

HOW TO MAKE THE STATE MORE EFFECTIVE?

POLICY PROPOSALS ABOUT DEVELOPING STATE CAPACITIES IN CZECHIA, POLAND, AND SLOVAKIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Weak state performance and low level of state capacity are among the key causes of democratic decline and populism. This is particularly true in the case of the newly established post-communist democracies of the Visegrad group: Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.**
- **State capacity is the ability of the state to implement the designated policy goals in practice. There is a strong causal link between a well-functioning state (that is, good governance) with extensive capacities, and the various indicators of development. Just as the decline of democracy, the containment of populism and authoritarianism is closely linked to the level of state capacity. For a stable democracy and the rule of law to function, it is essential that the state is able to carry out its tasks effectively.**
- **In Czechia, there are three main areas of intervention in terms of improving state performance: state capacity, evidence-based policy making and digitalization.**
- **In 2020, there were approximately 78,000 public servants – 2% of the total Czech workforce. There are three key problems regarding the quality of human resources in the public sector: lack of financial and personal motivation, fragmentation and lack of coordination across ministries and municipalities, and the threat of politicization of the public sphere. and the threat politicization of the public sphere.**
- **To gain sufficient financial capacities, the state needs an efficient tax system. At 34%, the tax-to-GDP ratio in Czechia was on the OECD average, but it was still lower than in most EU countries. The tax composition is heavily reliant on obligatory social security contributions, health, and social insurance, which are the highest of all OECD countries. Contrarily, property taxes are the lowest of all countries. This tax composition places a large burden on low-income households. With 47% of GDP, the governmental expenditures are slightly below the EU27 average of 52%, while social security expenditures are significantly below the average.**
- **Government decisions in Czechia can appear ad-hoc or politically motivated and can be difficult to defend in front of the public. Lack of analytical and legal skills can also lead to formal deficiencies in proposed legislation. The two main problems regarding digitalization of the Czech state are the lack of integration of digital state services, and the inefficiency of IT procurements.**
- **In Poland, two key areas for urgent intervention are the rule of law and the quality of the civil service.**



- For almost two decades Poland was considered one of the most successful cases of a transformation from a communist regime to a liberal democracy. However, since 2015, changes in the judicial system and the public service have been criticized by the public and various international institutions.
- Over the last decade, Poland has performed well in terms of professionalization of the civil service. However, in recent years, the autonomy and impartiality of the bureaucracy has been weakened by the amendment of the Civil Service Act.
- In Slovakia, the three key problems are: the extreme fragmentation of the public administration system, EU funding dependency, aging bureaucracy, and the unclear relationship between politics and meritocracy, i. e. the government and the National Implementation and Coordination Authority.
- In Czechia, a stronger public service office must be created! Rather than promising to fire a certain number of government officials in election campaigns, review state agendas and see if there are indeed too many of them – or if, to the contrary, they are lacking at some positions! The prestige of the public sector (both moral and financial) must be raised!
- The extremely fragmented Czech municipality system must be centralized and rationalized!
- Strengthen the revenue side of the Czech state budget! Reform the tax mix in order to better target excess money lying in banks, private investments, and properties!
- While improving internet connectivity and digital skills of the Czech citizens, the possibility of reaching the government through offline routes must be ensured! Build autonomous IT infrastructures for the Czech state!
- In Poland, the recommendations of the EU regarding judicial reform must be implemented! A platform between government officials and human rights organizations must be created!
- Strengthen the legal guaranties of the autonomy of the civil service! The standard of not being a member of a political party for at least 5 years should return! Create a transparent recruitment process with a two-stage candidate selection process! Clearly define the career path of civil service!
- In Slovakia, implement a reform of the regional administration! After reducing the complexity of the system, create incentives for municipalization!



- **Create state capacity to properly handle EU funding: reform the public procurement system and decentralize decision-making! EU funding must be diverted towards meaningful development, instead of maintaining state services!**
- **Create a Slovakian inter ministry arbitrage organ! Strengthen state service education! The newly established ministerial analytical institutes have to be stabilized and strengthened, including their financing, intellectual independence, and position within the legislative system!**

1. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the **democratic backsliding and the rise of populism and authoritarian tendencies in the former Socialist East European Countries**. Many have tried to provide explanation for this trend from the angles of politics, society, economics, or constitutional law. At the same time, **relatively less attention has been devoted to one of the main structural reasons behind the phenomenon: weak state performance and declining popular trust in the state**. This shortcoming not only makes it difficult to understand the trends in question, but also makes it impossible to find appropriate solutions.

Ideological debates usually revolve around such issues as the “ideal” size of the state (whether we need a “small” or a “large” state) and whether the state is a “bad manager”. However, the very way in which these questions define the underlying issue is misleading. Empirical research has revealed that successful countries include nations with smaller and larger state apparatuses as well. **The decisive factor is state capacity – in other words, the ability of the state to implement the designated policy goals in practice**. Can the state operate well-functioning healthcare, education, social welfare, or innovation support system? Or, to refer to the experiences of the recent past, can it act swiftly and decisively amidst a public health crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic? It is no coincidence that state capacity has emerged as one of the central concepts in the social science and public literature of the past two decades. There is considerable empirical research demonstrating the **strong causal link between a well-functioning state (that is, good governance) with extensive capacities, and the various indicators of development, such as GDP per capita, the quality of the business environment or life expectancy at birth**.

Building state capacity in the former socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe was a particularly difficult challenge after the regime change in 1989. The rapid dismantling of state socialism and the establishment of a new, democratic constitutional order went hand in hand with the transformation of the economic framework and the urgent integration into Western economic and political institutions. Following the break-up of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, these two countries faced the additional challenge of state-building itself, but the task of establishing a modern state institutions and administration under the rule of law was accompanied by a number of dilemmas and social conflicts in Poland and Hungary as well. **The economic competitiveness of these countries, the social costs of economic transformation and especially the stability of the constitutional order have all been directly affected by the quality of the newly established democratic states**. Reservations about liberal democracy and the susceptibility to populism and authoritarianism has been closely intertwined with the **poor performance of the public administration**, the deteriorating public education and healthcare services, and the general dissatisfaction with the basic lack of public safety in large swathes of the country.

Therefore, just as the decline of democracy, the containment of populism and authoritarianism is closely linked to the level of state capacity. For a stable democracy and the rule of law to function, it is essential that the state is able to carry out its tasks effectively. The Equilibrium Institute has therefore previously developed a specific policy proposal on strengthening state capacity in Hungary. Below **the other three V4 countries will be addressed: the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia.** In the first part, we analyse of the most pressing challenges and the specific areas for intervention in the three selected Visegrad countries. In the second part, we present policy recommendations for improving state capacity and public services in each country.

2. COUNTRY REPORTS

| 2.1. Czechia

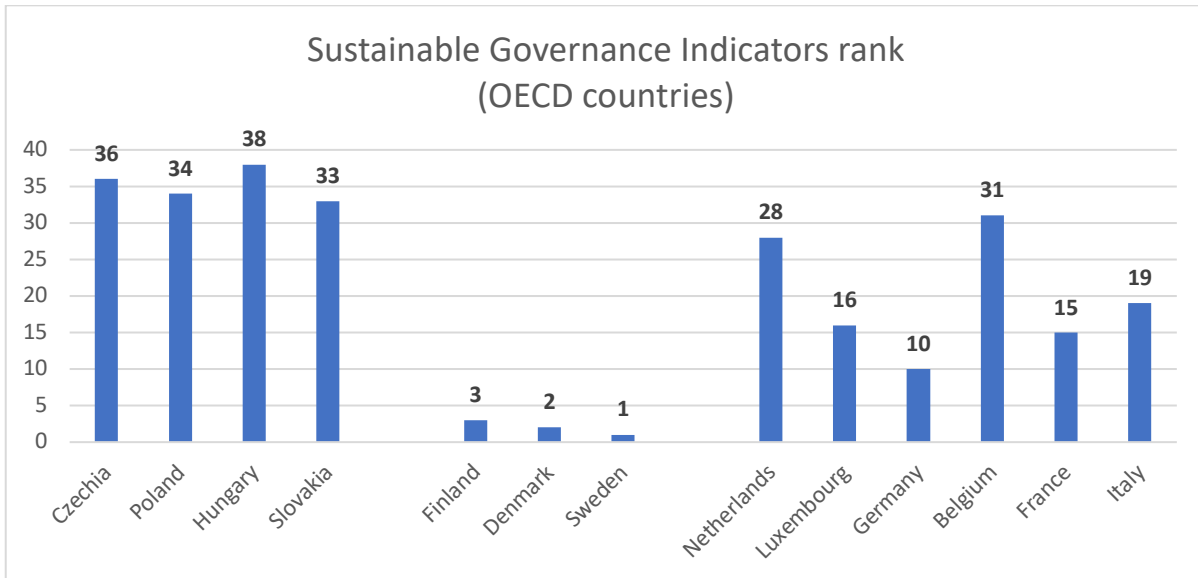
| (KLÁRA VOTAVOVÁ – RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE EUROPEUM INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY)

