

## Monitoring the Transition in the Czech Republic: Data, Surveys and Studies\*

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**Abstract:** The description of post-communist societies is still insufficient and contrasts with the rich knowledge on Western societies. The focus is still on economic and, in particular, macroeconomic data, while social data and reports are rather scarce. With regard to socio-economic studies and analyses, the Czech Republic is even lagging behind the other transition countries of Central Eastern Europe. To ease the access to basic social knowledge on Czech society, the author presents an overview of information sources including references to surveys and institutions. Among them, the author refers to analyses of international bodies, as well as to domestic efforts to launch more comprehensive social reports. The Czech government's recent projects regarding the visions, strategies and priorities for further development of society are referred to also. Surveys already collected in the 'Sociological Data Archive' and available to the public provide a good opportunity for developing the study of Czech society from various angles.

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Since 1989, social reporting and social indicators research in the strict sense has not yet become well established in the Czech Republic. This can mostly be attributed to a generally underdeveloped discipline, as Czechoslovak sociology was more harshly reined in by the communist regime than was sociology in neighbouring 'socialist' countries. In Poland, sociology actually continued during the 1950s and even began to flourish again one decade later, whereas in Czechoslovakia it was completely removed from teaching, research and public life until the mid-1960s. In Hungary, sociology expanded without a significant break from the 1960s onwards, while in Czechoslovakia it was energetically frozen in the aftermath of the 1968 Prague Spring, a period referred to as 'normalisation' and characterised by stringent ideological control over the social sciences.

This legacy is still apparent in the relatively low level of lively sociological debate as well as the lack of comprehensive research activities devoted to social indicators and reporting. Nevertheless, social statistics have maintained a relatively high-level tradition, with several report-like activities being developed in a variety of forms and institutions since the mid-1990s. The slowly rekindled interest in social reporting peaked in 1998, when two documents seeking to map the post-1989 changes from different angles were (coincidentally)

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released almost simultaneously: the Social-Democrat governmental report 'on the state of Czech society' and the academic sociological report 'on the development of Czech society'.

In the following sections of this study, we overview the principle aspects of reports published and several important survey resources provided by Czech institutions, in conjunction with governmental, academic or international organisations. Mostly, but not exclusively, we refer to reports that are publicly available, at least in Czech. In the final sections, we outline the *Social Trends* project, the aim of which was to establish social reporting as a regular activity in the country.

## 1. The Czech Statistical Office

In the general field of information about the economy and society, the Czechoslovak Statistical Office (CSO) has continued to publish the *Statistical Yearbooks of Czechoslovakia* (since 1993, of the Czech Republic). The contents have gradually been enlarged to encompass the new political and economic situation, with new indicators and entire sections added, including 'currency and the capital market' and 'the organisational structure of the national economy'. Immediately after 1989, a bilingual (Czech and English) description of the tables was introduced.

For the general public, the Czech Statistical Office publishes yearly booklets entitled *The Czech Republic in Figures*, presenting brief key demographic, economic and social indicators on the country. Basic information with a comparative perspective on the transition countries is provided by the quarterly *CESTAT Statistical Bulletin* (covering the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia). More detailed and structured information is made available by the quarterly *Indicators of Economic and Social Development in the Czech Republic*.

In individual fields, the Czech Statistical Office publishes a quarterly series on wide-ranging issues such as the labour force (with tables on employment, unemployment and labour mobility), or on family budgets (with information on household incomes and expenditures). Similarly, multiple series on demography and other issues are also published regularly. Periodically, time series are published on the labour market (*Time Series of Basic Indicators of Labour Statistics*), family expenditures (*Statistics of the Level of Living of Households*), and other topics.

In 1997, a summary report entitled *Facts on the Social Situation in the Czech Republic* was published in Czech, containing commented statistical data on the level of living of the population and related issues, provided by social statistics, as well as several results from surveys of opinions conducted by the *Institute of Public Opinion*, an affiliate of the Czech Statistical Office at the time. So far, however, there has been no sequel to this report, nor is one planned for the current year.

