

Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights Implications

Country: Czechia

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1 Measures taken by government/public authorities impacting on specific freedoms

Please briefly describe the main developments, between 1 September – 31 October 2020, in the legal framework and related measures adopted in your country in response to the Coronavirus pandemic with respect to emergency laws/state of emergency, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement.

1.1 Emergency laws/states of emergency

In the **Czech Republic**, a state of emergency was declared for the second time in 2020 from 5 October for a period of 30 days¹ and on 30 October it was extended until 20 November.² The Government declared this state of emergency under the terms of Articles 5 and 6 of the Constitutional Act on the Security of the Czech Republic.³

In the Czech Republic COVID-19 cases started rising sharply at the beginning of September, which resulted in the introduction of a series of initially milder measures. They did not have the desired effect of flattening the curve, so over the course of October a series of increasingly restrictive measures were introduced (see below). The upward epidemiological trend continued, however, and by the end of October the Czech Republic had the highest COVID-19 infection rate in the EU.⁴

From media reports it seems that whenever possible the Police enforce the newly introduced restrictions, such as the compulsory wearing of masks everywhere inside the transportation system, primarily by means of attempting to persuade people who refuse to comply with the measures.⁵ Fines are also issued, for instance, to people who gathered in front of restaurants and bars.⁶ No reports of the use of excessive force or persecution in connection with the coronavirus measures were identified (except the anti-mask demonstration on 18 October, see the section on freedom of assembly).

In a judgment from 20 October 2020 No. 5 A 103/2020,⁷ the Municipal Court in Prague annulled the Measure No. HSHMP 59998/2020 of the Prague Public Health Office dated 18 September 2020⁸. The measure prohibited university students from being present at the universities in Prague. The complainant challenged the legality of the measure and demanded it be annulled. He argued that the Prague Public Health Office failed to explain why it considered it necessary to ban the presence of students at universities, why the measure did not apply to high school and elementary school students, and why other institutions (restaurants, shopping malls, etc.) remained open. He also stated

¹ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 30 September 2020 No. 957](#).

² Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 30 October 2020 No. 1108 on the extension of the state of emergency in connection with the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic](#).

³ Czech Republic, Constitutional Act on the Security of the Czech Republic No. 110/1998 Coll. ([Ústavní zákon č. 110/1998 Sb. o bezpečnosti České republiky](#)), 29 May 1998.

⁴ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2020), [COVID-19 situation update for the EU/EEA and the UK, as of 22 October 2020](#).

⁵ Krýslová, M. (2020), 'The number of people boycotting the wearing of masks is rising, police officers have been unable to enforce mask wearing. Instead of fines they just try to persuade people' ([Lidí bojkotujících nošení roušek přibývá, strážníci jsou na ně krátkí. Místo pokut policie pouze domlouvá](#)), *Lidovky.cz*, 8 October 2020.

⁶ iRozhlas (2020), 'The Prague Police issued fines over the weekend and identified 560 violations of governmental measures' ([Pražská policie o víkendu rozdávala pokuty, zjistila na 560 porušení vládních nařízení](#)), 12 October 2020.

⁷ Municipal Court in Prague (2020), Judgment No. [5 A 103/2020](#), 20 October 2020.

⁸ City Health Station of Prague (2020), Measure No. [HSHMP 59998/2020](#), 18 September 2020.

that the measure infringed his right to education. The Municipal Court upheld the complaint stating that the Prague Public Health Office failed to justify the necessity of the measure. On 12 October, universities switched to online learning in the whole country by a decision of the Government (see below the chapter on education).

1.2 Freedom of assembly

On the same day that the state of emergency was declared (5 October), attendance at mass events was restricted, a measure that was initially to apply until 18 October.⁹ A maximum of ten people were allowed to gather indoors and twenty people outdoors, with the exception of family members. The ban placed significant restrictions on attendance at artistic performances, especially performances involving a significant amount of singing, which were completely banned, and at most six people could sit at a table in bars and restaurants. Sports events were to be held without spectators and the attendance of religious events was capped at 100 persons.

Further restrictions were introduced in two waves on 9 October¹⁰ and 12 October.¹¹ The first set of measures closed casinos, indoor sports grounds, wellness facilities (including swimming pools), zoos and all recreational and other clubs for children and further restricted the operations of catering facilities and clubs. With the second set of restrictions effectively all gatherings were banned that involved more than ten people indoors or more than twenty people outdoors (not including employees), and no more than 30 people were allowed to attend a funeral or wedding. The measure restricted the right of assembly, which is laid down in Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on the right of assembly (according to § 1 freedom of assembly is realised when people gather to express their free opinions, exercise their constitutional rights, and express their views on matters of public or social importance). A maximum 500 people were allowed to gather for organised outdoor events (e. g. a demonstration) provided that they move around in groups of up to 20 while socially distancing by at least 2 metres and wearing face masks.