The 2020-2021 Covid-19 crisis highlighted **significant deficiencies in the functioning of the Czech public service**. Lack of staff and equipment in public health offices and the state's inability to incorporate expert input and data into its strategies and legislation were among the most pressing problems. As a consequence, the number per capita of COVID victims in Czechia was among the highest in the world.¹

There is a **real risk that the Czech state will also fail to navigate challenges that are yet to come, be it the ongoing costs of living crisis in the short and the impacts of climate change in the longer term**. The state will need to provide a functioning safety net for misplaced workers, facilitate the transformation of local energy market and industry, and absorb shocks caused by more volatile weather conditions. In addition, **there is still significant room for improvement in the areas of public service digitization and modernization**. If the public sector fails to provide its services adequately, extremism, mostly in the form of nationalist populism, threatens to further rise in the Czech Republic.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung Sustainable Governance Indicators rank Czechia low on executive capacity, highlighting that strategic foresight, cooperation between ministries and regulatory impact assessment are not sufficient.

¹ Petra Guasti et al., 'Czechia Report: Sustainable Governance in the Context off the COVID-19 Crisis', Sustainable Governance Indicators (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2021)



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022

According to a comprehensive public pool from 2021, 82% of Czechs think that the public sector is bureaucratic, 70% that it is corrupted and 83% that it is slow. Vast majority of both citizens and public sector workers think that the administration should be reformed. They highlight digitalization as the most important task, followed by fastening bureaucratic processes and lowering the number of public servants.

There are three main problematic areas concerning state performance:

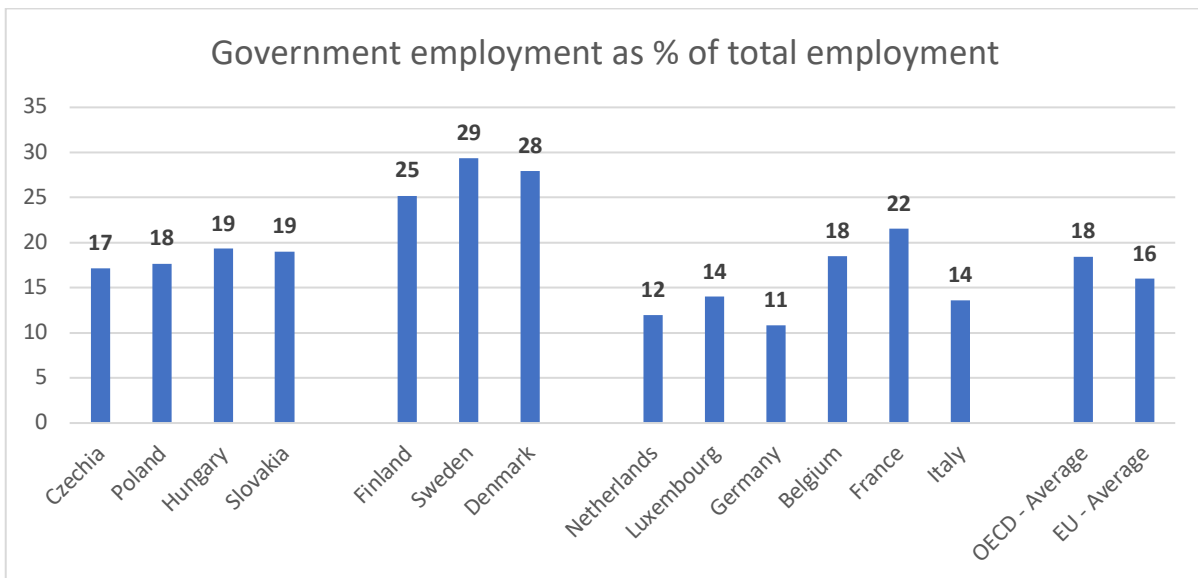
- State capacity and efficiency
- Evidence-based policy making
- Digitalization

State capacity and efficiency

This paper looks both into **human** and **financial capacities** of the state.

Human capacities

As highlighted, citizens think that there are too many public servants in the Czech Republic and that their number should be lowered. However, while the allegedly excessive number of government employees features prominently in the Czech public discourse, their share in total employment does not stand out from the EU average – it is lower than in the Nordic states and other V4 states, and higher than in most states of the EU founders.²



Source: OECD, 'Government at a Glance - Yearly Updates: Regulatory Governance', OECD, 2023, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=85336#>

² Eurostat, 'The European Economy since the Start of the Millennium - Share of Government Employment Nearly Stable', Eurostat, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/digpub/european_economy/bloc-4d.html?lang=en.

At the same time, despite these groups being frequently interchanged, only 17% of employees paid by the government are actually public servants who work at ministries and other state institutions. **In 2020, there were approximately 78,000 public servants – only 2% of the total Czech workforce.**³ This indicates that frequent concerns about the quantity of public servants actually overshadow another concern: their quality, allocation, and motivation. Arguably, **the biggest space for reducing the number of public servants is at the municipal level.** At over 6200, Czechia has the largest number of municipalities per capita in the EU. This means that agendas are often duplicated by actors from multiple municipalities, which also complicates coordination and economies of scale.⁴ Fragmentation and lack of coordination on the horizontal level – between ministries and other state institutions – is another problem hampering efficiency of the Czech public service.⁵

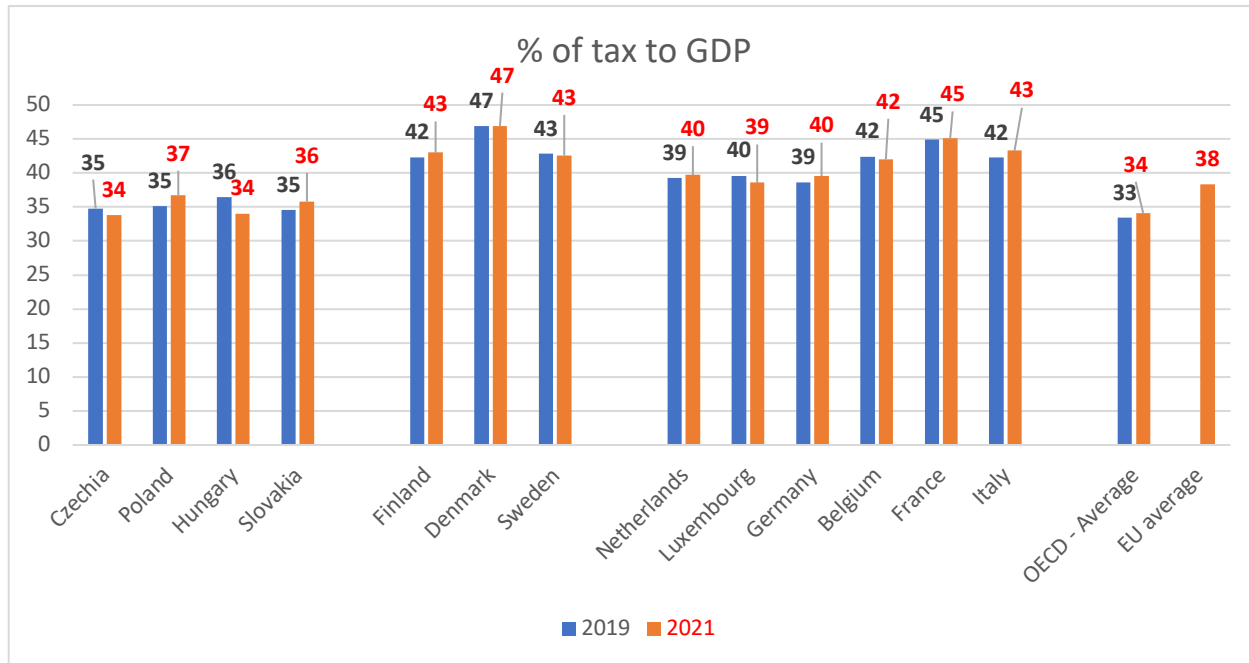
Zooming in on motivation, **careers in public service are not considered attractive in Czechia** and even employees in public service think that the best people choose not to work there.⁶ **One of the key reasons may be the level of salaries,** which is not able to motivate professionals to work for the public sector. Between 2018 and 2022, the rise in public sector salaries did not reflect the rise in salaries in the entire economy.⁷ Another reason for the lack of motivation to work in public service is that **people don't see it as a place for their personal self-realization.**⁸ Tight hierarchization, lack of coordination between resorts, internal bureaucracy but also insufficient incentives to try new things, even if one may fail, are among the key reasons young people don't want to join the public service – or decide to leave it soon into their career.⁹ What is more, **the state is unable to provide career advancement to motivated professionals,** as there is a limited number of more prestigious positions, such as heads of unit and foreign postings.

