership and redirects audiences to arguably lower-quality content producers.
- In September, the Babiš-linked Agrofert conglomerate sold Mafra, one of the two largest publishing houses in the country, to the Kaprain Group, owned by billionaire Karel Pražák.⁵⁴ Kaprain acquired Mafra in a deal that also included purchasing the LONDA radio company and the Synthesia chemical plant, the latter of which was the most valuable asset in the whole transaction.
- Media analysts wrote that while Babiš has now left the media market, worries over media ownership concentration in large companies whose business is not primarily media remained, and some expressed concern that Babiš was able to resolve his conflict of interest while winning himself positive coverage at the same time.
- The Czech National Committee of the International Press Institute (CZ IPI) addressed energy and media tycoon Daniel Křetínský in an open letter calling on media outlets owned by the Czech News Centre

(CNC), which is controlled by Křetínský and his business partners, to respect journalistic standards.⁵⁵ CZ IPI issued the letter following a series of articles in which CNC's *Blesk* tabloid, Czechia's most circulated daily, criticized the acquisition of Net4Gas by the Czech state without noting that Křetínský's energy company EPH was also interested in acquiring Net4Gas.

- In December, the online news outlet Seznam Zprávy reported on a police document outlining Křetínský's communications with Jiří Malý, the deputy director of the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine (IKEM) hospital, in which they discussed CNC's *Reflex* magazine publishing an article about IKEM.⁵⁶ Křetínský's spokesperson Daniel Častváj told Seznam Zprávy that while Křetínský did participate in editorial decision-making at his outlets, Častváj himself had discussed the articles about IKEM with *Reflex*'s editor in chief.
- Disinformation and Kremlin-backed propaganda remains largely unaddressed at the governmental level, after turmoil following the February dismissal of the government commissioner responsible for combating disinformation, Michal Klíma. It prompted some media observers to conclude that Fiala's cabinet has abandoned efforts to address disinformation and propaganda in the Czech public and on the internet.⁵⁷ Several analyses published in 2023 warn about the wide proliferation of climate skepticism and climate disinformation in the Czech media more broadly.
- Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are increasing. In one example, Gaby Khazalová, an editor at the independent online outlet Deník Referendum, won a court case in which she was sued by the wife of energy billionaire Pavel Tykač for the feature story "Hidden Empire of the Tykač Family" about the couple's privatization of apartments in the Prague city center.⁵⁸
- Parliament adopted amendments to the Acts on Czech Television and Czech Radio in July, distributing voting rights to elect members of both public broadcasters' councils between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.⁵⁹ The bill came into force in October and was designed to strengthen the system of checks and balances protecting the editorial independence of public media.
- The new head of ČT, Jan Souček, was elected in June, ending the tenure of Petr Dvořák, the broadcaster's longest-serving director.⁶⁰ In September, Souček introduced his vision aimed at developing ČT into "the leader of the Czech digital audiovisual market," including by increasing investments into online content.⁶¹

Local Democratic Governance 1.00-7.00 pts

Considers the decentralization of power; the responsibilities, 6.00 /
election, and capacity of local governmental bodies; and the 7.00
transparency and accountability of local authorities.