On October 14 further restrictions were introduced affecting freedom of assembly.¹² No more than six people were allowed to gather inside or outside (not including employees working together) and people who gather must socially distance themselves by two metres. Meetings, assemblies and events held by constitutional bodies, public authorities, public law entities, political parties and court sessions could be held, but they could be visited by a maximum of 100 people from the general public, who were required to be seated and socially distance. Gatherings pursuant to Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on the right to assembly¹³ could also be attended at most by 500 people. Wedding and funerals could be attended by a maximum of 30 people, but concerts and theatre performances were entirely banned. Restrictions also applied to restaurants and similar establishments, which were only allowed to serve guests through a window and had to cease service by 8 pm at the latest.

On 18 October a demonstration took place on Prague's Old Town Square against the wearing of masks and the government's allegedly chaotic measures. Protesters were joined by football and ice hockey

⁹ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 30 September 2020 No. 958 on the adoption of an emergency measure.](#)

¹⁰ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 8 October 2020 No. 995 on the adoption of a crisis measure.](#)

¹¹ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 8 October 2020 No. 996 on the adoption of a crisis measure.](#)

¹² Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 12 October 2020 No. 1021 Adopting an Emergency Measure.](#)

¹³ Czech Republic, Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on the Right of Assembly ([Zákon č. 84/1990 Sb. o právu shromažďovacím](#)), 29 March 1990.

ultras who contributed to the escalation of the situation. After the Police observed that the number of demonstrators surpassed the set limit of 500 and the event was dispersed, a violent clash between participants and the Police ensued and the Police deployed water cannons and tear gas.¹⁴ In a television interview that took place before the demonstration, the Minister of the Interior, Jan Hamáček, said that it is irresponsible to hold demonstrations in the current situation, but he did not question people's right to express their opinions and to demonstrate.¹⁵ A peaceful demonstration was held on 28 October.¹⁶

As the epidemiological situation worsened toward the end of October¹⁷ a ban on free movement of the population was introduced to apply from 22 October (see below)¹⁸ to 3 November. A maximum of two people were allowed to gather in a public place if they were not members of the same household or they were not working together/conducting business. The same measure placed further restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, pursuant to Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on the Right of Assembly,¹⁹ in that it limited the number of people allowed to take part in a demonstration or similar event could be a maximum of 100, and again they had to be in groups of up to 20 participants, wear a face mask or a protective covering on the nose and mouth and keep distance of at least 2 metres had to be maintained between the groups of participants. The latest measures limited the number of participants at a wedding or funeral to ten people. Restrictions on retail sale were also introduced to apply from 22 October to 3 November.²⁰ The measures closed hotels and similar facilities and food courts in shopping malls, allowing shops selling groceries, fuel, drugstore items, newspapers, and tobacco products and similar services to remain open, as well as car repair workshops, dry cleaners, pharmacies, funeral services, and florists.

According to an article published on the webpage ceska-justice.cz²¹ and the list of pending plenary cases on the webpage of the Constitutional Court,²² the Constitutional Court received several complaints challenging the legality of the Government Resolutions and the Special Measures of the Ministry of Health. On 21 October 2020, a complaint was filed against the measures²³ restricting freedom of movement. The case is being processed under No. Pl. ÚS 105/20²⁴. Details of the case will

¹⁴ Euronews (2020), ['Anti-lockdown demonstration turns violent in Prague'](#), 18 October 2020.

Czech Radio (2020), ['Police clash with protesters against government's Covid-19 restrictions'](#), 18 October 2020.

¹⁵ Lidovky.cz (2020), 'The Police should keep anti-mask protesters away from hooligans who simply want to have a fight, says Rakušan' ([Policie by měla „odpírače roušek“ držet dál od chuligánů, kteří se chtějí rvát, říká Rakušan](#)), 18 October 2020.

¹⁶ Czech Press Agency (2020), 'Demonstration against Covid measures took place in Prague' ([V Praze se demonstrovalo proti koronavirovým opatřením](#)), 28 October 2020.

¹⁷ Czech Republic (2020), 'The current epidemiological situation and a predicted progress of COVID-19 as of 20 October 2020' ([Aktuální epidemiologická situace a predikce vývoje COVID-19 k 20. října 2020](#)), press release 21 October 2020.

