

COUNTRY PROFILES

Czech Republic

It is clearly stated in literature on the Czech Republic's approach to international cultural policy that it acknowledges the benefits, and is supportive of, EU cooperation with other non-European countries throughout the world.

This is most strongly demonstrated in the signing of the Declaration of Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Republic of Hungary, Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic). This regional group has been working together since the first Visegrád declaration in 1991 with a view to European integration. The second declaration was signed in light of accession to the EU and commits the partners to cooperate, help and share knowledge with neighbouring countries in Eastern and South Eastern European countries within the framework of EU policies.

The Czech Republic also shows its openness to work internationally in cultural matters by joining the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) as an observer.

The Czech Republic is also an active member of UNESCO. In fact, the Strategy of Culture State Promotion (cultural policy), which was prepared by the Ministry of Culture, has been inspired by UNESCO documents.

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n A f f a i r s

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has supreme responsibility for signing international cultural agreements. The Department is divided into two main units – the Cultural Relations Unit and the Relations with Czechs Living Abroad Unit. In the cultural field, the Department has been actively cooperating with the majority of Czech diplomatic missions abroad in the preparation of various cultural events. It draws up plans annually offering cultural events like touring exhibitions and film shows to individual diplomatic missions. The Department also assists diplomatic missions in organising events, which they sponsor themselves or with local organisers. Besides this, the Department sends Czech films to the diplomatic missions to be shown within film festivals and other events organised abroad. The presentation of the country abroad, relations with Czechs living abroad and dialogue with non-governmental organisations are also important aspects of diplomacy. Falling within the responsibilities of the Department is the agenda of cultural agreements, i.e. bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of culture, education and science.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

According to the official website of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Ministry works, through EU programmes, in a number of countries. Beyond European programmes the Ministry also works with UNESCO and WIPO.

The Department of Regional and Ethnic Culture fulfils the task of the Ministry as a central governmental agency in the sphere of cultural-educational activities and ethnic culture. It is responsible for:

- securing (in cooperation with the Foreign Department) professional activities connected with the foreign contacts of teams and individuals in the area of non-professional art implemented for the purpose of representation abroad on the authority of the Ministry
- ensuring the fulfilment of tasks of the Ministry in the sphere of the culture of ethnic minorities and foreigners.

P o l i c y f o c u s

The primary aim of Czech foreign policy is to promote and protect national interests, including in the wider context a peaceful, unified, stable, safe and prosperous Europe. The Czech Republic pursues its foreign policy within the European integration process and the firm Euro-Atlantic Alliance. The key Czech foreign policy priorities in the 2003 - 2006 period, set by the Government Policy Statement of 5 August 2002, have (in terms of issues relating to culture) the following priorities; developing good neighbourly relations; enhancing regional cooperation; developing relations with other countries and international organisations on bilateral and multilateral bases with special attention to the economic dimension of foreign policy and; efficiently promoting the Czech Republic abroad.

G e o g r a p h i c a l f o c u s

According to statements on the official websites visited, it could be assumed that the Czech Republic pays particular geographical attention to its European Union partners, in particular those of the Visegrád group, neighbouring countries (namely those of the European Free Trade Association) and countries of East and South East Europe including Ukraine, the Russian federation and other CIS countries; the USA and Canada; the Russian Federation and Ukraine (mainly on security); and other CIS countries. It furthermore claims that through EU policy it is able to have relations also with Asia, Africa, Australia and Latin America.

The above statements can be seen reflected in the distribution of cultural institutes. For example, the Czech Republic has cultural institutes stationed within nine EU countries, above all in close neighbouring countries: Germany (Berlin, Dresden and Munich), Austria (Vienna), Slovakia (Bratislava), Poland (Warsaw), the Netherlands (Amsterdam and the Hague), Belgium (Brussels), United Kingdom (London), France (Paris), Sweden (Stockholm). The Czech Republic also has cultural institutes in four non-EU neighbourhood countries: Romania (Bucharest), Bulgaria (Sofia) and the Ukraine (Kiev), and Russia (Moscow).

In North America, cooperation is mainly based on security and economic alliance. However, the Czech Republic does have a cultural institute in the USA (New York).

S e l e c t e d r e a d i n g

Lycka, Z., (2003) Foreign Cultural Policy in Europe. The Case of the Czech Republic, E-Doc Link: http://www.ifa.de/europa-akp/konferenz/download/eu_lycka.pdf
Czech contribution to the conference "Europe-a Union of Culture?" of the German Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen, Berlin, October 2003. Includes abstract.

Ministry of Culture, (2005) Ministry of culture Czech Republic and EU, E-Doc Link: <http://www.mkcr.cz/en/www/article.php?id=366>
The Ministry of Culture of CZ secures the negotiation process of CZ entry into the EU in the area of audio-vision, culture, preservation of monuments and intellectual property.

Ministry of Culture, (2005) Ministry of Culture and UNESCO, E-Doc Link: <http://www.mkcr.cz/en/www/article.php?id=430>
In compliance with Act No. 2/1969 Collection of Laws on Establishment of ministries and other central governmental agencies of the Czech Republic, as amended, the Ministry of Culture is also responsible for assignments resulting from the membership of our country in UNESCO and from international treaties, which this organisation administers. General information about this organisation can be found at this address.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, (2005) Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: mission statement, E-Doc Link: http://www.msmt.cz/_DOMEK/default.asp?ARI=102081&CAI=2889

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the central authority of state administration for overall strategy, educational policy and the preparation of appropriate legislative standards and also executive and operational activities. It establishes upper-secondary and special schools and appoints their school heads. It distributes the financial resources from the state budget and also introduces the general scientific research and development policy. In terms of international cooperation the Ministry is responsible for promoting the Czech culture and language. It does so mainly through supporting summer schools. Summer Schools of Slavonic Studies are organised by public institutions of higher education in the Czech Republic with a view to promoting the teaching of the Czech language, literature, and history and to raising awareness of the Czech culture and history of Czech art abroad. Participants in summer school courses are, for the most part, foreign students and teachers of Czech/Slavonic Studies to foreigners in Slavonic schools.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2005) Statement of policy: culture,

E-Doc Link:

<http://www.mzv.cz/wwwo/mzv/default.asp?ido=8971&idj=2&amb=1&ikony=True&trid=3&prsl=False&pocc1=>

Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Section devoted to its cultural policy.

(2005) Concept of Foreign Policy for the 2003 - 2006 Period,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.mzv.cz/servis/soubor.asp?id=4670> Czech Republic

This document lays out the Czech Republic's foreign policy and priority areas. Although it was written before EU accession it has allowed for policy following accession.

□ F u r t h e r b a c k g r o u n d r e a d i n g

EFAH, Interarts (2003) Study on cultural cooperation in Europe: Annex 1 - National reports – Czech Republic,

E-Doc Link: http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/sources_info/pdf-word/annex1national_reports3.pdf

Background to structures, competencies and institutes in the field of cultural cooperation.