- Ongoing antigraft probes in the municipality of Brno, Czechia's second-largest city, widened after police indicted more suspects in connection with the rigged privatization of city-owned apartments.⁶² High-profile ODS politicians from the municipality, including Brno mayor Markéta Vaňková and state minister of justice Blažek, have been accused by a local politician, Pavel Hubálek, of running a ring during the 2010s that gave out the apartments in exchange for bribes.⁶³ Hubálek testified to the police after being investigated for taking part in the plot.
- The Prague municipal government formed in February, after a record-length negotiation following municipal elections held in September 2022.⁶⁴ A rift over the anticorruption efforts of local grassroots party Prague Together was at the core of the protracted negotiations involving the liberal Pirates and the right-of-center SPOLU, the latter of which refused to govern with Prague Together. Earlier, SPOLU was close to forming a government in Prague with ANO, but ultimately SPOLU, the Pirates, and the center-right Mayors and Independents (STAN) group formed a majority coalition, relegating Prague Together and ANO to the minority in the city parliament.
- Regional assistance centers for Ukrainians seeking shelter in Czechia were set up in 2023 to relieve the overcrowding of centers in Prague and Brno. According to police data from January, Prague, Brno, and the regions surrounding those two cities—the Central Bohemia and South Moravian regions, respectively—host the majority of the Ukrainians sheltered in the country.⁶⁵ The country has so far not been able to redistribute the Ukrainians it is sheltering more evenly across the regions outside of metropolitan areas in Bohemia and Moravia, underscoring Czechia's long-term imbalance between large urban centers and outlying regions.⁶⁶
- For the first time since the mid-1980s, the Czech population increased as a result of the inflow of people from war-stricken Ukraine.⁶⁷ However, this growth does not appear to be evenly spread across the regions, highlighting the existing social and living standard gaps between the rich urban centers of Prague and Brno and their surrounding regions, and peripheral regions like the Ústecký, Karlovy Vary, and Moravian-Silesian regions. In recent elections, this gap was also mirrored in political preferences, with populist and antiestablishment parties winning or performing better in the poorer regions while liberal parties did better in the wealthier regions.⁶⁸
- The long-awaited community energy bill was approved in December 2023. Proponents argue that the approval of the bill could lead to the decentralization of Czech energy distribution and an increased use of renewable energy in regional towns. Czechia is currently facing EU

infringement proceedings for failure to enable the development of energy communities.⁶⁹

- A new nuclear waste disposal law faces strong opposition in the regions. In November, Parliament approved legislation that outlines rules for the construction of an underground storage facility for nuclear waste.⁷⁰ The parliamentary version of the legislation does not give veto rights to municipalities near a future nuclear waste repository, leaves the Senate out of decision-making regarding the facility's location, and moves forward the deadline for selecting the location to 2028, which was criticized by municipalities and NGOs as being too soon.⁷¹ The Senate returned the legislation to the Chamber of Deputies in December, in an effort to give the Senate a say over the facility's location.

Judicial Framework and Independence 1.00-7.00 pts

Assesses constitutional and human rights protections, judicial independence, the status of ethnic minority rights, guarantees 5.75 / of equality before the law, treatment of suspects and 7.00 prisoners, and compliance with judicial decisions.

- After long delays, Czechia's Whistleblower Protection Act (formally Act No. 171/2023 Coll. on the Protection of Whistleblowers) came into force on August 1 after being passed by Parliament and signed earlier in the year.⁷² The first high-profile case, involving a corruption complaint made by Jan Benýšek, the head of the Ministry of Justice's corporate insolvency department, demonstrated that whistleblower protections are still not well-established. In November, Benýšek filed a complaint that his superior Antonín Stanislav—Minister Blažek's deputy—had meddled with examinations for administrators who would oversee large corporate insolvencies and requested protection under the new whistleblower law.⁷³ In an apparent act of retribution, Benýšek's department was split into two shortly after reports of his filing appeared.⁷⁴ The case was still ongoing at the end of the year.⁷⁵
- The case underscored that although Czechia had adopted legislation introducing elements of protection for whistleblowers, considerable obstacles remain in implementation. In January 2024, the Whistleblowing Center, run by the NGO Revival, reported that in 2023, there had been 81 requests for whistleblower protection, 20 of which had been deemed valid and forwarded for to the relevant authorities.^{76 77}
- In February, the outgoing president Zeman withdrew his plans to preemptively appoint the head of the Constitutional Court before leaving office. The previous year, Zeman had mulled such an early appointment, which legal analysts warned would lead to a constitutional disarray, in order to maintain his influence in case his ally Babiš lost the upcoming January presidential election. Instead, Pavel appointed Josef Baxa⁷⁸ as the new president of the constitutional court after the term of the previous head of the court,

Pavel Rychetský, expired in August. Before leaving, Rychetský warned in June that the Constitutional Court's operations have been negatively affected by vacancies on the bench.