¹⁸ Czech Republic (2020), Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 21 October 2020 No. 1078 Adopting an Emergency Measure

¹⁹ Czech Republic, Act No. 84/1990 Coll. on the Right of Assembly ([Zákon č. 84/1990 Sb. o právu shromažďovacím](#)), 29 March 1990.

²⁰ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 21 October 2020 No. 1079 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

²¹ Ceska-justice.cz (2020), 'Limiting masses and the education of children: The Constitutional Court again is receiving petitions seeking the cancellation of COVID-measures' ([Omezení mší a vzdělávání dětí: ÚS znovu dostává návrhy na rušení koronavirových opatření](#)), 16. October 2020 .

²² Ústavní soud (2020), 'Pending plenary cases' ([Projednávané plenární věci](#)).

²³ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 30 September 2020 No. 957](#); Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 21 October 2020 No. 1078 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

²⁴ Ústavní soud (2020), 'Pending plenary cases' ([Projednávané plenární věci](#)), 21 October 2020.

be made public after the decision. Another complaint²⁵ was filed by a group of Senators which challenged the legality of the Government Resolution²⁶ limiting the number of participants at religious services. The complainant stated that the Resolution infringed on freedom of religion and that the Government failed to justify the necessity of the measure. There has been no decision in the case yet. It is being processed under No. Pl. ÚS 102/20.

Other complaints concerned, among others, the declaration of the state of emergency and the measures being physically present on school premises.²⁷

1.3 Freedom of movement

As was the case during the spring state of emergency,²⁸ several waves of measures were introduced that gradually limited the movement of the population. The conditions introduced on 22 October were initially similar to the spring restrictions and exceptions to the ban on the free movement of the population included essential travel to and from work, essential shopping, essential visits to the doctor or the public authorities, visiting and taking care of family members, and walks in parks and the countryside.²⁹ The ban does not apply to travel to one's own holiday cottage and staying there. Yet, unlike in the spring, a de facto curfew was introduced on 28 October when a measure came into effect banning people from leaving their home from 9pm to 5am (exceptions apply, such as going to work and dealing with urgent matters).³⁰

Social services are an area in which restrictions on freedom of movement were introduced ahead of the general ban. In this area a ban was introduced early, on 12 October, preventing certain clients of social services from leaving their building or complex.³¹ This ban applies to care facilities for the elderly and facilities caring for Alzheimer patients or people with similar conditions, but exceptions apply. The same press release from 12 October of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs explains that COVID-19 cases had been diagnosed by that date in 95 social service facilities. The total number of COVID-19 positive clients in these facilities was 637, and 316 staff were also infected. According to data from 20 October, 1,961 positive cases were diagnosed in social care facilities, which amounts to 1.76% of all COVID-19 cases in the country.³² This number includes both clients and staff.

²⁵ Ústavní soud (2020), 'Pending plenary cases' ([Projednávané plenární věci](#)), 8 October 2020.

²⁶ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 30 September 2020 No. 958 on the adoption of an emergency measure](#).

²⁷ Ceska-justice.cz (2020), 'Limiting Masses and education of children: The Constitutional Court again is receiving petitions seeking the cancellation of COVID-measures' ([Omezení mší a vzdělávání dětí: ÚS znovu dostává návrhy na rušení koronavirových opatření](#)), 16 October 2020

²⁸ Ministry of Health (2020), Special Protection Measure No. MZDR 12745/2020-1/MIN/KAN on free movement on the territory of the Czech Republic ([Mimořádné opatření - volný pohyb osob na území ČR](#)), 23 March 2020.

²⁹ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 21 October 2020 No. 1078 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

³⁰ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 26 October 2020 No. 1102 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

³¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020), 'Additional governmental measures in social services will provide more protection for caregivers, clients and homeless people. Students will also assist in providing services' ([Další vládní opatření v sociálních službách přinesou větší ochranu pečovatelům, klientům i lidem bez domova. Službám vypomohou i studenti](#)), press release 12 October 2020.

³² Czech Republic (2020), 'Current epidemiological situation and predicted progress of COVID-19 as of 20 October 2020' ([Aktuální epidemiologická situace a predikce vývoje COVID-19 k 20. října 2020](#)), press release 21 October 2020.

