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Novice teachers status in the Czech republic and the role of trade unions

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Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education (ČMOS PŠ)



- The biggest Czech trade union of workers in education that brings together employees particularly in the education sector, students, pensioners and the unemployed, who have worked in education, regardless of one's political affiliation, nationality, religion, race and gender.
- Active in promoting better working and salary conditions in educational sector and is a partner to the Czech government and employers' associations in tripartite meetings at local, regional and national level.
- Member of the Czech and Moravian Trade Union Confederation (ČMKOS) and of Education International (EI) and its regional section European Trade Union Committee in Education (ETUCE).

Key activities of the union

- **Collective Bargaining:** Negotiations with the government and educational institutions to improve working conditions, fair and competitive salaries, quality public education for all, sustainable educational system and its financing.
- **Networking:** networking of trade union members to share best practices and insights, networking with other stakeholders in the educational sector.
- **Professional development:** organizing training sessions and workshops to enhance educators' skills, information about new legislature regarding the educational and labour law.
- **Advocacy:** actively advocating for policies that enhance the quality of education and working conditions of all workers in the sector of education, adequate and sustainable budgets for the sector of education.

ČMOS PŠ Sections



Professional Section for ECEC Professional Section of Primary Education



Professional Section of Workers in Educational and Care Institutions



Professional Section of Head Masters and School Leaders



Professional Section of Secondary Education



Professional Section of Educational Support Personnel



Section of seniors





Mgr. František Dobšík
President of the Union

Our leaders

The main mottos during our
strike in November 2023:
„Education is not a debt to the
state.“

„The tariff must remain the
basis of the salary.“

„Quality education needs
good financing.“

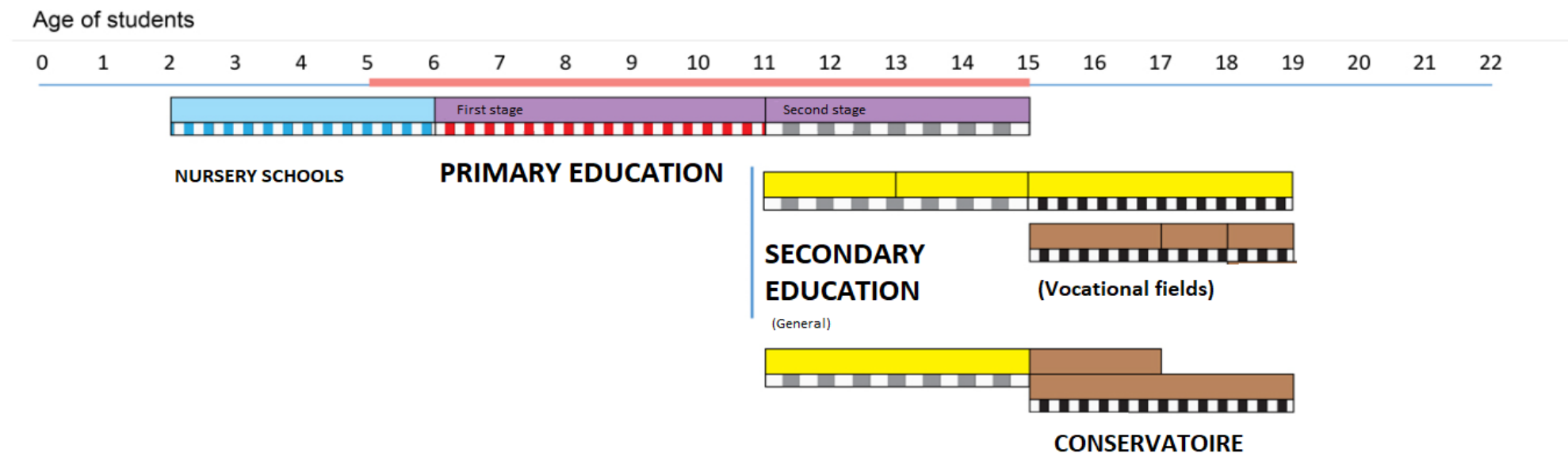
Mgr. Markéta Seidlová
Vicepresident



Teachers in the Czech republic

- Some numbers and statistics
- Status of novice teachers in the system and their support
- Challenges
- Recommendations for the future

Czechia – 2022/2023



Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are responsible)

Primary education

Single structure

Secondary general education

Allocation to the ISCED levels:

ISCED 0

ISCED 1

ISCED 2

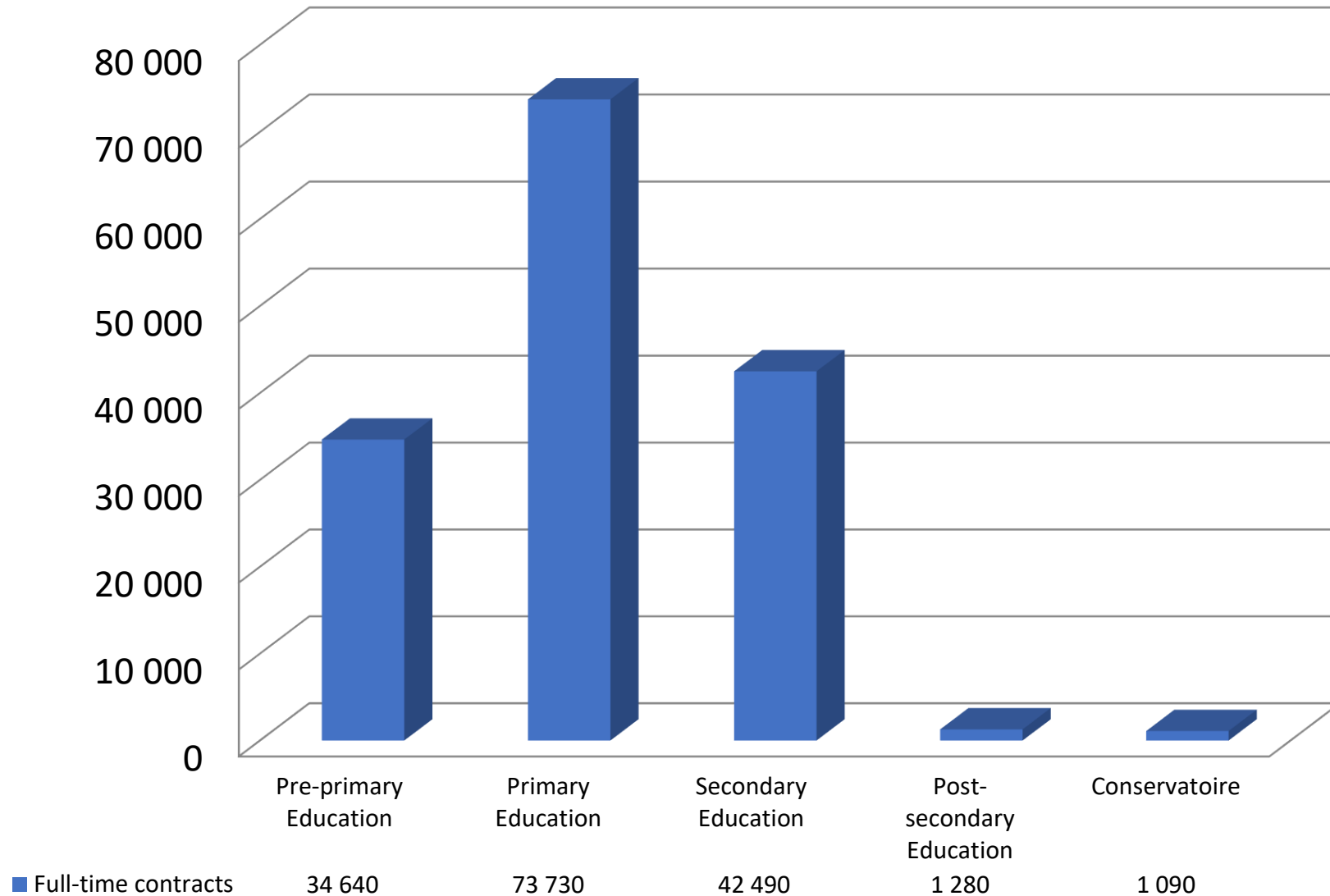
ISCED 3

Compulsory full-time education/training

Possible additional year

Compulsory part-time education/training

TEACHING WORKFORCE



TEACHERS' SALARIES (EUR)

YEAR	AVERAGE GROSS MONTHLY SALARY			
	Pre-primary Education	Primary Education	Secondary Schools	Children with special needs ¹⁾
2021	1 633	2 039	2 062	2 028
2022	1 649	2 077	2 122	2 078
¹⁾ Includes teachers in schools and classrooms for children and pupils with special educational needs				

Source: Czech Statistical Office according to data from the Structural Wage Statistics

AVERAGE GROSS MONTHLY SALARY based on AGE (EUR)

YEAR	AGE GROUP				
	25–29 years	30–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55+ years
2021	1 685	1 755	1 880	2 022	2 099
2022	1 704	1 787	1 911	2 059	2 151

Source: Czech Statistical Office according to data from the Structural Wage Statistics

References

- Czech Statistical Office, 2023, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/analyticka-cast-9uf1m2n9u2>.
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Education and training monitor 2022 – Czechia*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/863530>.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Czech Republic