- Accusations of conflict of interest followed⁷⁹ Minister of Justice Blažek throughout 2023. Early in 2023, reports emerged that Blažek had filed an internal complaint against Judge Aleš Dufek for granting the media access to court documents from police raids in Brno last October that implicate several of Blažek's ODS party colleagues in corruption allegations.⁸⁰ In March, the Czech Pirate Party called on Blažek to resign after media reports⁸¹ revealed that Blažek also made several requests to obtain information from prosecutors on the Brno investigation. Supreme State Prosecutor Igor Stříž said that "the frequency [of the requests] does not seem appropriate to me," raising questions about the reason for Blažek's requests and the possibility that he had meddled with the investigation.
- The Pirate Party passed an internal resolution in June stating that Blažek threatened public trust in the country's judiciary and that his actions went against the cabinet's program.⁸² The resolution was passed in response to media reports that month claiming that Blažek was withholding information about being questioned by police in 2020, when he had been approached in connection with the Brno graft probes. Blažek also invoked his immunity as an MP at the time and refused to answer questions from detectives from the General Inspectorate of Security Forces (GIBS) about where he obtained certain documents which earlier disrupted the Brno probe.⁸³ Blažek is backed by Prime Minister Fiala, his close ally from the Brno branch of the ODS, and ODS legislators in Parliament passed a resolution in support of the minister of justice that has helped him stay in office.
- President Pavel's nomination of Judge Robert Fremr to the Constitutional Court led to renewed discussion of the judiciary's Communist-era past. Fremr withdrew his bid in August after the media reported that, during time serving as a judge during the 1980s, Fremr had given criminal sentences to more than 100 people for emigrating from the country without official approval, which was a crime in Communist Czechoslovakia.⁸⁴
- In June, the Czech cabinet gave approval for Parliament to vote on ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which Czechia had signed in 2016 but never ratified.⁸⁵ However, the Czech Senate failed to ratify the Istanbul Convention in a January 2024 vote, further jeopardizing its prospects.⁸⁶ The stalled ratification, which had not yet taken place even though the country joined the international agreement in 2016, underscores the country's inadequate record on women rights. Czechia's placement on the Gender Equality Index maintained by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) fell for the third straight year in 2023, dropping by two places down to 25th out of the 27 EU

countries. Its score of 57.9 is well below the European average of 70.2.⁸⁷

- NGOs have long advocated for revising the definition of rape contained in existing legislation. In August, the Ministry of Justice submitted a proposal for comment that would define any sex without consent as rape, and would also apply that crime—rather than the less serious sexual assault—to any sexual intercourse with a child under the age 12, up from the current age of 5. NGOs warn that the proposal may not yet be sufficient but is a starting point for reform.⁸⁸ As of December 2023, Czech law still requires physical force to have been used in order for a sexual assault to be categorized as rape, and does not recognize a victim's verbal refusals, state of shock, intoxication, or disability as grounds for a rape charge. Calls for the legal redefinition of rape intensified in November after young former rising political star Dominik Feri was sentenced to three years in prison for two rapes and one attempted rape. When handing down the ruling, presiding judge Lenka Hájková described the three-years jailtime Feri received as low.⁸⁹
- A May legislative proposal by the government aims to strengthen protections for victims of domestic violence. It is the first amendment to the existing legislation in 15 years and widens the definition of domestic violence, to what the media described as the first proper definition for the offense. It is expected to come into force in July 2024.⁹⁰
- Czechia still has not completed foreclosure and insolvency reforms necessary to meet the standards set forth by the EU's Restructuring and Second Chance Directive.⁹¹ Calls by NGOs for a more thorough reform of foreclosures, which still affect a high figure of 639,579 Czechs,⁹² were highlighted by Czech Television's documentary series outlining the systematic abuse of people trapped in foreclosures.⁹³
- The Olomouc Region state prosecutor, Radim Daňhel, resigned in June for "personal as well as professional reasons" that prevented him from effectively conducting his duties, according to Daňhel and a Ministry of Justice statement.⁹⁴ Daňhel spent less than a year in office and was overseeing the Brno graft probes, over which Minister of Justice Blažek had faced criticism and accusations of conflict of interest. It was another change at the helm of closely watched Olomouc prosecutor's office, one year after the previous prosecutor Ivo Ištvan had asked to be moved to another post.
- Babiš was acquitted in a €2 million (\$2.1 million) fraud case in January, but the ruling was canceled nine months later by Prague's High Court. After the case was appealed by the state prosecution in April, it was returned to the lower court for retrial in September. Babiš and his former adviser Jana Nagyova were alleged to have fraudulently obtained an EU subsidy in connection to the Stork's Nest farm and conference center, whose ownership was transferred from