In response to some of these concerns, **the current government proposed to renew the 2014 Public Service Act in 2022, which is in force since the beginning of 2023.** This novelization simplifies hiring conditions, in order to attract experienced professionals to leadership positions in the public service. However, **it does not sufficiently prevent politicization of the public sphere.** Notably, ministers are newly able to bring in an unlimited number of political deputy ministers, creating a de-facto parallel structure to expert officers. Department directors newly have to compete for their position every five years. **A more profound reform, which would be based on extensive expert consultations and strike the right balance between depoliticization and efficiency still awaits.**¹⁰ To achieve such a balance, the key is to **establish a strong public service office independent from politicians,** which would be able to perform long term and consistent changes in public service operation.¹¹

Financial capacities

The state also needs **sufficient financial capacities to perform its main services** – be it for social security, public investments or for financing public education and healthcare. To gain these capacities, the state needs an efficient tax system.

At 34% in 2021, the tax-to-GDP ratio in Czechia was on the OECD average. However, it was lower than in most EU countries. It is notable that, while the tax-to-GDP ratio rose in most OECD countries between 2019 and 2021, as states strived to gain resources to stimulate post-pandemic investment and green innovation, the tax-to-GDP ratio lowered in Czechia.¹²



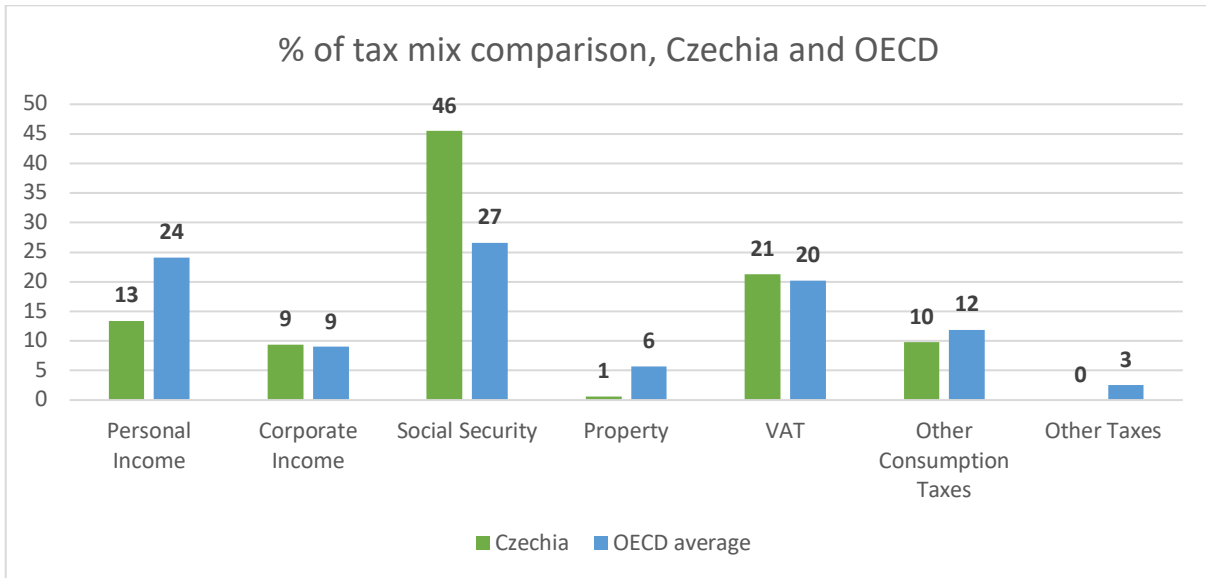
Source: OECD, 'Revenue Statistics - OECD Countries: Comparative Tables'

The Czech tax composition is heavily reliant on obligatory social security contributions, health and social insurance, which are the highest of all OECD countries. Contrarily, property taxes are the lowest of all countries. **This tax composition places a large burden on low-income households**, which have to pay social security contributions and VAT at the same level as richer ones.¹³ It also completely disregards the large gap in wealth distribution in the Czech Republic, which is a far more pressing issue than income inequality in the country.¹⁴

¹² OECD, 'Revenue Statistics - OECD Countries: Comparative Tables', OECD, 2023, <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=REV#>, OECD, 'Tax Revenues Rebounded as Economies Recovered from the COVID-19 Pandemic, According to New OECD Data - OECD', OECD, 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/tax-revenues-rebounded-as-economies-recovered-from-the-covid-19-pandemic-according-to-new-oecd-data.htm>.

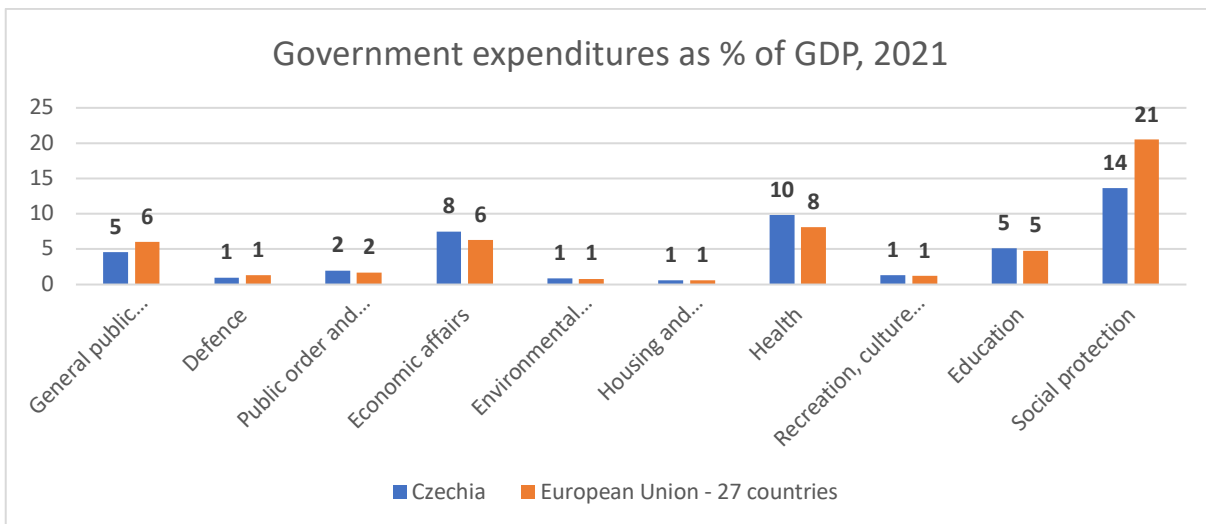
¹³ European Commission, '2022 Country Report - Czechia'.

¹⁴ Jakub Komárek, 'Majetková nerovnost v ČR je výrazně vyšší než příjmová, daně z majetku však patří k nejnižším.', PAQ Research, 23 September 2021, <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/majetkova-nerovnost>.



Source: OECD, 'Revenue Statistics - OECD Countries: Comparative Tables'

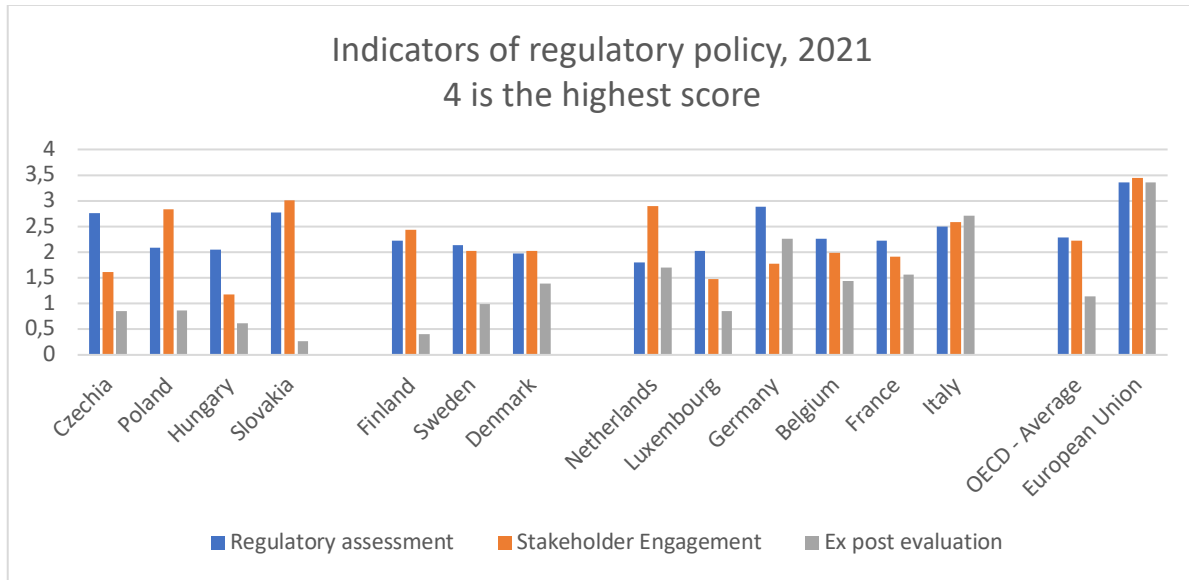
At 47% of GDP, Czech governmental expenditures are slightly below the EU27 average of 52%. Expenditures on health and education are similar to or even higher in Czechia than the EU average. Contrarily, **social security expenditures are significantly below the average** – despite the fact that the alleged widespread misuse of social benefits is a common trope in the Czech public debate