There are three main regular statistical sample surveys on population:

The *Microcensus Surveys* started in 1958 as regular income surveys conducted every 3–5 years on 1–2 percent samples of households. Data on wages were provided by employers, while pension benefits were provided by post-offices. In addition to income data, the surveys include information about housing and household property. The transition period is described in the three most recent surveys:

- Microcensus 1989 was conducted on a 2 percent random sample (N = 69,912) in March 1989, and included yearly incomes of households in 1988;
- Microcensus 1992 was conducted by the CSO on a 0.5 percent random sample (N = 16,234) in March 1993, and included yearly incomes of households in 1992;
- Microcensus 1996 was conducted by the CSO on a 1 percent random sample (N = 28,148) in March 1997, and included yearly incomes of households in 1996.
- the next Microcensus is planned for March 2003, inspecting yearly incomes of households in 2002.

The *Family Expenditure Survey (FES)* was established in 1958 as a regular survey, based on a quota-sample of roughly 0.1 percent of households of manual workers (the working class), non-manual workers (employees) and co-operative farmers, with pensioners (only households of pensioners without economically active members) added later. Unlike FES in other countries, the survey is conducted as a permanent observation based on daily records of all household incomes and expenditures. After 1989, the category of self-employed was also included and a special sub-sample of low-income families was added, aiming to over-represent the number of households living below or close to the legal subsistence minimum in order to enable a more detailed analysis of this population category. For financial reasons, the size of the sample was considerably reduced in the 1990s, from about 3500 to about 2000 households. Following EUROSTAT recommendations, quota-sampling is to be replaced by random-sampling in the near future.

The *Labour Force Survey (LFS)* was piloted in the last quarter of 1992 and introduced in 1993 as a quarterly survey on a rotated sample of about 60 thousand persons (0.7 percent of households). It is a standard LFS, shaped strictly according to EUROSTAT recommendations since its inception. On the basis of each survey a standard publication is released, containing basic results, regional cross tabulations, as well as time series covering all surveys from the previous year.

## **2. The government and governmental bodies**

Until recently there were no regular reports by the Czech government on economic and social development in the country. In early 1999, however, the new Social-Democrat government, in keeping to its pre-electoral promises, released a *Report of the Government on the State of the Czech Society*. This 200-page internal document encompassing all basic fields of economic and social life contains plenty of data but also many assessments and is highly critical of the 1990-1996 policies.

In late 1999, the *Government's Council on Social and Economic Strategy* launched a project to elaborate the 'National Vision of Development of the Czech Republic' with the release of a series of studies on reproductive behaviour and family, regional and local development, globalisation, the information society, human capital, economic competitiveness, social values, ecological sustainability, social cohesion, and civil society. In the meantime, the research was transferred to the Centre for Social and Economic Strategies (CESSES) at Charles University. There, a small team led by Martin Potůček synthesised previous activities in a comprehensive study (Vize, 2001).

While much narrower in scope and ambitions, the project to design a 'social doc-

trine for the Czech state', backed by Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, is similar in character. It was discussed in the Council of Social and Economic Agreement, and it was promised to be submitted to the government. It is not available as a separate publication as yet, only in a preliminary form at [www.socioklub.cz](http://www.socioklub.cz).

Individual ministries are active in reporting on their own activities. Thus, the *Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs* publishes on employment protection and welfare, the *Ministry for Regional Development* issues surveys on housing, the *Ministry of Education* documents the education system, the *Ministry of Culture* reports on the protection of cultural heritage, while the *Ministry of Environment* publishes yearbooks on the state of the environment and environmental protection [*Statistical...* 1999]. The activities of ministries affiliated to special research institutes are reported in greater detail in section 5.

### 3. International organisations

Prior to its full membership in the OECD, and during its time as an associated country, the country's economy was analysed in a standard OECD survey on Czechoslovakia, issued in 1991 [*OECD...* 1991]. After the split of Czechoslovakia, a joint report on the Czech and Slovak republics was released [*OECD...* 1994]. Another (highly optimistic) report was issued in 1996, after the admission of the Czech Republic into the organisation at the end of 1995 [*OECD...* 1996]. The other regular report was published in 1998 [*OECD...* 1998] and the most recent in 2000 and 2001 [*OECD...* 2000; *OECD...* 2001].

The OECD has published special reports on the Czech labour market [*Review...* 1995], the education system [*Review...* 1996], and the environment [*Environmental...* 1999]. The Czech Republic was also involved in a comparative analysis of national systems of social protection and the battle against exclusion [*Battle...* 1998].

The World Bank, which has published extensively on poverty in Hungary, Poland and other CEE countries, has not paid this kind of special attention to the Czech Republic (fortunately, this is not due to oversight, but to the much better economic situation in the country). However, an extensive special report, *Czech Republic: Towards EU Accession*, was produced and released in 1999. The report assesses the country's economic performance, fiscal and financial problems, enterprise reform, agriculture, environment, public administration, social conditions, health care and its infrastructure.