Babiš's Agrofert conglomerate to members of the former prime minister's family—and then later back again to Agrofert—in an apparent attempt to get around the requirement that the subsidy benefit small- and medium-sized businesses.⁹⁵

Corruption 1.00-7.00 pts

Looks at public perceptions of corruption, the business interests of top policymakers, laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest, and the efficacy of anticorruption initiatives. 4.25 / 7.00

- Corruption is Czechia's lowest-scoring section in the NIT ranking. This rating corresponds to the country's standing in other international assessments such as Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), where Czechia's 2023 score remained unchanged at 57/100, seven points below the EU average, though it has improved its rank by one place to 41st out of 180 countries.⁹⁶
- The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) latest reports urge Czechia to do more to prevent corruption in the highest echelons of politics, state administration and law enforcement.⁹⁷ In 2023, several high-profile corruption cases illustrated the persisting proliferation of corruption in politics, and, more recently, corruption in connection with evading sanctions placed on Russia.
- Czechia implemented new legislation in August introducing basic elements of protection for whistleblowers for the first time, but the first high-whistleblower case that followed—of whistleblower Jan Benýšek from the Ministry of Justice—has already demonstrated that protections still lag in practice (see Judicial Framework and Independence).
- Increased media attention to sanctions against Kremlin-linked oligarchs, officials, and businessmen led to several investigations exposing assets in Czechia owned by sanctioned individuals and their families or business partners. In a high-profile revelation, Maria Pevchikh of Alexey Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation documented that the family of Boris Obnosov, CEO of the Russian-state-owned holding company Tactical Missiles Corporation (KTRV)—which manufactures weapons systems, including missiles used to attack civilian targets in Ukraine—is living in luxury in Prague.⁹⁸ After weeks of media reports, Czech authorities seized the family's Prague property.⁹⁹ Despite the adoption of a national sanctions list, the Obnosov family case shows that without publicity in the national media, assets owned by Kremlin-linked figures in Czechia can go unnoticed.
- Outgoing president Zeman pardoned the construction company Energie stavební a báňská (ESB) less than 48 hours before his term expired in March.¹⁰⁰ Energie had been implicated in a rigged public tender in March 2022 for the €8.5 million (\$9.4 million) Klíčava water

project organized by the Lány Forestry Administration, an organization responsible for the forests around the presidential country retreat.¹⁰¹ Zeman also pardoned the former head of the Lány Forestry Administration, Miloš Balák, shortly after he was sentenced to three years in prison for his role in the rigged tender.

- In September, the police raided the headquarters of the Czech Army General Staff in Prague in connection with public tenders linked to businessmen implicated in the Dozimetr kickback scheme, which had first been exposed in June 2022 in relation to other significant public tenders in IT and transportation.¹⁰²
- Several Czech state companies were reported to have been granted exemptions from sanctions to continue in business activities with sanctioned Russian-linked companies in sectors like the nuclear and pharmaceutical industries that were critical to Czechia's infrastructure and economy. In August, media outlets and NGOs accused state-owned oil transportation and storage company MERO ČR of breaching sanctions after contracting oil purchases worth 1.1 billion koruna (\$50 million) from a company represented by the former vice president of Russian oil company Lukoil.¹⁰³
- In August, KTRV CEO Boris Obnosov and his daughter and son-in-law were added to Czechia's national sanctions list, which includes Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian oligarch Vladimir Yevtushenkov, the latter of whom also reportedly controls assets in Czechia. However, in November, Jana Šedivá resigned after four months of heading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' new sanctions department. Šedivá's resignation raised media concerns that the department is understaffed,¹⁰⁴ something NGOs have also warned about.¹⁰⁵
- Other developments pointing to persisting challenges in addressing the presence of Kremlin-linked businesses in the country include foreign media reports that by November, sanctioned Russian state energy company Gazprom was still a shareholder in Czechia's most advanced gas storage facility at Dambořice.¹⁰⁶ In September, Minister of Justice Blažek met with Martin Nejedlý, who had previously been an aide of the pro-Kremlin former president Zeman as well as a representative of Lukoil, in a highly criticized meeting.