A measure mandating the wearing of face masks or a similar face cover was introduced on 13 October at public transport stops, station platforms, waiting rooms, and in all indoor premises of buildings, except for one's home.³³ Only children under the age of two do not have to wear a mask, even though the WHO recommends that children aged 5 years and under should not be required to wear a mask.³⁴ Other exceptions include children and teaching staff at nursery and primary schools, persons with intellectual disorders, disorders on the autistic spectrum, and cognitive disorders or with severe psychological disorders, or whose mental capacity or current mental state does not allow them to observe this prohibition, and so forth. On 21 October the requirement to cover one's nose and mouth was extended to apply to public spaces where the social distance of 2 metres from people from a different household cannot be kept, and inside cars (unless the passengers are members of the same household).³⁵

Unlike during the spring state of emergency when Czech citizens were not allowed to travel outside the country, there are currently no restrictions on international travel. People returning from a high-risk country, according to the weekly updated 'traffic light' map operated by the Ministry of Health, must present a negative PCR test upon returning or face a 10-day home quarantine.³⁶ Many countries have listed the Czech Republic as a high-risk country and have imposed travel restrictions for travellers coming from the Czech Republic. Incoming travellers to the Czech Republic must as of 21 September fill in the Ministry of Health's on-line arrival form before entering the country if they have been outside the country for more than 12 hours in any country that is not on the list of countries with a low COVID-19 risk (exceptions include EU citizens and foreign nationals with a long-term or permanent residence permit in the EU passing through the Czech Republic in 12 hours or less).³⁷ The ban on entry for third-country nationals who are not on the list of countries with a low risk of COVID-19 and for citizens of third countries who have a temporary or permanent residence in these third countries remains in place.³⁸ The following categories are exempt: foreign nationals with a long-term or permanent residence permit in countries with a low risk of COVID-19 contagion, those who hold a valid long-term visa or permit to reside in the Czech Republic, foreign nationals with a short-stay visa issued by the Czech Republic after 11 May 2020, foreign nationals with a long-term or permanent residence permit in the European Union, and family members of citizens of the Czech Republic or citizens of the European Union with a domicile in the Czech Republic. All persons who have been out of the country for more than 12 hours in a country that is not on the list of countries with a low risk of COVID-19 contagion must within 7 days of entering the territory of the Czech Republic undergo a PCR test for the presence of SARS CoV-2 at their own expense (this does not apply to residents, EU nationals, and children under the age of 5 years) or go into quarantine.

³³ Ministry of Health (2020), [Extraordinary Measure No. MZDR 15757/2020-36/MIN/KAN from 12 October 2020](#).

³⁴ World Health Organization (2020), [Q&A: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Children and masks](#), 21 August 2020.

³⁵ Ministry of Health (2020), [Extraordinary Measure No. MZDR 15757/2020-37/MIN/KAN from 19 October 2020](#).

³⁶ The list of EU countries is [available on the Ministry of Health's website](#).

³⁷ The list of countries based on COVID-19 risk is [available on the Ministry of Health's website](#).

³⁸ Ministry of Health (2020), [Protective Measure No.: MZDR 20599/2020-32/MIN/KAN from 2 October 2020](#).

2 Implications of Covid-19 and measures to contain it on specific social rights

Please provide information on legislation/measures taken by the government/public authorities, between 1 September – 31 October 2020, in response to COVID-19 that have impacted negatively on relevant social rights with respect to two of the following areas of life: education, work, health care and housing.

2.1 Health care

The sharp deterioration in the epidemiological situation and rising hospitalisation rates due to COVID-19 had by the end of October affected the general provision of health care and the ability of the public to access health care services. The watchdog website Hlídač státu (Watchdog of the State) has since September been publishing data on the capacity of Czech hospitals. According to the website, the data are based on information from the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic, and the Government has only made these data publicly available on a daily basis since 1 October and as a result of the watchdog's activities.³⁹ Based on the Government's prediction of epidemiological developments on 20 October, if the current trend continues hospitals will reach their maximum capacity on 10 November⁴⁰ – and that includes the additional capacity provided by the construction of a field hospital with 500 beds by the army on the outskirts of Prague, which the Government ordered on 16 October.⁴¹ An obligation to work was introduced for students in selected years of medical faculties, pharmacy, dentistry, and higher vocational and secondary medical schools on 12 October.⁴²

As the number of people hospitalised with COVID-19 has risen, the number of infected medical personnel has also sharply increased.⁴³ Based on data from the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic, the newspaper *Ústecký deník.cz* claimed that on 24 October there were 13,226 medical professionals infected with the virus (including doctors, nurses, and other medical staff).⁴⁴ The number of people in the general population confirmed to have the virus on that same day was 125, 661.⁴⁵ Hospitals have at least since the beginning of October been postponing non-

³⁹ Hlídač Státu (2020), Hospital capacities ([Kapacita nemocnic](#)), updated daily.