In relation to the accession process, the statistical service of the European Commission also included candidate countries. Since 1999, a *Statistical Yearbook on Central European Countries* has been published, and since the 2000 edition the EUROSTAT statistical yearbook has been devoting one chapter to candidate countries. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London has since 1994 annually published *Transition Reports*, which include, alongside a general assessment of reforms, economic data on the country and a description of recent 'key reform challenges'.

With regard to databases and surveys, we can mention the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (CEEB) surveys carried out on behalf of the European Commission between 1990 and 1997 in up to 20 countries. In the Czech Republic, this survey was conducted annually between 1992 and 1997 on a sample of 1000 respondents. A new series of surveys, the Applicant Countries Eurobarometer (ACEB), began in October 2001 in 13 accession countries (see [www.gesis.org/data\\_service/eurobarometer/ceeb/index.htm](http://www.gesis.org/data_service/eurobarometer/ceeb/index.htm)).

The Innocenti Research Centre of UNICEF in Florence compiled the MONEE (Monitor the Social Conditions during the Transition to a Market Economy) time series of indicators, published as statistical annexes to the regular Regional Monitoring Reports (UNICEF 2001, and [www.unicef-icdd.org/publications/pdf/monee8/eng/index/htm](http://www.unicef-icdd.org/publications/pdf/monee8/eng/index/htm)).

#### **4. Commissioned and comparative research**

Several comprehensive projects have been initiated and/or financed by various international bodies and completed by domestic scholars, both with and without external assistance.

One of the first commissioned studies was written in the early 1990s, within the framework of the comparative project *East-Central Europe 2000*, commissioned by the European Commission DG XII [see van Zon 1994]. The aim of the project was to make a comparative assessment and forecast beyond the year 2000 concerning the four 'Visegrad' countries with respect to their prospective entrance into the EU. Various studies by Czech authors were collected in an unpublished volume [Illner et al. 1993], with a selection of them finalised and published in a special issue of the *Czech Sociological Review*, number 1 of 1994.

In 1996, the Czech Republic began publishing the *UN National Human Development Report*. The first report was prepared by a team led by the demographer Zdeněk Pavlík (HDR 1996), the second by a team headed by the sociologist Michal Illner (HDR 1997), and the third by a team headed by the economist-journalist Eva Klvačová (HDR 1998). Most recently, the 1999 report was prepared by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), headed by Martin Mácha and Aleš Kroupa (HDR 1999).

An important comparative project was started with the *Social Costs of Transformation (SOCO)*, initiated and co-ordinated by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna. In addition to other activities, an empirical survey of households (1000 in each country) was conducted in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and later East Germany. An internal national report [Matějů and Večerník 1996] was distributed in domestic circles. The SOCO project continues its activities through the support of individual research projects focused on selected topics – most recently, on regional disparities, gender in social policy, and social policy on a micro-level.

The SOCO project has also initiated and financed the START foundation, which was established in late 1993 and headed by Jiří Večerník. During its three years of activity, research in the field of social policy was conducted by a number of scholars from various institutions, most of which was published in the series of START Research Papers, which were distributed among the communities of academics and policy-makers. The activities of START were overviewed in a brief report [Večerník 1995], and some of the START papers were also published in Kovács (1996), with many more made available on the Web ([www.univie.ac.at/iwm/](http://www.univie.ac.at/iwm/)).

Following the OECD study on education [Review... 1996], the study *Czech Education and Europe* was written and published in 1999, in both Czech and English, with the financial support of Phare. In particular, this study provides an overview of the functioning and results of the Czech education system from a 'European' perspective.

The study *Human Resources in the Czech Republic* is similar in character. Commissioned by the Institute for Information in Education and the National Education Fund, a small team of experts formulated a description of life-long education, employability and the labour market, human capital and skills, and motivation structure. The study was financed by Phare and published in early 2000 in Czech and English [Human Resources 1999].

In the framework of the project 'Public Policies and Social Conditions: Monitoring the Transformation to the Market Economy in Central and Eastern Europe', UNICEF commissioned the *Report on Social Policy and Social Conditions in the Czech Republic*. This report was published in Czech in the trade union review *Pohledy* (Views) and in a revised English-language version as a UNICEF Innocenti Occasional Paper [Hiršl, Rusnok and Fassman 1995].