Author: Albin Sybera, a Czech national living in Slovenia, is a freelance journalist, a news reporter covering Czechia and Slovakia at bne Intellinews, and a contributing editor at the Warsaw-based think tank and magazine Visegrad Insight. He is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, researching constructions of Czech national identity in the media. His articles, interviews, commentaries, and analyses regularly appear in the *Guardian*, Balkan Insight, the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Just Security, Czech Radio, RTV Slovenia, N1, Britské listy, and *Hospodářské noviny*. Sybera holds degrees in philosophy

from Carleton University, Ottawa, and in Reading European Cultures from the University of Glasgow.

Footnotes

- 1“Populismus byl poražen, je to světově významná událost, řekl Pithart ke zvolení Pavla” [Populism has been defeated; it is an event of world significance, Pithart said about Pavel being elected], Czech Television (ČT), January 30, 2023, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/populismus-byl-porazen-je-t...>
- 2Voter turnout hovered around 70 percent in both rounds of the presidential vote (see Electoral Process).
- 3Most notably, political analyst Jiří Pehe, who has extensively covered Blažek in appearances on Czech Radio (ČRo).
- 4Jan Červenka, “Důvěra ústavním institucím—podzim 2023” [Trust in constitutional institutions—autumn 2023], press release, Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM), December 14, 2023, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5735/f9/pi...
- 5ANO would win with 33.2 percent, followed by SPD with 12 percent, ODS with 11.6 percent, and the Czech Pirate Party with 10.2 percent, according to the November poll by STEM for the CNN Prima News television channel. According to a December poll by the Kantar agency for Czech Television, ANO would win with 34.5 percent, followed by ODS with 12.5 percent, the Pirates with 11.5 percent and SPD with 10 percent. For a full breakdown, see: Adam Fiala, “Hnutí ANO ve volebním modelu Kantaru zvyšuje náskok, pokles podpory je patrný hlavně u ODS” [ANO widens lead in the Kantar model, a drop in support is visible particularly with ODS], ČT24, December 10, 2023, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/hnuti-ano-ve-volebnim-model...>
- 6Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, “Breakthrough Necessary to Ensure the Equality and Dignity of Roma People and People with Disabilities in the Czech Republic,” February 27, 2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/breakthrough-necessary-to-ens...>
- 7Vít Pohanka, “Rok války aneb Ukrajinci v Česku. Pomoc státu klesá, uprchlíci se o sebe chtějí postarat sami” [A year of war, or Ukrainians in Czechia. State aid is dropping, refugees want to take care of themselves], Czech Radio (ČRo) Plus, March 5, 2023, <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/rok-valky-aneb-ukrajinci-v-cesku-pomoc-statu-kl...>
- 8Václav Štětka, “Komentář: Mediální anomálie končí. Oligarchický model žije dál” [Commentary: Media anomaly ends. The oligarchic model lives on], Seznam Zprávy, September 5,

2023, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/ekonomika-komentar-medialni-anomalie...>

