



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights


France, 29-30 November 2022

Comments paper – Czech Republic



Ein Unternehmen der ÖSB Gruppe.

The information and views set out in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This publication is supported by the European Union Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission and shall contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected.

For more information see: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv>

Sex education in a sexually liberal country

Lucie Jarkovská

Masaryk University

Abstract:

The Czech Republic has some of the most liberal laws regarding abortion and sex education is not seen as a burning political issue. However, the absence of a strong religious or conservative voice against sex education does not mean that the problems of sex education have been solved. Above all, there is a lack of teacher training and sufficient didactic support.

1. Sex education in the Czech Republic

1.1 National framework for sex education

The framework for sex education in Czech schools is set by the Framework Educational Programmes (FEP). These define binding "frameworks" for the different stages of education (pre-school, primary and secondary education). On their basis, individual schools then prepare their own School Educational Programmes. Teachers do not teach according to any national curriculum that would define the content of teaching for students of a certain age. The FEPs do not focus so much on content that should be taught to children, but rather emphasise the competencies that should be acquired by students. FEPs create good conditions for sex education, where teachers can tailor programmes according to their students' needs. However, in addition to flexibility, the FEP also allows some topics to be omitted or reduced from the curriculum. This implies the danger that sex education could be neglected in some schools. FEP prescribes expected outcomes (i.e. use anatomical correct terms of genitals, master the basics of intimate hygiene etc.). Those outcomes are subsequently inspected and enforced by the Czech School Inspectorate.

The FEPs are divided into educational areas and educational disciplines. Sex education is not a separate subject or area. The FEP does not provide a definition of sex education.

Previously, sex education was conceived primarily in biological terms, focusing mainly on describing the anatomy and process of menstruation and fertilization. Today, WHO standards recommend a holistic approach that looks at human sexuality not only in terms of biological reproduction, but as an important aspect of life that includes psychological and social components and can also be understood in terms of human rights, social justice and sexual citizenship. Modern sex education is no longer content with a list of facts about reproductive organs and has to cope with rapid developments in the fields of medicine (new contraceptive options), human rights (LGBTQ+ equality, gendered aspects of sexuality, sexual consent, sexual harassment) and technology

(internet dating, sexting, pornography), or topics such as the hypersexualisation of girls in particular in pop culture. This places enormous demands on teachers and educators, which they can hardly meet without adequate didactic support.

1.2 Institutional framework for sex education

Based on the FEP, each school prepares its own school education programme (SEP). SEP elaborates the procedures through which the expected outcomes will be achieved. Schools are given a great deal of freedom to choose adequate teaching methods. Information relevant to sex education can be delivered by different teachers in different subjects (biology, civics or family education), it can be chosen as a topic for special project days, in which the topic is taken up in a comprehensive way, the school can involve external experts in the fields of human rights, medicine, law or experts from non-governmental organisations offering specialised programmes on these issues.

1.3 Non-governmental organisations providing sex education

Various programmes and trainings are offered by NGOs. However, it should always be verified that the external cooperation is in line with the FEP and the SEP. Educational programmes are also offered by religious groups, their programme provide often not evidence based content.

1.4 The pitfalls of sex education in the Czech Republic

The autonomy, where schools do not have to follow a set curriculum, places great demands on the institutions themselves and the teachers in charge of the subject. What is currently lacking is not a legal framework for sex education, but the availability of resources that schools could use to prepare adequate programmes themselves. While a large amount of training and literature is available to teachers for the didactics of mathematics or foreign languages, the offer is more limited in the field of sex education.

This is somewhat a consequence of a certain performance discourse that was dominant in education at the beginning of the 21st century, in which knowledge-oriented subjects were generally preferred to education. There was also a view that anyone could teach family and, by extension, sex education, because the key issue was whether children learn maths, Czech and English. This often led to the subject being given to someone with a spare capacity in their time, rather than a person who had suitable qualifications.

The growing influence of neoconservative social actors with dogmatic religious background in the state administration is also a risk for sex education.

2. Policy debate

There has been no major public or political debate on sex education in recent years. Between June and October 2020, the Czech Secondary Students' Union carried out a mapping of the situation regarding sexual education in secondary schools in the Czech Republic. This report on the questionnaire survey aims to summarise the essential findings obtained directly from secondary school pupils and graduates and highlight specific shortcomings. The study claims that sex education often does not take place at all, and if it does, it is usually limited to basic topics such as prevention of sexually transmitted diseases or methods of contraception. Topics on which the educator must take his or her own stance and be open to discussion with the pupils - domestic violence, consent, pornography, or topics that are often taboo – first sex, masturbation, orgasm, do not usually appear at all in secondary school teaching. Students identified school as the least frequent source of information about sexual and partner life. The students consider sex education in secondary schools to be important. All of the respondents would like to cover more sex education topics than they have done so far.

3. Good practice examples

- Planned parenthood <https://www.planovanirodiny.cz/>

SPRSV is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization. Its main objective is to make information on partnership, parenting, equal opportunities, sexual and reproductive health and related rights available to the extent that it enables each individual to make a free choice. The organisation uses an approach involving the work of educators, psychologists, doctors, lawyers, social workers, other specialists and the general public, and prefers the participation of young people in the design and implementation of its programmes. At the same time, our experts provide extensive online advice not only to educators and other specialists, but also to young people and the general public. Very valuable are the annual congresses on sex education, which bring together experts from various fields (medicine, pedagogy, law, social work, psychology, sociology, demography).