Source: Eurostat

Evidence-based policymaking

OECD indicators for regulatory policy and governance show that **the biggest shortcomings in evidence-based policy making in Czechia lie in stakeholder engagement and ex-post evaluation of legislation.**



Source: OECD¹⁵

Insufficient use of data was a large problem during the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁶ and remains so even outside of it. In many cases, decisions – e.g. the abolition of electronic evidence of sales – are not based on data, but rather on political preferences and symbols.¹⁷ Social science is underfunded and has little respect in the Czech society. Sociologists, political scientists or media experts are often not members of government advisory bodies, which then struggle with the assessment of social impact, or with crafting the right communication strategies.¹⁸ Another problem is **the lack of inclusivity**. Academics, NGOs, trade unions and business associations are often heard out only formally, with their input not being adequately reflected in governmental strategies, policy-making and legislation.¹⁹

¹⁵ 'Government at a Glance - Yearly Updates: Regulatory Governance'

¹⁶ Guasti et al., 'Czechia Report: Sustainable Governance in the Context off the COVID-19 Crisis'; Štěpán Jurajda, 'The Importance of Data in Evidence Based Policymaking', 2023.

¹⁷ Stanislav Biler, 'EET končí, výsledky neznáme, zbyl jen pocit marnosti', *A2larm*, 5 December 2022, sec. Česko, <https://a2larm.cz/2022/12/eet-konci-vysledky-nezname-zbyl-jen-pocit-marnosti/>.

¹⁸ Jurajda, 'The Importance of Data in Evidence Based Policymaking'.

¹⁹ Guasti et al., 'Czechia Report: Sustainable Governance in the Context off the COVID-19 Crisis'.

There is a **standardized method through which regulatory impact assessment (RIA) of new laws occurs in Czechia. However, RIA is often conducted as a mere formality, not properly engaging with data, nor covering all proposed legislation.** Horizontal coordination between ministries is also insufficient: rather than employing its own analytical team, the Office of Government serves as a mere coordinator of policy lines developed by individual ministries. This makes the government unable to work efficiently on larger, intersectional topics (such as the European Green Deal legislation). What is more, analytical teams in ministries are also understaffed. Medium and longer-term policy strategy frameworks exist, but they are not consistently applied in ministries.²⁰ Ex-post evaluation in Czechia is conducted by individual ministry departments. Since 2018, discussions on a more systematic approach through a unified methodology are under the way, but with no concrete results so far.

Taken together, the lack of evidence-based policymaking means that government decisions can appear ad-hoc or politically motivated and can be difficult to defend in front of the public. Lack of analytical and legal skills can also lead to formal deficiencies in proposed legislation.

Digitalization

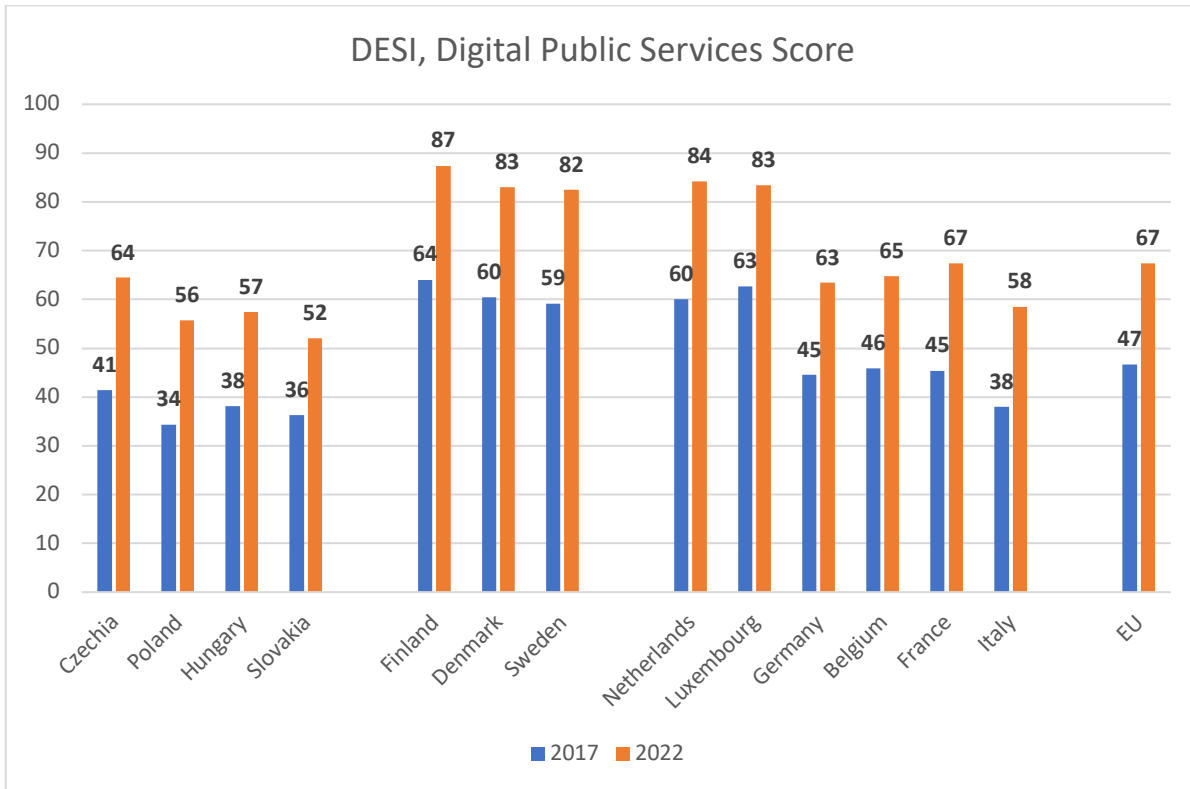
Public opinion polls show that **lack of digitalization and overall slowness are among the key reproaches of Czechs vis-à-vis the public sector.**²¹

The European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) shows that **Czechia is only slightly below the EU average in the enrolment of public digital services to its citizens.** The best ranked V4 country, Czechia is on par with some Western European countries such as Germany. What is more, it has made an above-average progress since 2017.²²

²⁰ Michal Šalomoun, 'Chceme legislativu podloženou tvrdými daty a dobrými analýzami, řekl ministr Šalomoun na konferenci o využití dat a metodik ve státní správě', vol. 2023, 2023, http://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/pri-uradu-vlady/michal_salomoun/aktualne/chceme-legislativu-podlozenou-tvrdymi-daty-a-dobrymi-analyzami--rekl-ministr-salomoun-na-konferenci-o-vyuziti-dat-a-metodik-ve-statni-sprave-203695/.

²¹ NMS Market Research and The Aspen Institute Central Europe, 'Vnímání Státní Správy: Závěrečná Zpráva'.

²² European Commission, 'DESI by Components — Digital Scoreboard - Data & Indicators', European Commission, 2023, https://digital-agenda-data.eu/charts/desi-components#chart={%22indicator%22:%22desi_dps%22,%22breakdown-group%22:%22desi_dps%22,%22unit-measure%22:%22pc_desi_dps%22,%22time-period%22:%222017%22}.



Source: European Commission

According to the DESI ranking, **Czechia has an above-average number of e-government users**. It also progresses fast in improving public data transparency.²³ In the availability of public digital services provided to citizens and governments, Czechia ranks the average. It is nevertheless still lagging in integrating once provided information across multiple institutions and forms (the “once only principle”). This confirms **the larger problem of decentralization and fragmentation of the Czech public sector**.²⁴ Another long-term problem is **inefficient IT procurement**, which can cause vendor-lock-ins of Czech ministries.²⁵ The inability to develop own platforms or to procure them efficiently also creates dependence of the public sector on US-based digital platforms such as Microsoft. This can also be a concern from a privacy standpoint: state-collected data are sent to the US, which has much laxer data privacy legislation than the EU.²⁶

²³ European Commission, ‘Open Data Maturity Report 2022’ (European Commission, 2022).