- 9Czech News Agency (ČTK), "ANO má dost podpisů pro hlasování o nedůvěře vládě. Nejde o kampaň, tvrdí Schillerová" [ANO has enough signatures for a vote of no confidence. It is not a campaign, says Schillerová], Aktualne.cz, January 12, 2023, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/schillerova-preda-podpisy-pro-svolani...>
- 10Jan Burda, "Hlasování o nedůvěře je legitimní krok, nyní je to ale jen součást strategie, myslí si politoložka Dvořáková" [Vote of confidence is a legitimate move, now it is just a part of strategy, thinks political scientist Dvořáková], January 17, 2023, in Vinohradská 12, podcast, ČRo Plus, <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/hlasovani-o-neduvere-je-legitimni-krok-nyni-je-....>
- 11ČTK, "Policie prověřuje balík kauz, které se týkají hospodaření prezidentské kanceláře" [Police is reviewing a package of cases, which are linked to the management of presidential office], ČT24, March 31, 2023, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/policie-proveruje-balik-kau...>
- 12These included the replacement of Vladimír Balaš with Mikuláš Bek as the minister of education, youth, and sports and the appointment of Martin Dvořák as Minister of European Affairs in May—all three of them members of STAN—and the replacement of the Minister of Agriculture Zdeněk Nekula with fellow Christian Democrat Marek Výborný in June. See: "Prezident Pavel přijal demisi ministra Nekuly. Ve čtvrtek na jeho místo jmenuje Výborného" [President Pavel accepted the demise of Minister Nekula. He will appoint Vyborny on Thursday to his post], iROZHLAS, ČRo, June 26, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zdenek-nekula-rezignace-demise-pet....>
- 13Prime Minister Fiala had appointed Christian Democratic leader and Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Marian Jurečka as the interim minister of the environment in November 2022, before the KDU-ČSL summit approved Petr Hladík—who had been questioned by police in one of the Brno antigraft probes—as the party's nominee for the position in December. However, in January 2023, Zeman refused to sign the proposal to make Hladík minister; two days later, Jurečka appointed Hladík as the first deputy minister of the environment.
- 14"Havlíček: Vláda fatálním způsobem neplní své sliby. Kauza Dozimetr byla jen poslední kapkou" [Havlicek: cabinet is not keeping its promises in a fatal way. The Dozimetr affairs has just been a last drop], ČT24, October 17, 2023, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/domaci/havlicek-vlada-fatalnim-zpu...>

- 15The proportion of the respondents saying that they trusted Fiala's cabinet declined over the course of the year, falling from 25 percent in a survey carried out by CVVM in June and July to 17 percent in another survey conducted between September and December. See: Červenka, "Důvěra ústavním institucím—podzim 2023"; Jan Červenka, "Důvěra ústavním institucím—červen/červenec 2023" [Trust in constitutional institutions—June/July 2023], press release, CVVM, August 7, 2023, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5680/f9/pi....
- 16"Uklidit zemi po pětikoalici.' Babiš chce dovést hnutí ANO po volbách v roce 2025 zpátky do vlády" ["To clean up the country after the five-party coalition." Babiš wants to lead ANO back to the government after the elections in 2025], iROZHLAS, February 10, 2024, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/uklidit-zemi-po-petikoalici-babis-....>
- 17Jakub Grim, "Jihočeská mocenská klika i ,klausista' Zahradil. I v ODS jsou rebelové s odlišnými názory, než má vedení"[South Bohemian power clique and "Klausist" Zahradil. Even in the ODS there are rebels with different views than its leadership], Czech Radio (ČRo), July 19, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/jihoceska-mocenska-klika-i-klausis....>
- 18ČT24 and ČTK, "Úsporný balíček se dotkne peněženek Čechů, daňové zatížení poroste" [Government package will impact wallets of Czechs, tax burden will grow], ČT24, October 12, 2023, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/ekonomika/usporny-balicek-se-dotkn....>
- 19Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), "Volba prezidenta republiky konaná ve dnech 13.01.–14.01.2023 (promítnuto usnesení NSS)" [The election of the President of the Republic held on 13.01–14.1.2023 (projected NSS resolution)], Volby.cz, accessed May 21, 2024, <https://www.volby.cz/pls/prez2023nss/pe2?xjazyk=CZ>.
- 20Police launched an investigation into the hoax, but stopped the inquiry in June after establishing that the disinformation came from servers owned by the Russian Yandex technology company. See: "Policie odložila případ dezinformace o úmrtí Pavla. Informace se podle ní šířila z Ruska" [Police shelved the case of disinformation about Pavel's death. Information was spread from Russia, according to police], iROZHLAS, June 2, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/petr-pavel-dezinformace-umrti-volb....>
- 21Babiš also reported threats that were investigated by police, until they ended when the main suspect committed suicide. See: "Policie vypátrala odesílatele výhružného dopisu pro Babišovu manželku. Podezřelý zemřel" [The police tracked down the sender of the threatening letter to Babiš's wife. The suspect died], iROZHLAS,

