

A.1 Pre-school Education

Pre-school education (PE) in the Czech Republic takes place in “mainstream” kindergartens, special kindergartens, in preparatory classes of basic schools and in preparatory classes of special basic schools. The level of participation in pre-school education is high and is also affected by the fact that under Sec. 123 (2) of the Education Act “education in the last grade of nursery school, preparatory classes of basic schools and the preparatory grade of special basic schools established by the state, a region, a municipality or a union of municipalities shall be provided free of charge”. Measures of the MEYS adopted in the past period and focusing on optimisation should lead to a reduction in the proportion of children whose compulsory school attendance was postponed and to an increase in the proportion of children from socially disadvantaged environments and from culturally different environments where pre-school education is considered by school experts as the most efficient prevention against the risk of future school failure.

The changes made in the capacity of networks were, when compared with the previous school year, minimal. In total 4,880 kindergartens were recorded in the Register of Schools, which means that no significant change occurred. The proportion of state funded schools was 96.8 % while the share of private kindergartens was 2.6 % and the proportion of kindergartens operated by churches was only 0.6 %. The indicator of the average number of children in a class has not changed at the national level and remained at 23.5 per class. However, when comparing individual regions the situation is very different and in a number of the schools visited the majority of classes contain the number of children permitted by an exception for the highest number of children in one class.

Therefore demand for pre-school education exceeded the supply offered by founders of kindergartens and capacity of individual schools. Founders solved the lack of places by increasing the number of children in the classes or by merging more kindergartens in one entity or by establishing new classes. As a consequence of such rationalisation measures the proportion of so called small schools (up to 50 children) has decreased to 54.1 % of the total number of schools.

Table 1 Financial indicators in pre-school education

Monitored parameters – Czech Rep. (according to the IIE)	Situation in the year		Trend
	2009	2010	
Total public expenditure on PE in CZK million	15,983.4	16,383.3	+
Share of expenditure on PE of total public expenditure for the education system (%)	9.96	9.99	+
Recalculated number of teachers in PE	24,584.3	25,736.8	+
Share of teachers (%)	8.9	10.2	+
Average salary of teachers (CZK)	18,857	20,207	+
Expenditure per child (CZK)	44,123	42,477	-
Weekly number of hours exceeding prescribed number of working hours	319	298	-