²⁴ European Commission, ‘DESI by Components — Digital Scoreboard - Data & Indicators’.

Digitalization currently features high on the government agenda, which created a dedicated minister post for digitalization. **In April 2023, a new body responsible for digitalization of the public services, called the Digital Information Agency (DIA), started its operation.** The agency should lead projects that will enable the citizens to, inter alia, carry their IDs in their phones, apply for social security benefits online and integrate forms under one umbrella.²⁷ The government also aims to adjust job contents and salaries in order to attract IT professionals into the public service. A special law from 2020 guarantees the citizens' a catalogue of services they will have a right to access online by 2025.²⁸

²⁵ European Commission, 'Digital Economy and Society Index 2022: Thematic Chapters' (European Commission, 2022).

²⁶ Síť k ochraně demokracie, 'Experti na politická a občanská práva: Plán vlády na boj s dezinformacemi hrozí omezením svobody slova | OCHRANADEMOKRACIE.CZ', www.ochranademokracie.cz, 2023, <https://www.ochranademokracie.cz/aktuality/experti-na-politicka-a-obcanska-prava-plan-vlady-na-boj-s-dezinformacemi-hrozi-omezenim-svobody-slova>.

²⁷ Digitální Česko, 'DIA | Digitální Česko', Digitální Česko, 2023, <https://digitalnicesko.gov.cz/dia/>.

²⁸ European Commission, 'Digital Economy and Society Index 2022 - Czechia' (European Commission, 2022).

| 2.2. Poland

(MACIEJ SYCHOWIEC – WISEEUROPA)

As for state capacity and effectiveness, two key areas for urgent structural intervention can be identified in Poland:

- Rule of law
- The quality of the civil service

Rule of law

For almost two decades Poland was considered one of the most successful cases of a transformation from a communist regime to a democracy. However, **since 2015, Polish authorities introduced some changes to the judicial system that has received a negative feedback from the public opinion and various international institutions.** Among them was merging the positions of the Public Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice and thus making the prosecution offices at each organizational level parts of a hierarchical system headed by the Minister of Justice. As a result, the Minister of Justice can interfere with any investigation conducted by an individual prosecutor, may order a new investigation, terminate or modify their scope and targets.

Another alarming change was related to **the National Council of the Judiciary (NCJ)**, the body that is mandated to protect the independence of courts and judges. Moreover, the 2018 bill shifted the election of the Council's members from their peers to the parliamentary majority. Together with the disciplinary body at the Supreme Court, the changes of the NCJ have received a significant negative response from various EU institutions, including the European Union Court of Justice.

The backsliding of checks and balances has a profound impact on various aspects of the economy, society, and political life. The rule of law and per capita GDP exhibit a positive connection,²⁹ further showing that the rule of law reduces economic inequality. In countries with a high level of development, the rule of law is associated with higher tax revenues.³⁰ Moreover, checks and balances mechanisms allow for the oversize of political activities and thus contribute to preventing the misuse of public resources. As a result, confidence in public institutions and their stability attracts more investments, improving economic growth.³¹ Confidence in public institutions also improves the general level of social trust,³² and thus stimulate civic life and various forms of organizations that voice different interests and thus stimulate the further social capital. Finally, the low perception of good governance is associated with a higher support of populist or nationalist parties.³³

The quality of the civil service

A strong and competent civil service is a foundation of democracy. The significance of this issue is highlighted by, among others, the European Commission: “The establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions require a public administration that complies with the rule of law, is neutral and is loyal to the democratic institutions and is respectful of the people it serves”.³⁴ Over the last decade, **Poland has performed very well in terms of professionalization of the civil service.** Between 2012 and 2015, the index of the bureaucratic professionalism has increased in Poland relative to 89 out of the 94 countries.³⁵ As a result, the country has exceeded the average performance of the OECD countries.

²⁹ Bhagat, S. 2020. “Economic Growth, Income Inequality, and the Rule of Law.” *Harvard Business Law Review* 2020: 1–12.

³⁰ Günel, T., & I. Didinmez. 2022. “Relationship between rule of law and tax revenues: dynamic panel data analysis”. *Public Sector Economics*, 46(3), 403–419.

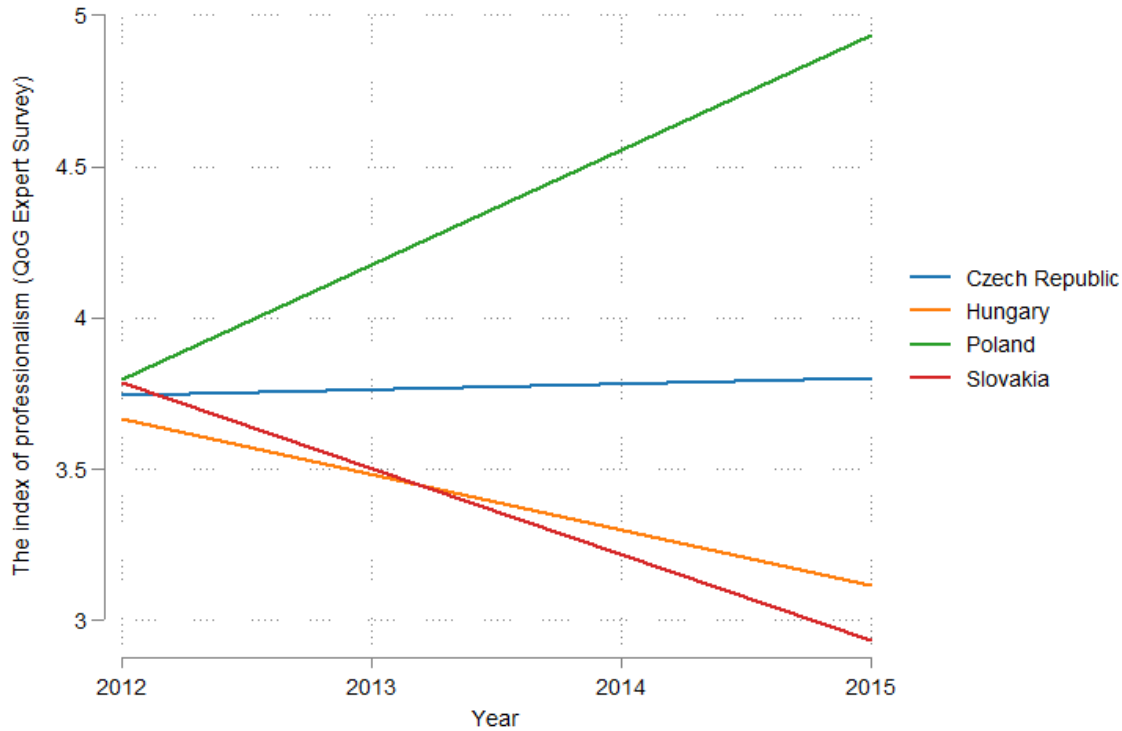
³¹ Jensen, N. 2008. “Political Risk, Democratic Institutions, and Foreign Direct Investment”. *The Journal of Politics*, 70(4): 1040-1052.

³² Rothstein, B. & J. Teorell. 2008. “What Is Quality of Government? A Theory of Impartial Government Institutions”. *Governance*, 21: 165-190.

³³ Agerbeg, M. 2017. “Failed expectations: Quality of government and support for populist parties in Europe”. *European Journal of Political Research*, 56: 578-600.

³⁴ Recommendation No. R (2000) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the status of public officials in Europe (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 24 February 2000 at the 699th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=340693&Site=CM>.

³⁵ Dahlström et al. 2015. The index part of the Quality of Government Expert Survey II (the University of Gothenburg) that provides assessment of the organizational design of public bureaucracies and bureaucratic behavior across countries. The index of professionalism (Professional Public Administration) measures to what extent the public administration is professional rather than politicized. Higher values indicate a more professionalized public administration. (Dahlström, C., J. Teorell, S. Dahlberg, F. Hartmann, A. Lindberg, & M. Nistotskaya. 2015. “The QoG Expert Survey Dataset II”. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, The Quality of Government Institute)



Source: QoG Survey I & II, the University of Gothenburg)

Between 2012 and 2015, **Poland has experienced the biggest improvement in terms of professionalisation of the bureaucracy among Visegrad countries.** In contrast, the index of both Hungary and Slovakia has dropped during this period. These results are based on two waves of the survey. In 2020, the third wave took place. However, there was a change of the construction of the index and, thus, it is difficult to compare it with two previous wave. Regardless of the change of the methodology, Poland has received the lowest score of the index (-2.3) in comparison to other V4 countries.