January 2, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/andrej-babis-naboj-dopis-vyhrozova...>

- 22 Michaela Rambousková and Lucie Stuchlíková, "Z kampane se stala obrana hodnot, řekl Pavel" [The campaign has turned into a defense of values, Pavel said], Seznam Zprávy, January 24, 2023 <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/volby-prezidentske-petr-pavel-kvuli-....>
- 23 For an interview with Charles University research Jaroslav Bílek Anna Urbanová on polarization in Czech society, see: Anna Urbanová, "Pavel rozšiřuje svůj ‚love brand‘, Babiše volí jiný typ lidí, upozorňuje na možný optický klam politolog" [Pavel expands his "love brand," Babiš chooses a different type of people, a political scientist points out a possible optical illusion], iROZHLAS, January 22, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/volby/prezidentske-volby-kampan-andrej-babis-pe....>
- 24 For a Czech Radio interview with Vít Hloušek, the head of the International Institute for Politics at Masaryk University, see: Jakub Grim, "Přestože prohrál, Babišova agresivní kampaň zabrala. Teď se pokusí eliminovat SPD, míní politolog" [Even though he lost, Babiš's aggressive campaign worked. Now he will try and eliminate SPD, thinks political scientist], January 29, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/volby/prezidentske-volby-andrej-babis-spd-kampa....>
- 25 In January 2024, Czech activists with support from Amnesty International and Konsent held a "Light for the Victims" protest in front of the Ministry of Justice, sparked by a case in 2023 in which a stepfather repeatedly raped his minor child and received a conditional sentence (see Judicial Framework and Independence). See: ČTK, "Podmínku za opakované znásilnění prověříme, ujišťuje resort spravedlnosti. Lidé demonstrovali před budovou ministerstva" [Conditional sentence for repeated rape is reviewed, justice resort assures. People demonstrated in front of the ministry building], ČTK, January 23, 2024, <https://ct24.ceskatelivize.cz/clanek/domaci/zive-resort-spravedlnosti-p....>
- 26 Johanna Nejedlová, "Nejdřív policie, teď soudce. Měli by pomáhat obětem, místo toho si dělají ze znásilnění legraci" [First police, then judge. They should be helping victim, instead they are making fun of rape], iROZHLAS, October 14, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/komentare/znasilneni-vtipy-soudce-nejvyssi-soud...>; proFem, "Výzkum: sexualizované násilí—výskyt, dopady a náklady na zdravotní péči" [Research: sexualised violence – occurrence, impact and financial burden on health care], February 22, 2024, <https://www.profem.cz/cs/novinky/a/vyzkum-sexualizovane-nasili---vyskyt....>