- NESEHNUTÍ <https://nesehnuti.cz/tag/fera/>

The F*ÉRA programme is run by the renowned NGO NESEHNUTÍ and specialises in gender-sensitive approaches to education. It works with young people on a positive relationship with their own bodies and sexuality, raising issues of power and the causes of violence. It creates space for young people themselves to advocate for the fulfilment of their needs and social change. In doing so, it also develops professional materials for teachers, brings together active parents, publishes articles, produces streams, conducts workshops for high schools and second grades of primary schools, and creates methodological materials for preschool children.

- Konsent <https://konsent.cz/>

Konsent is an association dedicated to the prevention of rape. It strives to ensure that sex education does not end with chapters on reproduction, but that parents and teachers talk to children about mutual respect and the need for active consent of all those involved in the sexual act. Boys need to be encouraged to treat girls and women with respect, both in public and in intimate relationships. Girls and women should be encouraged not to allow themselves to be harmed even in intimate relationships. The aim of the organisation is also to engage in the social debate and to convince the responsible authorities that the issue of sexual violence is an important topic that must not be neglected. Through their activities they want to contribute to improving the legal environment and aftercare.

- Jules a Jim <https://julesajim.cz/>

- Loono <https://www.loono.cz/>

Loono is a team of young doctors, medical students and other professionals. Through workshops, trainings, and webinars in schools and businesses, we educate the public about the importance of cancer (#cancer) and cardiovascular (#heartdisease) prevention, reproductive (#goodheart) and mental health (#goodhealth).

- Transparent <https://jsmetransparent.cz/podpurne-skupiny/>

Trans*parent z.s. works to promote rights and positive social change for transgender, non-binary and intersex people. The association was founded in Prague in spring 2015 due to the need for mutual sharing of information and experiences as well as policy change in the area of equality for transgender people. Thus, Trans*parent seeks to promote understanding and acceptance of trans, non-binary and intersex people on both a societal and legislative level.

- PROUD <http://proud.cz/>

Platform for Sexual and Gender Equality, Recognition and Diversity

- A show on sex education focused on parental sex education usually carried out as a performance combined with sharing experience and discussion <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6NRQjF45ls&t=4s>
- Government Council for Gender Equality <https://www.tojrovnost.cz/cs/>

Project „Enhanced capacities and methodological support in prevention of domestic and gender-based violence“

Project focuses on strengthening the capacity of the system for preventing and combatting domestic and gender-based violence. Specifically, it aims to increase the capacity of public administration to effectively combat domestic and gender-based violence; improve prevention of sexual violence among young people through education in schools; ensure the further dissemination of the film "Angry Man" in addressing cases of domestic violence witnessed by children; increase state expertise in domestic and partner violence through bilateral and international

cooperation; increase knowledge of the extent and forms of online sexism in Czech society and increase the ability of the police to respond to new forms of sexual violence in cyberspace and to sensitize victims.

Realization: from the 1st of March 2020 to 31st of December 2023

Funding: (EU/State budget): 23 970 000 CZK (NF: 20 374 500 CZK / State budget: 3 595 500 CZK)

Funding Resources: Funded by Norway Grants and State budget of the Czech Republic

Activity 1

Activity 1 provides methodical support (incl. training) to authorities of public administration in domestic and gender-based violence including new forms of such violence (on-line, sexual violence etc.). Thus, the activity contributes to increasing the capacity of public administration to address the violence.

Activity 2

Under Activity 2, workshops on prevention of sexual violence will be held for children and youths (incl. children and youths in socially excluded areas). In addition, student od pedagogical faculties will be trained to ensure further dissemination of workshops in the future.

Activity 3

Activity 3 aims on further dissemination of the film “Angry Man”. Film Angry Man is an innovative instrument in addressing cases of domestic violence witnessed by children. The film was introduced in the Czech Republic in cooperation with Norwegian organisation Alternative to Violence under previous project of the Office of the Government of the Czech republic funded by Norway Grants.

Activity 4

Activity 4 develops successful bilateral cooperation with Norwegian organisation Alternative to Violence established under previous project of the Office of the Government of the Czech republic funded by Norway Grants. The goal of this activity is an enhancement of expertise of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in prevention of domestic and gender-based violence and presentation of results of the cooperation.

Activity 5

Activity 5 focuses on increasing the ability of public administration to respond to new forms of gender-based violence in cyberspace such as on-line sexism. Activity

responds to recommendation on prevention and combating sexism of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Activity 6

The goal of the activity 6 is increasing the ability of the police to respond to new forms of gender-based violence through training. The project is implemented in cooperation with Norwegian organisation Alternative to Violence.

4. Transferability aspects (compared to the FR and BE practices)

Belgium

- Facilitating access to contraception

The issue of access to contraception is not currently perceived as a pressing problem, however, Belgian activities may be inspiring for the Czech environment

France

- The implementation of “Emotional, relational and sexual life spaces” (EVARS)

Services presenting sexuality education among young people as a tool for preventing gender-based violence, fighting sexism and promoting gender would be useful in the Czech Republic.

- The creation of the national toll-free number “Sexuality, contraception, and abortion”

There is a sufficient number of help-lines that can deal also with sexuality issues.

- Experimenting with the collection of follow-up data on Female Genital Mutilation in France

Not a pressing issue in the Czech Republic.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Quality sex education is part of a comprehensive education. It can contribute to a good school climate, to respectful peer relationships, to the prevention of various undesirable phenomena such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexually transmitted diseases, and is part of the promotion of gender equality in schools, as sexuality and reproductive health are also major feminist issues.

Recommendations:

- Focus on teacher training in this area.
- support the development of teaching aids and books.
- Promote inclusive sex education that includes the sexuality of children and young people from ethnic minorities, disabled people, etc.
- Discuss the possibility to cover the costs of contraception and abortion at least for some social groups (young people, socially disadvantaged groups).