⁴⁰ Czech Republic (2020), 'The current epidemiological situation and the predicted development of COVID-19 as of 20 October 2020' ([Aktuální epidemiologická situace a predikce vývoje COVID-19 k 20. října 2020](#)), press release 21 October 2020.

⁴¹ Czech Republic (2020), Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 16. October 2020 No. 1043 ordering the Army of the Czech Republic to perform rescue work for the sake of the protection of the population due to the spread of the coronavirus SARS CoV-2, constituting the construction of a reserve health facility and partial operation of it ([Usnesení vlády České republiky ze dne 16. října 2020 č. 1043 o nařízení o použití Armády České republiky k záchranným pracím při ochraně obyvatelstva a prevenci šíření koronaviru SARS CoV-2 spočívající ve vybudování záložního zdravotnického zařízení a jeho částečné obsluze](#)).

⁴² Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 12 October 2020 No. 1023 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

⁴³ Vorlová R. and M. Janíková (2020), 'Zlín hospital diverted staff to take care of COVID patients from seven departments. To what extent is health care provision limited?' ([Zlínská nemocnice převedla na covid pacienty personál už ze 7 oddělení. Jak moc je omezena péče?](#)), *iRozhlas*, 27 October 2020.

⁴⁴ Vojíř, A. (2020), Počet zdravotníků s covidem rychle roste. Do práce musí i ti v karanténě (The number of medical staff with COVID is sharply rising. Even those who are in quarantine must go to work), *Ústecký deník.cz*, 27 October 2020.

⁴⁵ Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (2020), [COVID-19: Overview of the current situation in the Czech Republic](#) (COVID-19: Přehled aktuální situace v ČR), updated daily.

acute surgeries as operation theatres have been converted into ICU units for COVID-19 cases.⁴⁶ According to the online media portal Seznam Zprávy, in the Liberec region a hospital director claimed in a video posted on Facebook that the hospital's capacity had been stretched to such an extent that many patients, including those with acute cancer, are unable to access essential medical services.⁴⁷ No comprehensive empirical studies on the general population's access to health care were identified.

Testing for COVID-19 is not available free of charge for the general population and those who decide to undergo a PRC test without medical referral must pay as much as CZK 2,300 (€ 80).⁴⁸ The procedure for testing is the following:⁴⁹ A person obtains a medical referral from a doctor or an employee of the public health service; this form only exists in the electronic form and is being communicated directly to the testing centre. The person who is being referred for testing chooses the time and place of testing from a list of sites presented in the database that is available on a governmental website.⁵⁰ According to official recommendations, people should travel to the test site preferably by car (driven by a household member). To minimize possible contagion they should sit in the back seats of the car, wear a face mask, and limit verbal communication during the trip and are advised against taking public transportation. No financial support is available to cover the travel expenses, but there is a possibility to ask for a mobile sampling team, though those have limited capacities.

In September there were reports in the media claiming that there were waiting times of up to 6 days to get tested on medical referral and 3 days for self-paying client.⁵¹ The number of testing sites and their capacity have been increasing throughout September and October.⁵² According to the online media outlet *Novinky.cz*, at the end of October the waiting time for prescribed testing in the Ústí and Labem region was as long as 14 days.⁵³

Since 9 October visits to hospitals and care facilities have been banned,⁵⁴ but exceptions apply (e.g. visiting a child or a patient in a terminal stage). Unlike the restrictions introduced in March, which prevented fathers from being present during childbirth for a period of four weeks,⁵⁵ currently no such restrictions apply.

⁴⁶ Langová, M. (2020), 'Hospitals lacking beds, but some bed are unnecessarily occupied. A solution is being sought, empty hotels may help' ([Nemocnicím docházejí lůžka, přitom někteří je zabírají zbytečně. Řešení se hledá, pomůžou prázdné hotely](#)), *Lidovky.cz*, 8 October 2020.

⁴⁷ Seznam Zprávy (2020), 'Hospital director: The situation is critical, care for patients with cancer is being postponed' ([Ředitel nemocnice: Situace je kritická, odkládáme i pacienty s rakovinou](#)), 27 October 2020.

⁴⁸ Němcová, L. (2020), 'Hospitals often charge more for tests than the limit set by the ministry. People must pay an extra 500 crowns for a certificate' ([Nemocnice si často účtují za testy více než určuje ministerstvo. Lidé si připlácí i 500 korun za potvrzení](#)), *iRozhlas*, 25 October 2020.

⁴⁹ Czech Republic (2020), [Infection and general measures](#).

⁵⁰ See the website [Testy Covid-19](#).