Important projects have also been linked to comparative surveys. Among them, at least five international projects in which the Czech Republic participates merit attention.

*Social Justice 1991 and 1995*. This survey was conducted in 1991 within the framework of the 'International Social Justice Project', the aim of which was to compare perceptions of social inequalities and social justice in 13 countries (USA, Japan, West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Russia, Slovenia and Estonia). In order to describe the changes that had occurred since the first year of transformation, the survey was repeated in 1995 in the Czech Republic and in 1996 in Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, and East Germany. In a 1999 survey, the core questions of the project were repeated, together with the ISSP Social Inequality module.

*Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989 (SSEE) and the Survey on Elites*. This survey was conducted on large samples (3-5000 respondents) in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia and Slovakia (all in 1993), and in Poland in 1994. Donald J. Treiman and Ivan Szélenyi conducted the international comparative research project from the University of California in Los Angeles. The questionnaires used in individual countries included fully comparative questions, out of which an international file was created. Along with the survey of representative samples of the populations in Hungary, Poland and Russia (all in 1993), and in the Czech Republic in 1994, a survey on elites was conducted which compared the situation before and after 1989. The use of the large survey was less major than expected, but more importantly, the survey of elites resulted in a book in Czech, written by the team led by Petr Matějů and Klára Vlachová (1999), and was also largely utilised in another book (Eyal, Szélenyi and Townsley 1998), which is reviewed in this issue.

*International Social Survey Program (ISSP)*. This long-term international research project originated in 1983 and is based on international and inter-project co-operation among interested institutions in the areas of the social sciences. It has four founding members: the Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) of the United Kingdom, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in the USA, Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen (ZUMA) of Germany, and the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University. Since 1983, the number of participants has grown continuously, reaching 38 in 2001. Each year, research on one topic is conducted in all participating countries within the framework of an ongoing survey. Individual modules are then repeated after a specified period and new topics are introduced only when they are considered to be important and applicable in international and temporal comparison.

*European Values Study/World Values Survey*. This large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal research programme focuses on changes in political and economic orientations,

family values and religious norms, their impact on economic growth, strategies of political parties, and democratic institutions. The first survey in 1981, was initiated and organised by the 'European Value Systems Study Group' in nine West European countries. During the 1980s, researchers from other European and non-European countries joined the project and the study was extended to 23 nations. The second wave of the European/World Values Survey was carried out between 1990 and 1991, with participation from a total of 43 nations. The third survey was conducted between 1995 and 1998 among 92 nations or regions. The last wave of the European Values Study took place in the period 1999-2001, covering 36 nations. Surveys in the Czech Republic were collected in 1991 and 1999.

*International Adult Literacy Survey.* The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) is a large-scale co-operative effort by governments, national statistical agencies, research institutions and the OECD. Development and management of the survey were co-ordinated by Statistics Canada and the Educational Testing Service. In 1994, nine countries (Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the US) conducted the survey [*Literacy...* 1995]. Five additional countries or territories (Australia, the Flemish community in Belgium, Great Britain, New Zealand and Northern Ireland) decided to administer the IALS instruments in 1996 [*Literacy...* 1997]. Finally, eight other countries (the Czech Republic, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway and Slovenia) participated in 1998 (SIALS). Three domains of literacy skills are investigated through the survey: prose literacy (the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts), document literacy (the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats) and quantitative literacy (the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations). A report covering results from all three surveys was published by OECD/Statistics Canada in 2000 [*Literacy...* 2000].

Last but not least, we should also mention the New Democracies Barometer (NDB), a survey which was fielded in 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1995 under the leadership of Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer. Its results were largely published in the University of Strathclyde's Centre for Public Policy working papers series and in articles by both authors. The data can be analysed using a special tool on the Internet, which is accessible on the www server of TÁRKI Budapest. Data sets have not been made.

## **5. Academic and research institutions**

In the demographic field, the series published by the Czech Statistical Office are paralleled by a regular series entitled *Population Development of the Czech Republic* (first edition in 1994, editor Zdeněk Pavlík), published by the Chair of Demography and Geodemography of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Charles University, Prague. Here we should also mention a synthetic, collective work of Czech historical demography, entitled *The Population of the Czech Lands* [Fialová 1996].