One reason behind it have been **the amendments to the Civil Service Act introduced in 2015.** While Polish Constitution states that "a corps of civil servants shall operate the organs of government administration in order to ensure a professional, diligent, impartial and politically neutral discharge of the State's obligations" (art. 153), the introduced changes did not follow this requirement. They included **a removal of the open and competitive recruitment process for higher posts in civil service, a removal of all conditions of dismissal, and a removal of the requirement of having a specific level of relevant experience.**

The changes also concern the Chief of the Civil Service and his/her deputy, including the fact that **candidates for this position no longer have to be civil servants and can be members of political parties during the recruitment process.** As a result, the lowering of the standards of the recruitment process for higher civil services has created the possibility for the politicization of this group of public officials which is not in pair with national and international standards. This was confirmed by a report prepared by the Civil Development Forum Foundation, which analyzed all the staff changes resulting from the legal provisions adopted by the new government. By the end of 2017, a total of 37 “staffing” laws were adopted, which allowed for the replacement of staff most often by way of: (1) interrupting the term of office of a single or multi-person body, (2) transferring appointments from the local level to the central level, (3) liquidation of a multi-person body or (4) statutory termination of employment contracts.³⁶

The rapid changes and the unpredictability of employment caused 2016-2017 the number of candidates for civil service nominations to drop by over 30% compared with 2013-2015.³⁷

The autonomy of the bureaucracy has a fundamental impact on well-performing governance, in particular regarding efficient public good provision. The existing evidence shows that autonomous and impartial civil service is achieved through **the separation of careers between bureaucrats and political officials through a meritocratic recruitment system rather than through appointments.**³⁸ When politicians appoint public servants, the latter have no interest in reporting their superiors' malfeasances to the opposition parties, the media, or the relevant judicial authorities. Thus, it is in the interest of politically dependent civil servants to turn a blind eye or to take part in the abuse of public office for private gain.

A bureaucracy can be politically autonomous and, at the same time, free from special privileges for civil servants, such as life tenure, internal promotions (i.e. preventing lateral entries), and special employment laws in comparison to those prevailing in the private sector. This “**managerial administration**” (ibid.) operates in countries with the highest quality of government in the world, such as the Skandinavian countries, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition, in the public sector, the career ladder should be determined by their professional colleagues rather than being tied to economic rewards or be based on political will. **The prospect of attractive career opportunities is one of the key factors in recruiting high-quality applicants to the public sector.** Moreover, the performance of civil service is not only related to the day-to-day contact with beneficiaries of their duties and the high level of social trust. As a result of the citizens' everyday interactions with bureaucratic officials, an experiential foundation for their perceptions of various state institutions is shaped.³⁹

| 2.3. Slovakia

| (*ÁBEL RAVASZ – INŠTITÚT MATEJA BELA/BÉL MÁTYÁS INTÉZET*)

Slovakia's current public service regime is a hybrid system, which comes closest to the one in the Czech Republic, but contains vestiges from other, historically influential systems, too. Many of the state and local government institutions are completely analogous to the current Czech governance institutions, others however, show various peculiarities. A good example would be land use law, in which Slovakia follows the old Hungarian system (every child inherits), whereas Czechia uses the Austrian system (one child inherits).

The country's internal administration structure is also in a state of permanent flux. The capital, Bratislava, is located in the southwestern corner of Slovakia, and in a quite particular fashion, directly borders both Austria and Hungary. Owing to both this, and the elongated shape of the country itself, the key administrative issue has always been west-east connectivity.

Slovakia has initially inherited the old Hungarian road system, radially reaching out from its Budapest center and connecting the old state's peripheries to it. It has also inherited the Czechoslovak focus on connecting Bratislava to Praha (and Brno) to the north. Neither of these includes the type of west-east connections that the current Slovak state needs. Rugged terrain and state incompetence mean that Slovakia has not been able to connect Bratislava with the second largest city (and informal capital of the east), Košice.

The state's administrative divisions are widely criticized and in general believed to be temporary. During the Czechoslovak era, the country was usually divided according to the above-mentioned west-east logic into western, central and eastern regions. **After 1994, an administrative reform broke this structure up into eight self-governing regions consisting of 79 districts.** The new regions do not fully respect the traditional regional identities of the constituents, for example the Spiš (Zips) region, which has a very strong narrative of tradition and regional identity, is divided between two administrative regions and five districts. Neither do the current regions well represent the economic structures of the country (such as agglomeration areas) or its ethnic diversity (minorities are divided between the regions and districts). **An administrative reform has been in the making for decades,** the last effort being tabled by the outgoing government in 2023.

Slovakia is a rather small country with 49 thousand km² and a little less than 5.5 million inhabitants. Despite this, **it operates a complex system of layers, including regions, districts, municipalities and in the case of Bratislava and Košice, also sub-municipalities.** Most of these layers are directly elected via public vote, but districts are not (their leadership and staff are nominated by the central government). **The division of competences between them are hard to understand or even justify and produce various anomalies.** As an example, a road crossing in Bratislava can have up to four different levels of government owning various segments of it, making even trivial changes or repairs difficult.

For the regional level, in specific, it is almost impossible to produce a coherent agenda. Regions operate some of the schools (but not all), some of the hospitals (but not all), some of the social services, and so on. Voters, who in this case elect the self-government directly, find it hard to assess the quality of the regional government's work or even identify with the current regions.

On the level of districts, long-standing local grievances with regards to the division of districts have been strengthened by the state itself creating parallel structures to them. As the current district system does not map the realities on the ground well, various state institutions have created their own parallel territorial divisions, called areas (*obvod*), introducing further complexity to the system. These areas are often similar in size to districts (*okres*), but can combine chunks of different districts or divide an existing district into two.

Slovakia is also among the most fragmented countries among the EU or even OECD members. Municipalization has never happened, even partially, leaving the country of 5.5 million inhabitants with 2933 self-governing municipalities. Two thirds of them have less than 1000 inhabitants, and 200 have a population of less than 100. With such small municipalities, it is impossible to effectively govern, provide public services or execute strategic regional development.

The development of state capacity in the area of regional development is further hindered by two factors. The first is **overbureaucratization.** Slovakia features prohibitive public procurement laws that make the process of executing developmental projects clumsy and ineffective. Project administration is overburdened with administrative tasks and unable to push out development resources as fast as it would be needed. This lack of proper capacity can be very well mapped in Slovakia's border regions, where the pace of development on the Slovak side vastly lags when compared to its neighbors.

The second factor is **EU funding dependency**, a serious ailment that stems from the misuse of EU funds to finance “pilot projects” that are, in reality, more akin to public services. This is endemic in the case of poverty reduction, where key services such as social field work or school assistants have been run from EU funding for over a decade now, but it is also present in various other fields like care for the elders, highway construction and the like. The idea of **bringing in EU funds to finance the regular running of the state** is not just a problem in terms of misleading the EU – these financial instruments are not designed to provide a seamless stream of revenues, creating gap years, defunding problems and supply-driven policymaking. By misconstruing its own designs for EU funding, Slovakia sets itself up for practical failure via having to use tools designed to support pilot projects for the sustainment of social services.

In many cases, funds cannot be effectively distributed because of the **unclear boundaries between the competence of state and municipality, state and region, or between various segments of the state**. As of currently, most of these conflicts remain frozen barring a direct intervention of the government itself or a successful court case, but these can take years if not decades. Frozen issues lead to great frustration and distrust of the state by its own citizens.

When it comes to the central organizations of the state, **the current international challenges have exacerbated the existing problems with maintaining an effective and motivated bureaucracy**. The central government has mostly been operating with a bureaucratic cadre with a strong continuity from the 1990s. **Ministries have, however, been reporting an aging of their staff and a difficulty in finding proper replacements for outgoing colleagues**. The governance period 2020-2023, framed by the government as an era of rapture with how the state has usually operated, has hastened this process. External shocks such as the COVID pandemic, coupled with a new style of governance (including the gist of legislation shifting from strategic planning by the ministries towards ad hoc decisions by the parliament) has produced an exodus from central state service. Replacements are difficult to come by, as state service is widely seen as non-competitive with the private sector in terms of wages and career paths.

There is also not an easily accessible cadre of potential nominees into bureaucratic positions. **Slovakia does not have a well-established public service university; existing institutions provide a small minority of all bureaucratic cadres**. They are, rather, recruited primarily from other walks of life, come in with little previous training and fluctuate in and out of state service.