⁵¹ Boček, J. (2020), Waiting for tests: In hospitals within six days, if self-funded then three days. How not to win the battle with the coronavirus ([Čekání na testy: v nemocnici za šest dnů, jako samoplátce za tři. Jak nevyhrát boj s koronavirem](#)), *iRozhlas*, 25 September 2020.

⁵² Novinky.cz (2020), Map: Testing places have been added. Where can you get tested? ([Mapa: Odběrových míst přibylo, kde všude už se můžete otestovat?](#)), 16 October 2020.

⁵³ Novinky.cz (2020), Up to fourteen days waiting time for testing ([Na testy zdarma se čeká i čtrnáct dní](#)), 27 October 2020.

⁵⁴ Czech Republic (2020), Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 8 October 2020 No. 998 on a crisis measure ([Usnesení vlády České republiky ze dne 8. října 2020 č. 998 o přijetí krizového opatření](#)).

⁵⁵ Ministry of Health (2020), Special Protection Measure No. MZDR 12344/2020-1/MIN/KAN ([Mimořádné opatření Č. j.: MZDR 12344/2020-1/MIN/KAN](#)), 18 March 2020.

On 9 September the Government passed a resolution according to which all citizens over the age of 60 were to receive five surgical masks and a respirator via post services.⁵⁶ On 12 October the measure was extended to further vulnerable groups, such as pensioners or minors with a recognised disability status.⁵⁷

After the Czech Republic requested humanitarian assistance from the European Commission, on 22 October the Commission dispatched dozens of ventilators to alleviate the medical crisis in the country.⁵⁸ In July the government granted a three-month financial bonus (a maximum of 25,000 CZK (EUR 2,800) per month) for medical professionals who were fully employed in a hospital during the first wave of the epidemic. The bonus scheme was initiated by the Trade Union for Medical and Social Care (Odborový svaz zdravotnictví a sociální péče).⁵⁹ No such scheme has yet been announced for the autumn months.

2.2 Education

Restrictions in the field of education have been in effect since 12 October.⁶⁰ Universities (except for the provision of practical training in the field of health care) and secondary schools switched to online learning and the upper primary grades (for children from 10 to 15 years) started alternating back and forth between distance learning and in-school learning on a bi-weekly basis (each time with half on the number of classes present in the school building). The autumn holiday at the end of October was extended by an extra two days. From 14 October all primary grades switched to distance learning and only kindergartens and day care centres remained open.⁶¹ Schools and day care facilities for the children of essential services workers (law enforcement, the armed forces, integrated emergency services, public health stations, providers of health and social services) aged 3-10 remained open.⁶² Schools that educate children with disabilities also remained open in the reporting period.

Dormitories for university students were closed abruptly when a measure was introduced on 12 October requiring all dormitories to close on 14 October, leaving students with only one day to find alternative accommodation or face eviction.⁶³ This created much confusion and existential uncertainty among students and exceptions allowing some students to stay were subsequently introduced.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Czech Republic (2020), Government Resolution No. 910 from 9 September 2020 on the distribution of protective equipment in connection with the COVID-19 disease ([Usnesení vlády České republiky ze dne 9. září 2020 č. 910 k distribuci ochranných pomůcek v souvislosti s onemocněním COVID-19](#)).

⁵⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020), 'Masks and respirators will be handed out to pensioners with a recognised disability status and holders of a disability certificate under the age of 18' ([Roušky a respirátory dostanou také invalidní důchodci a držitelé průkazů ZTP a ZTP/P mladší 18 let](#)), press release 12 October 2020.

⁵⁸ European Commission (2020), [Coronavirus: first rescEU ventilators dispatched to Czechia](#), press release 22 October 2020.

⁵⁹ Trade Union for Medical and Social Care (2020), Press release of OS and LOK-SČL on bonuses in the health sector ([Tisková konference OS a LOK-SČL k odměňování ve zdravotnictví](#)), press release 20 August 2020.

⁶⁰ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 8 October 2020 No. 997 on the adoption of a crisis measure](#).

⁶¹ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 12 October 2020 No. 1021 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

⁶² Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 12 October 2020 No. 1033 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

⁶³ Czech Republic (2020), [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 12 October 2020 No. 1022 Adopting an Emergency Measure](#).

⁶⁴ Menšík, J. (2020), 'Chaotic measures on student dormitories. Students required to move out from one day to the next' ([Zmatky v nařízení o kolejích. Studenti se mají ze dne na den vystěhovat](#)), *Novinky.cz*, 13 October 2020.