In the economic field, the joint institute of the Academy of Sciences and Charles University, CERGE/Economics Institute, started in 1996 to produce an annually released, standard booklet in English, which provides basic information on economic development in the country [Turnovec 1997, 1998, 1999; Hanousek and München 2000]. The most wide-ranging book on the economic transition provides an extensive summary of articles from various fields, published in Czech (by the publishing house Academia) and English [Svejnar 1995].

A representative publication in English produced by a team of specialists in various fields, led by Bedřich Moldán, head of the Charles University Environment Centre, is of particular importance. It provides well-documented explanations involving economic issues, environment, and the quality of life, and stresses the positive features of the country and society. This is based in particular on manifest success in the area of the environment, which since 1989 has experienced improvements and has had an impact on other areas of society (Ten Years On 2000).

In the sociological field, we should draw attention to the publications of Pavel Machonin and his team, who have continued work initiated in the book on social structure originally released in the late 1960s [Machonin et al. 1969] and have carried it into the 1990s [Machonin, Tuček et al. 1996]. In the most recent publication, the structure and methods of the original book were partially reproduced. The database of the analysis rests upon two surveys of social stratification conducted after 1989, which are compared with several pre-1989 surveys.

Another comprehensive publication is the book *Markets and People. The Czech Reform Experience in a Comparative Perspective* [Večerník 1996]. The main aim of the publication was to show the socio-economic transition in the Czech Republic 'from below', as it is viewed by individuals and households and through differences and inequalities. The author thereby intended to fill the gap between, on the one hand, the relatively frequent macroeconomic description of the transformation and some microeconomic insights (on the part of firms and the labour market), and on the other hand, the rather scarce analysis of the acceptance of and participation in the socio-economic transformation on the part of ordinary citizens and their groupings. The book was extensively re-written and updated for the Czech edition [Večerník 1998].

In 1998, a large conference, entitled 'Czech Society at the End of the Millennium', was organised for the 650th anniversary of the founding of Charles University. Polished conference contributions were published in their original languages (mostly Czech) in two volumes entitled *Czech Society at the End of the Millennium* [Potůček ed. 1999]. A broad range of topics was presented within four sections:

- A. Vision for the Czech state (chairman Martin Potůček)
- B. Macroeconomic transformation in the context of societal changes (chairman Milan Sojka)
- C. Problems in Czech society (chairman Jiří Kabele)
- D. Problems in the Czech and Slovak states (chairman Jiří Musil)
- E. Ways to improve the environment of the Czech and Slovak republics (chairman Bedřich Moldan).

In 1998, a summary article describing the vast field of transitional changes - with rich documentation and references - from the perspective of the concept of the quality of life was published in *Social Indicators Research* by Michal Illner [Illner 1998].

Academic and research institutions also conducted several series of surveys comparative in time, which are rather scarce in the Czech Republic. The most important of these are:

*Czechoslovak and Czech Social Structure and Mobility Surveys.* The first Czechoslovak social stratification survey was conducted in 1967 by a team of sociologists led by Pavel Machonin. In 1978 and 1984, during the 'normalisation' period, two surveys



entitled 'Class and Social Structure of the Czechoslovak Population' were conducted by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. The field of interest covered the economic and social positions of the household head and other active members, the basic intra- and inter-generational mobility data of all adult members of the household, income, housing conditions, leisure time, attitudes and value orientations.

After 1989, an extensive survey on the 'Transformation of Social Structure in Czechoslovakia' was organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Socio-Political Sciences of Charles University. It focused on demographic and family status, education and 'cultural capital', economic position and occupation, assets and income, position in decision-making, the standard of living, consumption and life style, inter- and intra-generational mobility, the subjective perception of the social structure, value orientations and political preferences, attitudes towards political changes and economic reforms. The most recent survey, entitled 'Ten Years of Social Transformation in the Czech Republic', was conducted in November/December 1999, in mostly a way comparative with its predecessors.

*Family 1989-1998.* This longitudinal panel survey project was organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. The original intention was to observe the life and professional careers of children leaving primary school. The main waves of the interviewing took place in 1989 (children and parents), 1992 (parents), 1993-1994 (children finishing secondary school) and 1998 (children and parents).

*Economic Expectations and Attitudes (EEA).* Surveys of the Czechoslovak and later the Czech population started in May 1990 and were conducted at first biannually (1990-1992) and later annually (1993-1998). Surveys were organised by the socio-economics team of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, headed by Jiří Večerník. The questionnaires include a wide range of items concerning the perception of the general and one's personal economic situation, household finance, poverty, labour market participation and related attitudes, political opinions, class self-identification, etc.