An undergoing positive change in this sphere is **the establishment of the so-called analytical institutes**. Financed from EU project funding and embedded in all ministries, these analytical centers are meant to support the work of the ministries themselves through value-for-money type of analyses, cost revisions and decision preparation. As a secondary goal, they can also work to draw young, analytical types into government service. While widely hailed as a positive influence on the running of the state, the analytical institutes have nevertheless run into multiple conflicts with the ministries themselves in terms of competency and planning.

The analytical institutes provide an alternative to the regular run of the state, which makes them part of the ongoing conflict with regards to the technocratic influence on governance. Again, this is an issue that has become more pronounced over the last years with the advent of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). As part of the RRP, Slovakia pledged to attain a number of policy-related benchmarks over the course of the plan, and a new organ, the **National Implementation and Coordination Authority (NICA)** has been established. NICA interfaces directly with the ministries to oversee the implementation of the RRP, a structure that has caused some discomfort with regards to political decision-making.

The above-described **problems with state capacity have played a role in the gradual cooling of the Slovak economy and development.** GDP growth, real GDP per capita and living standards have all gradually stalled over the last years, and the need to execute the overarching reform of large state subsystems such as education, health-care, justice and the pension system, looms large. Such reform efforts can only be effectively undertaken with the support of a capable and strong state sector, something which now is sorely missing.

3. POLICY PROPOSALS ABOUT DEVELOPING STATE CAPACITIES IN CZECHIA, POLAND, AND SLOVAKIA

| 3.1 Czechia

3.1.1. Increasing state effectiveness

Create a stronger public service office and a project team!

The public service office currently operating under the Ministry of Interior lacks competencies and capacities needed to reform the service to be both efficient and depoliticized. Therefore, **there is a need for a stronger office with sufficient powers to order reforms at individual ministries, without falling victim to political preferences of individual political parties.** The office should have an explicit mandate to reform the public service by the Prime Minister and be in direct contact with him. The tasks defined in the office should be carried out consistently and independently by a specialized project team.

Distribute, track, and assess the completion of tasks better!

Streamline and divide longer-term strategies into manageable sub-tasks for individual ministries and track how these tasks are carried out! Based on this, the assessment of individual officers, but also whole ministries should be made. In order to achieve this, **managerial capacities of officers in leading positions should be systematically increased.**

Don't reduce the discussion on public service merely to the number of public servants!

Claims that there are too many public sector employees are an evergreen in the Czech political discussion. However, the number of government employees in Czechia is not higher than in other EU states.

Rather than promising to fire a certain number of government officials in election campaigns, **review state agendas and see if there are indeed too many of them – or if, to the contrary, they are lacking at some positions.** Simply reducing the number of positions without prior consideration can further hamper the conduct of public services.

Raise the prestige of the public sector – both moral and financial!

Working for the public sector is not a prestigious career option in Czechia. The negative image of public service dissuades people, especially graduates, to join the ranks of the administration. **Politicians should instead finally acknowledge that the state needs public officials to devise quality strategies and laws**, make sure the existing rules are not broken, participate in international negotiations, and efficiently help citizens in need.

The second reason for the lack of prestige is financial. Especially in Prague where most institutions are located, graduates have a large selection of jobs that are much better paid than government positions. This is especially true in the case of highly demanded professions, such as lawyers and workers in IT. With the rising housing prices, it is becoming increasingly challenging for people to even afford working for the public service. **Better monetary remuneration of at least some positions to concur the private sector could remedy this.** The development of salaries in the public sector should also consider both the development of salaries in the entire economy and the ongoing double-digit inflation.

Provide better HR services and more flexibility to the workers!

Focusing on projects and work conducted, rather than counting hours spent at the workplace, could make work for the public sector more appealing. Another important task is the **debureaucratization of the public sector inner operations**: unnecessary papers and forms burden not only citizens, but also public service workers.

Hierarchization, whereby low ranked workers don't have responsibilities for anything and cannot reach higher echelons of the structure is another problem. **Workers should be given venues through which they can speak with their superiors, provide their own ideas and be listened to.** Contrarily to the private sector, systematic education, coaching, talking with workers about their needs and career ambitions are still largely lacking in the state institutions. Continued work with public service workers is needed, so that young professionals can grow and do not leave the public service after a couple of years.

Higher centralization of Czech municipalities!

Czechia has the largest number of municipalities per capita in the entire EU. This means that much of the tasks are duplicated, while at the same time, municipalities are not able to do their tasks properly because they lack quality people. **Centralizing some tasks conducted at the municipal level would be a way to both reduce the number of public servants, and raise the quality of the sub-state decision-making.**

Taxation should not be a taboo!

Unlike most of the OECD countries, the Czech Republic lowered its tax-to-GDP ratio since the beginning of the pandemic. According to experts, the unwarranted personal income tax cut in 2020 was poorly targeted and did not help those in need. To mend this financial hole, the current government is proposing a series of austerity measures. However, **strengthening the revenue side of the state budget is also needed.** Most OECD states have understood that in order to gain resources to stimulate post-pandemic investment and green innovation, and to absorb future crises, sufficient state revenues are needed. Czechia should understand this as well.

Tax excess money – not basic needs!

International comparisons show that the Czech tax system relies excessively on taxes everyone must pay – like social security contributions and VAT – while the existing inequalities in wealth are not properly reflected in the tax system. Consequently, **the tax mix ought to be repurposed to better target excess money that lie in banks, private investments and properties,** while not burdening households struggling to meet their basic needs.

3.1.2. Evidence-based policy making

Listen to data and (social) scientists!

During the pandemic, the state was very often reliant on individuals, NGOs and businesses who either gave or didn't give the state the needed data in times of need. **Data on all sectors should be collected systematically by the analytical teams of all state institutions and should inform political decisions.** Better appreciation and use of social scientists, and scientists with cross-sectoral expertise – such as public health experts or environmentalists – is also crucial. These scientists should be part of formal advisory structures and their advice be taken into account in government strategies, policy proposals and legislation.

Make policy debates more inclusive!

The preparation of the Czech national recovery plan was a prime example that the state does not adequately listen to all interested and concerned parties: citizens, municipalities, civil society, think tanks, trade unions and business associations. While these consultations can be cumbersome, they can provide valuable input to the government and also increase citizens' ownership in state decisions. **Adequate time, money and staff should be allocated to conduct such consultations.**

3.1.3. Digitalization of public services

Ensure offline contact is still possible!

In the past few years, Czechia has made considerable progress in digitalization. It is nevertheless important to ensure that citizens still can reach the government through offline routes. Some people do not want to communicate online, e.g., for privacy reasons, and others are not able to. **To bridge the digital divide, it is also important to improve internet connectivity across the entire country and improve digital skills of Czech citizens.**

Build autonomous IT infrastructures!

The state needs to be able to autonomously develop and improve its IT solutions and services. The first step is to **hire its own quality IT staff**, even if this task is expensive. Possibly, it can also cooperate on developing these solutions with other states, e.g., through joint EU-funded projects.

| 3.2. Poland

3.2.1. The improvement of the system of checks and balances

Respond to the European Union's recommendation on how to improve the judiciary!

The improvement of the checks and balances requires many policy steps, for instance: fixing the appointment of the judges of the Constitutional Court, removing the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court, or changing the appointment of members of the National Council of the Judiciary.

The implemented recommendations should guarantee that the judicial system is free from the control of the executive and legislative branches of the state.

Create a transparent and open system of nomination and promotion of judges!

As the common denominator for undermined quality of the judicial system is procedures of nominating and promoting judges at the various levels of the system, a transparent and open process has to be ensured that will be compliant with relevant international and European standards.

Improve public consultation practices!

While structural reforms of the judiciary are crucial to improve checks and balances, there are other means how to hold politicians accountable and serve as a whistleblower. One way is **to strengthen public consultations at all stages of law-making procedures** by paying particular attention to ensuring meaningful representation and participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups, and organizations representing their interests.

Create additional avenues for protecting individual rights!

As rule of law includes also the protection of individual rights, it is important to **create a platform between government officials and human rights organizations**. It could be mediated by the Polish Ombudsman.

3.2.2. Increasing the quality of civil services

Strengthen the legal guarantees of the autonomy of civil service!

One of the fundamental issues is to **maintain the autonomy of civil service** that allows it to operate in the balance between political neutrality and responsiveness to its superior. In contrast to many countries, Poland is one of a few states which has civil service defined in the Constitution as a public institution. However, it seems that the autonomy principle is defined in a too vague way as it does not provide any specific organizational or financial guarantees. It requires politicians only to respect this principle. **The standard of not being a member of a political party for at least 5 years should return**. This way the potential pool of candidates can be free of politicians and those who have remained tied to politics in the longer run. This should be extended by **forbidding behavior that can be associated with political manifestation, in particular in relation to senior members of civil service**. In terms of government administration, political appointees must be limited to ministerial positions and members of political cabinets. **The required years of experience must be increased and tied to a specific institution**. The aim is to improve the professionalization of bureaucracy and to limit potential political influence.