On 12 October the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports announced a grant programme for schools to cover the costs of computer hardware and software, but not IT support services.⁶⁵ On 14 October the educational NGO EDUin claimed in a press release that as a result of governmental, business, and NGO initiatives, technical equipment for online learning is currently more widely available than it was in the spring months. However, EDUin pointed out that collecting computers for children who cannot access digital learning, is of little use if a child lives in a home with no internet connection.⁶⁶

Children or their parents can collect their lunches at the school canteens and bring them home.⁶⁷ No comprehensive effort to ensure that children who cannot dine at school receive their lunches at home was identified in the reported period.

3 Negative impact on social rights for vulnerable groups including measures to address this

Please select and provide information concerning two groups whose social rights were particularly negatively impacted with respect to developments/measures adopted in relation to COVID-19, between 1 September – 31 October 2020. For each of the two groups selected – highlight which social rights were most impacted. Also, identify any government and related measures that were introduced to alleviate the negative impact on these groups.

3.1 Women

Single parents, 90% of whom are women, according to the Czech Statistical Office,⁶⁸ have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn, and their rights to social and economic protection and protection against poverty have likely been violated. According to the NGO Club of Single Mothers (Klub svobodných matek), the number of requests for assistance from their clients is in 2020 many times higher than it was in 2019. The nature of the assistance requested has also changed: whereas in 2019 financial assistance was provided to sponsor school lunches, summer camps, and Christmas gifts for children, in 2020 clients requested financial assistance to buy food and to supplement rent.⁶⁹

The Club of Single Mothers conducted an online survey in August to assess the economic situation of its clients.⁷⁰ The survey was completed by 1,528 respondents, 98% of whom were single mothers and 2% single fathers across the territory of the Czech Republic. One-fifth of respondents indicated that they lost their job due to the coronavirus crisis and 10% of those who were employed said they had

⁶⁵ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2020), Information on exceptional resources for IT for high schools ([Informace o mimořádných prostředcích na ICT pro gymnázia](#)), press release 12 October 2020.

⁶⁶ EDUin (2020), 'Children will need data with the borrowed notebooks. Will you help?' ([K zapůjčeným notebookům budou děti potřebovat data. Pomůžete?](#)), press release 14 October 2020.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2020), Methodological guidance on distance education ([Metodické doporučení pro vzdělání distančním způsobem](#)), 24 September 2020.

⁶⁸ Czech Statistical Office (2015), 'Single mothers: What are their expenditures in our country and in Europe?' ([Samoživitelky: Jak žijí a za co utrácejí u nás a v Evropě?](#)), press release 27 May 2015.

⁶⁹ Communication via email with the Club of Single Mothers on 27 October 2020.

⁷⁰ Club of Single Mothers (2020), 'One-fifth of single parents lost their job after the coronavirus' ([Jedna pětina samoživitelů přišla po koronaviru o práci](#)), undated (presumably from August 2020) press release shared with FRAnet researcher on 21 October 2020 via email.

to take on extra work in order to make ends meet. Income levels were also significantly negatively impacted by the coronavirus crisis. Whereas before the crisis 16% of single parents indicated that their earnings were below CZK 10,000 (400 €), after March 29% claimed that they earned less than this amount. Single parents whose salary was between 20,000 and 30,000 CZK (€ 800-1,200) experienced the most severe economic impact: before the crisis their percentage was 24%, but by August only 15% of respondents earned this amount. The official minimum income in the Czech Republic in 2020 is 14,600 CZK (€ 540). The situation of single mothers worsened also with regard to housing: 16% indicated that they had fallen into arrears on their rent since the pandemic began and out of these 2% had had their lease terminated. About half of all respondents had incurred debts since the crisis began and 3% had taken out a new loan to cover their existing debt. According to the NGO, the socio-economic situation of single mothers is expected to have deteriorated even more since September.⁷¹

On October 16 the Government simplified access to an immediately attainable one-off financial benefit (mimořádná okamžitá pomoc). The benefit can now be claimed also to supplement mortgage payments. The application can be sent via mail or internet.⁷² The scope of the benefit now includes the following: to purchase food, clothing or hygiene products, rent payment support (including energy costs), and support for mobile and internet services.⁷³

3.2 People in precarious or unstable work

A longitudinal research conducted by the private research institute PAQ Research focuses on the population's behaviour and life circumstances during the pandemic.⁷⁴ Their data reveal that by the beginning of September 13% of the population were either unemployed, working in extremely precarious jobs, or under-employed. The most negatively affected from an economic point of view are households that were living on the brink of poverty even before the crisis, and households of people who are self-employed, working on contracts to perform a job, or who work on the informal economy.