The regular monthly *Trends* was launched by the Centre for Empirical Research STEM as surveys on hot issues. Since some topics recur and certain basic questions (such as voting preferences) remain constant, the survey enables the compilation of trends in various opinions. Part of the social research of this very active agency was summarised in the booklet, *Czech Society in 1998* [Hartl, Huk and Haberlová 1999]. Another study summarising the main time series since 1990 was published in Czech under the title *Where to Now?* [Hartl et al. 2000].

The two other main public opinion agencies, the Research Institute of Public Opinion (affiliated to the Czech Statistical Office until mid-2000 and a part of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences since) and Sofres-Factum, also publish regular opinion series on political and economic issues. Synthesising publications are rather scarce, though one compilation was made by the agency Median (Friedlanderová et al. 2000). More is to be found in various internal editions and 'grey literature' (see e.g. Tuček et al. 1999).

## **6. The Social Trends project**

The project *Social Trends: Research - Archives - Publications - Training* was financed by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic between mid-1996 and the end of 1998. It was conceived by researchers from four institutions: the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences; the Faculty of National Economy of the Economic University in Prague; the School of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno; and the Centre for Educational Politics of the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University. The aim was to bring together economic, demographic, sociological and pedagogical institutions. The project was headquartered in the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, under the leadership of Petr Matějů and Jiří Večerník.

The project arose out of the idea that the integration of the Czech Republic into Euro-Atlantic structures also entails its integration into international networks of information, including the regular monitoring of economic, social and political change. While a strong base for this has already been built in other transition countries (especially Hungary and Poland), the Czech Republic has lagged rather far behind. The project was designed both to meet the demands of international institutions, and to address the substantial domestic audience for such information, which ranges from governmental institutions and Parliament to the interested public. Indeed, wide interest was stimulated through preparatory publications – eight-page bulletins for the wider public and comprehensive working papers aimed at specialists.

The intention of the project was to initiate the publication of a series of national *Social Reports* aiming to systematically map the development of society from economic, social and political points of view. The authors proposed publishing regular social year-books providing an overview of basic information and data, with simple analysis and brief commentaries, in a relatively comprehensive, historical and comparative form. The core of such studies was to be the description of socio-economic and political structures and the behaviour of the population, both placed within their macroeconomic and demographic contexts. The planned publications were to enable the description of society as a multi-dimensional and dynamic socio-economic and political entity, and to place emphasis on several of these facets of society.

This core objective could only be achieved through supporting and complementary projects. The first of these was the foundation of the *Sociological Data Archive*, similar to those already functioning in all advanced and some transition countries. The purpose of such an archive is to make the original data files easily accessible to students, researchers and all private interested parties, to be used for their own analyses according to their research hypotheses. This type of archive is not only an important resource, for those who are already aware of such research projects, but may also serve as an inspiration to all those who are interested in formulating research problems or providing empirical support for their hypotheses.

The second supporting project was to secure participation of the Czech Republic in the *International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)*. This participation allows not only the regular flow of internationally and temporally comparative data, but also co-operation with prominent sociologists from around the world, which puts necessary pressure on the standards of Czech sociological research. Thus the goal is to create conditions for the maintenance of a high standard of data from the Czech Republic and, at the same time, for the

more intensive use of ISSP survey data in domestic research projects and university teaching.

The third supporting project aimed at using international data and shared work on Social Reports for the *training of young researchers*. This aim arises out of the conviction that the present separation of teaching and post-graduate education from research is unfortunate. The new generation of specialists in social research is isolated from the core research projects with which the Czech Republic is entering into international co-operation. On the one hand, students generally have scarce access to empirical sources of good quality and analytically oriented specialists, and on the other hand, research projects are conducted in the absence of post-graduate students and promising young researchers. For this reason the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University set out to create a *seminar* for the comparative analysis of data from social research projects.

Although this long-term (as originally planned) project was involuntary terminated after the first two-year period, its goals were met to the greatest possible degree – with the exception of the seminar. The Czech version of the Social Report was published in 1998 (according to plan), and has already attracted the attention of a large audience. The English version was published in 1999. Within the project, three ISSP surveys were conducted: *The Role of Government* (1996), *Work Orientations* (1997) and *Social Inequalities* (1998). One survey from the series, *Economic Expectations and Attitudes*, was also conducted. In addition, the *Sociological Data Archive* was successfully opened and has generated increasing interest. Further information about the project may be found at [www.soc.cas.cz/trends](http://www.soc.cas.cz/trends).