- 27Šárka Fenyková, "Co je znásilnění? Státní zástupci a policisté si zákon vykládají ve prospěch pachatelů, tvrdí novinářka" [What is rape? State prosecutors and policemen are interpreting the law in favour of the perpetrators, a journalist says], iROZHLAS, May 4, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/znasilneni-statni-zastupitelstvi-p....> According to the NGO Konsent, which is advocating for legislative changes, only about 600 cases of rape are reported annually, a small fraction 12,000 cases of rape per year that actually occur; 90 percent of rape victims are women. See: Konsent, "Consent Is a Must," 2021, <https://konsent.cz/en/consent/>.
- 28Tomáš Pika, "Státní zástupkyně žádá pro Feriho ,okolo tří let' vězení. Trvám na své nevině, reaguje expolitik" [The public prosecutor is asking for "around three years" in prison for Feri. I insist on my innocence, responds the ex-politician], iROZHLAS, October 31, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/dominik-feri-soud-zaverecne-reci-a....>
- 29Apolena Rychlíková, "Česká republika změnu definice znásilnění potřebuje. Dokládá to i soud s Dominikem Ferim" [Czech Republic needs a change in the definition of rape. The trial with Dominik Feri shows it too], iROZHLAS, May 16, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/komentare/ceska-republika-definice-znasilneni-s....>
- 30Ian Willoughby, "Czech Police Chief Sorry for Saying Women 'Very Often' Make Up Rape Claims," Radio Prague International, October 8, 2023, <https://english.radio.cz/czech-police-chief-sorry-saying-women-very-oft....>
- 31ČTK, "Předseda Nejvyššího soudu měl v prezentaci vtipy o znásilnění. Nabídl omluvu těm, co se cítí dotčeni" [President of the Supreme Court had jokes about rape in his presentation. He offered apology to those who feel offended], iROZHLAS, October 4, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/predseda-nejvyssiho-soudu-petr-ang....> Angyalossy apologized and explained that his intention was to showcase absurd arguments made by defendants, but critics warned that such language reinforces the difficult environment rape victims face in police and courtroom settings.
- 32Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, "Breakthrough Necessary to Ensure the Equality and Dignity of Roma People and People with Disabilities in the Czech Republic," February 27, 2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/breakthrough-necessary-to-ens....>
- 33European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Roma in 10 European Countries: Main Report, (Vienna: FRA, 2021), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-sur...

- ³⁴Albin Sybera, "Ukrainian Refugees Become Populist Targets in Czechia," bne IntelliNews, September 6, 2023, <https://www.intellinews.com/ukrainian-refugees-become-populist-targets-....>
- ³⁵Gwendolyn Albert, "Czech President Petr Pavel to Commemorate the Holocaust and Its Romani Victims at Lety, Just the Second President to Do So after the Late Vaclav Havel in 1995," Romea, May 10, 2023, <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-president-petr-pavel-to-commem....>
- ³⁶Anna Fodor, "Fierce Debate over Same-Sex Marriage in Lower House," Radio Prague International, June 1, 2023, <https://english.radio.cz/fierce-debate-over-same-sex-marriage-lower-hou....>
- ³⁷Jan Lopatka and Jason Hovet, "Czech Lawmakers Give First Nod to Same-Sex Marriage Bill, Opposition Ahead," Reuters, June 29, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/czech-lawmakers-give-first-nod-sam....>
- ³⁸ČTK, "Návrh: Stejnopohlavní páry by mohly vstupovat do partnerství s právy manželů" [Proposal: Same-sex couples could enter into partnerships with the rights of spouses], České Noviny, ČTK, November 1, 2023, <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/2434928>.
- ³⁹A study conducted by PAQ Research found that two-thirds of refugees living in Czechia have incomes below the poverty line. As of July, authorities tightened the conditions for people in the temporary protection program, increasing the risk of poverty. See: Kateřina Šafářová et al., "Práci v Česku už mají dvě třetiny uprchlíků. Většina stále pracuje pod kvalifikací" [Two thirds of refugees already have jobs in the Czech Republic. Most are still working below qualifications], PAQ Research, August 9, 2023, <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/uprchlici-posun-jazyk-prace-bydleni>.
- ⁴⁰Czechia hosted 32.2 refugees per 1,000 people, followed by Poland (26.6), and Estonia (25.8). The EU average was 9.1.
- ⁴¹In a Czech Radio interview, Magda Faltová, the director of the Association for Integration and Migration, warned that border controls do not present a long-term solution to the issue of migration, which is going to occur regardless of such controls. See: Šárka Fenýková, "Faltová: Uvědomme si, že migrace nejde zastavit. Je to přirozený proces, dělají to zhruba tři procenta lidí" [Faltova: We should realize that migration cannot be stopped. It is a natural process, carried out by some three percent of people], iROZHLAS, October 5, 2023, <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zivotni-styl/spolecnost/ilegalni-hranice-migrac....>

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Documentation	info@ecoi.net	
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