Transparent recruitment process!

The whole process from the timeline and the requirements to the assessment criteria should be made known in the publicly available announcements. **The position should have clearly described duties and needed for its competencies**. The whole process may have a two-stage form:

- The first stage allows for a **selection of candidates that have relevant qualifications and fulfill all requirements**. It would be open for all interested and would test the knowledge and qualification related to working in civil service. The verification would be done by the commission which includes non-political experts (such as consulting and academic representatives).
- During the second stage **management decides based on the needs of specific institutions**. Managers would select from the pool pre-selected to work in civil service. This could create a specific link to graduates of the National School of Public Administration in Poland.

Clearly define the career path of civil services!

The career paths and regulations of civil services should be **both general that applies to the whole group but also specific and sector related**. The former should be related to the code of conduct, while the latter should be related to the potential promotion based on merit. By joining an administrative body at a very early stage in their careers and moving up slowly in the hierarchical ladder with internal promotions, young public servants are socialized over many years in a set of public values—such as equity and impartiality. This way civil service may be considered an attractive career option because of its reputation embedded in trust in public institutions.

Build trust in civil service!

An important element of strengthening the trust in civil service is **improving its social visibility**. Building a reputation requires not only structural changes but also changes in the attitudes of the society. In order to improve social confidence in civil service, it is needed to **conduct a series of campaigns that improve the social visibility of civil services and encourage new candidates to apply to work there**. Such campaigns should highlight the differences between politicians and civil servants. In addition, it is also necessary to show that civil service is an institution that consists of professionals that are able to solve complex problems for society and the state, including correcting market failures. For instance, agencies responsible for environmental protection, and labour relations can be seen as a corrective adjustment to selected market processes.

| 3.3. Slovakia

Implement a reform of the regional administration!

Dubbed “the mother of all reforms”, the creation of a new system of administrative divisions and a new division of competences between the various levels of government is essential. This entails a number of subtasks. First, **the state needs to decide on the number of layers that it wants to operate on**. To reduce complexity and bring the administrative division in line with popular expectation, the current system should be replaced with one focusing on a larger number of self-governing regions (15-20), that would map the traditional regional identity of their inhabitants. The regions would absorb the competences of both the current 8 regions and the current 79 districts. Macro-regions (west, center, east) would be recreated only as statistical units with no decision-making relevance. Sub-regional districts could be created by the regions for administrative purposes (such as the division of work between locations), would have no native competences and would absorb the current area level structures.

Create incentives for municipalization!

The second step is **optimizing the municipal structure**. Although popular narrative often blames mayors for not being thrilled at the perspective of municipalization, this is a greatly simplified understanding of the situation. As it stands today, municipalities are actively discouraged from giving up their independence and join their larger neighbours.

As per the current law, there is no opportunity for a balanced municipalization process. One municipality can join another (presumably a bigger one), but at the price of giving up almost everything that a municipality process. For such mergers, the merging (smaller) municipality loses its mayoral position, the guarantee of an electoral district, the right to veto issues with regards to their own functioning, the guarantee of its own cadastral land segment, and so forth. If we want municipalization to happen, this has to be remedied beforehand.

As was the case with the administrative reform, many maps about “ideal municipalities” or “functional microregions” have been drawn up, and then discarded. Such an effort – projecting an ideal network based on administrative data – seems to be a folly, or at best: impossible to implement. It is a much better idea to **create space and incentives for the voluntary merger of municipalities**. Tools for this can include tax breaks, extra points in project evaluation, or preferential treatment for municipalized regions in service support.

Public procurement reform and decentralization – create state capacity to properly handle EU funding!

The ability to handle the EU funds streaming into Slovakia has become one of the key issues and tasks for the state. In 2020, a new Ministry for Investments, Regional Development and Informatization (MIRDI) was created as an umbrella for these efforts. Although a step in the right direction, without creating a functional legal environment the stream of EU funds cannot be meaningfully improved.

The first area of improvement is **public procurement**. Slovakia needs to **novelize its legislation in the area with the goal of streamlining the process**. As of currently, municipalities and other actors are forced to run through a one-round, multi-control process, in which they incur a huge time cost and financial cost (project documentation, etc.). We can take example from our neighbors, such as Poland, to create a two-round, ex post controlled system. The difference is this: in the current Slovak system, perspective recipients procure a project documentation, apply for open calls, then (if successful) try to procure the supplier. In the proposed alternative system, recipients would apply with project ideas, have the ideas accepted, and then procure the project documentation and the supplier knowing that the process will continue as long as a feasible project can be created.

The second area is decision **decentralization**. As of right now, programs are created in the center, offered to perspective recipients as open calls and then evaluated from the center. This produces a supply-oriented project environment, in which recipients apply for what's available, and for what's needed. Alternatively, **strong programming capacities should be established in the regional centers, that could help self-governments create their own programs and implement them**. For the new programming period (effectively starting from 2023), such regional centers are planned to be made available. The successful implementation of this change could help the state build meaningful regional capacities.

Rethink what EU funds are used for!

The state has to make an honest effort at trying to rethink what EU funds should be used for in the future. Slovakia cannot continue to use EU funds in an inertia, by “financing what we usually do”. **EU funding should be diverted towards meaningful development, not the maintaining of state services**. The country has failed to address this challenge during the preparation for the next programming period (the so-called “Slovakia Program”), but meaningful changes to the structure of the program can be made even during its existence.

Create an inter ministry arbitration organ!

A key element to the inability of the state to further the development of the country is the **lack of proper coordination between various government organs**, especially the various subsidiaries of ministries. This can lead to very problematic outcomes where various state actors responding to the same problem only guard their own turf, look at their own legal boundaries and are unable (or unwilling) to budge.

To remedy this, we propose **an arbitration organ has to be created at the government office that could handle such issues**. This organ would be used to create binding solutions to these impasses, if necessary, by suspending portions of the standard legal system in the afflicted areas. The existence of such a body would go a long way to avoid decades-long frozen conflicts in the country.

Strengthen state service education!

Although there are some schools and faculties specializing in state service education, Slovakia in general needs to strengthen its university-level education in this segment. There is no need for a specialized new university, as the current dilemma is much more about **limiting the number of independent institutions rather than creating new ones**. Even so, as Slovakia is preparing its structural reform of the university system, **there should be an effort at creating new, concentrated state service education capacity**.

Strengthen and sustain the analytical institutes of the ministries

The analytical institutes established by the ministries from 2012 onwards play an important role in the creation of modern, professional state capacity in Slovakia. Their position within the state ecosystem is, however, precarious. The wages of the analysts employed by these institutes is, to a large extent, paid from EU funds, which puts them at risk of financing gaps and unforeseen changes.

The position of these institutes, under the direct control of ministries, is always delicate. They are supposed to analyze and evaluate the work of the ministries that pay their wages. This inevitably leads to conflicts. After 2020, several analytical institutes, including the key educational and health care institutes, were completely reorganized in part due to tensions. The future of the institutes after the 2023 elections is not clear, either.

It is thus important that **the analytical institutes are stabilized and strengthened going forward, including their financing, intellectual independence, and position within the legislative system!**

POLICY PROPOSALS ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF STATE CAPACITY IN CZECHIA, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA

Country	Proposal
Czechia	Create a stronger public service office and a project team!
Czechia	Distribute, track and assess the completion of tasks better!
Czechia	Raise the prestige of the public sector – both moral and financial!
Czechia	Provide better HR services and more flexibility to the workers!
Czechia	Higher centralization of Czech municipalities!
Czechia	Restructure the tax system to strengthen the revenue side of the state budget!
Czechia	Target better excess money that lies in banks, investments and properties!
Czechia	Listen to data and social scientists!
Czechia	Make policy debates more inclusive!
Czechia	Build autonomous IT infrastructures!
Czechia	Ensure that citizens still can reach the government through offline routes!
Poland	Implement the EU's recommendations on the judiciary reform!
Poland	Improve public consultation practices!
Poland	Create additional avenues for protecting individual rights!
Poland	Strengthen the legal guaranties of the autonomy of the civil service!
Poland	Transparent recruitment process!
Poland	Clearly define the career path of civil services!
Poland	Build trust in civil service!
Slovakia	Implement a reform of the regional administration!
Slovakia	Create incentives for municipalization!
Slovakia	Reform the public procurement system!
Slovakia	Decentralize the decision-making system in order to improve state capacity for properly handling EU funding
Slovakia	Divert EU funding towards meaningful development, instead of maintaining state services!
Slovakia	Create an inter ministry arbitrage organ!
Slovakia	Strengthen state service education!
Slovakia	Strengthen the analytical institutes of the ministries!