## **7. The Social Report of the Czech Republic**

Despite the availability of particular publications in the field of social reporting, a more extensive ‘social report’ on Czech society was lacking until some years back. Thus, the main task of the project *Social Trends* was to launch a series of social reports aiming to understand ongoing social change in its widest variety. The underlying idea was that social trends are more than just averages and aggregates in the forms usually documented by statistics. In other words, society should be seen not as an accomplished structure but as a living and profoundly diversified organism. As such, the purpose of a social survey is not to serve merely as a ‘sociographic’ gathering of data, but also as authentic research in the sense of data analysis, their interpretation and the subsequent presentation of the most important knowledge in the most condensed and clear form.

The report was first published in Czech, under the title *Report on Development of the Czech Society in 1989-1998* [Večerník ed. 1998]. The English version was published in 1999, under the title *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: Czech Society after 1989* [Večerník and Matějů (eds.) 1999]. The intention was to present Czech society in all its multifacetedness and motion, rather than as a list of social issues and societal pathology. The authors declare themselves as being committed to monitoring society as an active entity and not as the object of paternalistic care and extensive social engineering.

The first section reports on human resources, especially in relation to education, business, and the family, as the tools and the environment in which human activity is gen-

erated, developed, and applied. The second part is devoted to economic inequality and its formation mechanisms, the individual's ability to climb the social ladder and the 'division of territory' between the market and the state. The social structure, which is formed by economic and other human activities, not only tells us about living standards and life styles. It also greatly contributes to the structure of political orientation and behaviour, which, in a democratic society, results in the way in which a regime is defined and thus the general environment for the generation of human resources. The third part deals with the relationship between social and political structures, which is an attempt to create a sort of arch, returning us to the start of the explanations, and to complementing the context of the issues discussed there.

## **8. Conclusion**

In this document, we have compiled a comprehensive (but probably not exhaustive) overview of the main undertakings in social statistics, sociological surveys and analyses that are in some way oriented towards social reporting. A great deal has clearly been accomplished in the past decade. Yet in terms of the criteria for social reporting suggested by Heinz-Herbert Noll (the combination of 'objective' and 'subjective' indicators, multi-dimensionality, continuous reporting, representative samples, observations of state activities and the priority of reflexive functions [Noll 1999]), most of the documents cited here do not meet even a selection of them. Probably only the *Social Report* [Večerník and Matějů 1999] manages to meet most of Noll's criteria.

We cannot therefore conclude that Czech research or the activities of public institutions in the field of social reporting and continual social surveys are flourishing. While research teams have managed to participate in several international projects (ISSP, European Value Survey, SIALS), they have not participated in other important and quite common projects (household panel surveys, general population surveys, Euromodule). Despite the good research background established in communist times [Illner and Foret 1980], no especial theoretical efforts have been made since 1989. By terminating the *Social Trends* project, a serious attempt to partially institutionalise social reporting was halted. Unfortunately, activities related to *Human Development Reports* (quite uneven in their shape and quality) have not been used to establish systematic social reporting with wide public availability either.

While the academic and applied social research is somewhat atomised in space and discontinuous in time, the current (1998-2002) Czech government seems to be more committed to undertake synthesising and forecasting activities. The Social Democrats have put such notions such as 'the state of the nation', 'societal strategy', 'national vision' or 'social doctrine' on the table, and aim to design comprehensive documents. Unlike the first governmental report 'on the state of the society', the envisaged documents might be more balanced in their coverage of individual fields of economic and social life, better supported by empirical analyses and less politically biased.

Activities related to EU accession may also be conducive to better social information. While the OECD reports give a comprehensive picture of the economic arena and social protection, thorough analysis of social and value structures is as yet incomplete. However, two new and important surveys conducted in 1999 are to be analysed in the year

2000: the Czech part of the *European Value Survey* and the new social stratification and mobility survey titled *Ten Years of Social Transformation in the Czech Republic*. Along with surveys already stored in the *Sociological Data Archive*, there is certainly enough data to be summarised and analysed. In addition, strong political backing of such new efforts to provide a summarising picture of society may prove the hopes for the future active development of social reporting in the Czech Republic to be well founded.

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