On 16 October the European Commission organised an online workshop on the societal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁵ Data presented by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences indicate that in terms of the decrease in income levels the most vulnerable segments of the population were the ones most negatively affected by the pandemics.⁷⁶ The following groups in particular were identified:

⁷¹ Communication via email with the Club of Single Mothers on 27 October 2020.

⁷² Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020), 'Immediately attainable one-off financial benefit MOP COVID-19 assists those in need in the second wave. And it is even more accessible than before' ([Mimořádná okamžitá pomoc MOP COVID-19 pomáhá potřebným i v druhé vlně. A je ještě dostupnější](#)), press release 16 October 2020.

⁷³ The conditions of the benefit are detailed on the [website of the Employment Office](#).

⁷⁴ Prokop, D. (2020), 'New dashboard: Life during the pandemic' ([Nový dashboard Život během pandemie](#)), PAQ Research, 14 September 2020.

⁷⁵ European Commission in the Czech Republic (2020), 'The social effects of the pandemic: What do the data say?' ([Dopady pandemie na společnost: Co říkají data?](#)), online workshop on 16 October 2020.

⁷⁶ Fialová, K. (2020), 'The effects of the pandemic on the labour market: The coronavirus crisis and the development of wages' ([Dopady pandemie na trh práce: Koronavirová krize a mzdový vývoj](#)), Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, power point presentation at European Commission in the Czech Republic (2020), 'The social effects of the pandemic: What do the data say?' ([Dopady pandemie na společnost: Co říkají data?](#)), online workshop on 16 October 2020.

- people with low earnings and in precarious positions (employed through private employment agencies, on temporary contracts or contracts to perform a specific job, or on the informal economy);
- small-scale entrepreneurs.

According to the independent think tank the Center for Social Issues SPOT, the pandemic has not had a significant effect on people who are regular clients of the Employment Office and who are often long-term beneficiaries of social support schemes.⁷⁷ This category of people has low incomes, often default on their debts, and the jobs accessible to them do not provide economic stability. They often do not work on the open job market but in public work programmes. The category of people who have been much harder impacted by the pandemic and the ensuing crisis are people who are not recurring clients of the Employment Office and who normally do not receive social benefits. These people also have low earnings, but they are long-term employed and usually have several jobs at the same time. They have low financial reserves; often their salaries have been garnished, and they had difficulty maintaining stable housing already in the spring wave of the coronavirus. They often have a semi-official form of employment and work on short-term contracts. From an economic point of view, these are people who tend to have excess debt. This group includes single parents (most of whom are women), older people with very low pensions, families with low income and people who are highly qualified but do not have a permanent work contract (e.g. people working in the field of culture). In the autumn self-employed persons were made eligible for support from the financial support scheme to make up for lost earnings,⁷⁸ although the scheme is considerably more restrictive than it was in the spring.⁷⁹ The support scheme for people who work on short-term contracts or contracts to perform a job is also more restrictive than it was in the spring months:⁸⁰ currently only those whose monthly earnings were above 10,000 CZK (€ 400) and thus were required to make monthly payments into the public health insurance scheme between June and September are eligible.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Trlifajová, L. et al (2020), 'Precarious workers and employment support: Longitudinal findings on the first wave of the COVID 19 pandemic' (Prekarizovaní pracovníci a podpora zaměstnanosti: Průběžná zjištění k I. vlně pandemie COVID 19), Center for Social Issues SPOT, power point presentation at European Commission in the Czech Republic (2020), 'The social effects of the pandemic: What do the data say?' ([Dopady pandemie na společnost: Co říkají data?](#)), online workshop on 16 October 2020.

⁷⁸ Ministry of Finance (2020), Compensation bonus (autumn 2020) - FAQ ([Kompenzační bonus \(podzim 2020\) - nejčastější otázky a odpovědi](#)), press release 26 October 2020.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Finance (2020), Compensation bonus for the self-employed (spring 2020) - FAQ ([Kompenzační bonus pro OSVČ \(jaro 2020\) - nejčastější otázky a odpovědi](#)), press release 1 April 2020.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Finance (2020), Compensation bonus for people who work on short-term contracts or contracts to perform a job (spring 2020) – FAQ ([Kompenzační bonus pro DPP a DPČ \(jaro 2020\) – nejčastější otázky a odpovědi](#)), press release 21 July 2020.

⁸¹ Ministry of Finance (2020), Compensation bonus (autumn 2020) - FAQ ([Kompenzační bonus \(podzim 2020\) - nejčastější otázky a odpovědi](#)), press release 26 October 2020.