Novice teachers in the view of EU

- *Czechia's teaching workforce is ageing and the country is struggling to attract young graduates to the profession.*
- ... close to **one third (30.5%) of all school teachers are over 55 years old**, well above the EU average (24.5%) in 2021. Ageing affects primary education disproportionately: **only 7% of primary school teachers were under 30 in 2021 (EU: 9.6%)**. Teacher shortages are prominent, especially in mathematics, English, Czech language and literature, physics, engineering, telecommunications and computing (MEYS, 2019). According to official data, in 2019 close to 20% of elementary schools had been looking for physics teachers for over a year (MEYS, 2019). The supply of graduates in teacher training programmes does not meet the demand and motivation among newcomers is dwindling: **only about half (53.6%) of teachers with less than five years of professional experience opt for teaching as their first career choice (TALIS 2018)**. Potential teachers are deterred from their desired path already before they enter university by various barriers, such as financial situation or the perceived quality of initial teacher education; and **about half of those enrolled in teacher training programmes end up pursuing a different career (Korbel & Prokop, 2021)**.
- **Education and Training Monitor 2023, Czechia**, Catalogue number NC-AN-23-002-EN-Q, ISBN 978-92-68-05821-3, online available on <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2023/en/country-reports/czechia.html>



A group of nine people, including eight women and one man, are posing for a photo in front of a light blue wall. The man is crouching in the front center, giving a thumbs up. The group is dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, including jackets, sweaters, and jeans. Behind them, the wall features large, dark blue 3D lettering that reads "RIGA ISLANDE HOTEL" and "VIESNĪCA" below it. To the right of the text are four gold stars, with the fourth star being white. Above the stars is a decorative yellow and white swirl logo. The ground is paved with grey cobblestones.

RIGA ISLANDE HOTEL

VIESNĪCA

Novice teachers - legislation

Sec. 24a Teacher's adaptation period

The legal entity operating the school shall support the beginning teacher during his or her adaptation period, in particular by appointing an induction teacher. The teacher's adaptation period shall be the period from the start of the teacher's first employment until the end of the teacher's 2 years of employment with the legal entity operating the school. The teacher's adaptation period shall be extended by the duration of the full-time obstacles to work for which the teacher does not work, if these obstacles last continuously for more than 4 months.

Sec. 24b Teacher-in-charge/Induction teacher

In particular, the induction teacher guides the beginning teacher methodically during his/her adaptation period, evaluates his/her direct teaching activities and the performance of work related to direct teaching activities with him/her on an ongoing and regular basis, and familiarises him/her with the school's activities and documentation.

(Act no. 563/2004 coll., on pedagogical staff)

Novice teachers' status

Strong points

- A relatively high salary for a newcomer to the profession.
- The status of the novice teachers has been added to the legal act.
- Fixed adaptation period of two years.
- The adaptation period includes evaluation and feedback
- The position of the induction teacher is set by the law.

Weak points

- Salaries of teachers are relatively flat. It takes a lot of years of practice until you get a pay rise (so it might be demotivating in the long-term).
- There is no direct legal definition of a novice teacher.
- No clear and set rules on how the adaption period should look like (quality might differ from school to school).
- It is not clear what consequences this evaluation might have and how far the data/personal detail protection goes (e.g. is it only for the teacher or also for the headmaster?).
- The duties of the induction teacher and the bonus for mentoring are not defined / mentioned by the law (i.e. they remain in the discretion of a headmaster).

Salaries of new teachers and financial prospects

- The salary of a novice teacher generally comprises of three components: salary scale, and statutory and non-statutory components of the salary. However, the most important part of the salary is the salary scale/tariff, which also usually forms its largest part.
- The salary scale of an employee is determined on the basis of the pay category and pay grade in which the teacher is assigned. The employer assigns the employee to the category in which the most demanding work the employer requires of the employee belongs to, according to the job catalogue.
- Based on the afore mentioned, the employee's salary scale can be influenced either by the performance of more demanding work included in the higher pay category or by reaching a higher pay grade. **However, novice teachers will generally not have had extensive experience in the field and will also not be assigned more demanding work. Their salary scale, and therefore their possibilities to improve their initial salary, will be low.**
- In the **career system**, as currently drafted, pedagogues basically have **two directions** of further development, namely '**managerial**' and **pedagogical**. They can focus on the leading roles within pedagogical staff, such as deputy principals and school principals, or develop their pedagogical competencies through the study of specialised subjects or further qualifications allowing them to teach at another type of school.

Continous professional development and career prospects

- The Act on Pedagogical Staff stipulates the **obligation for teachers to continue deepening their expertise for the entirety of their employment with the school**. Teachers are also provided with the opportunity to increase their professional qualification and can take some days off for self-study, during which they choose how they want to proceed regarding their further Education.
- **Self-study leave is a special leave of absence** for the purpose of further education of pedagogical staff, i.e., also teachers. It usually comprises **twelve days in a calendar year**. As this is an obstacle to work, the employer cannot assign the employee what subject matter to study or in which area they are to pursue their further education.
- However, the self-study leave can be taken **only if it does not impede the regular school life**. If the leave is taken during working hours the headmaster must look for a substitute teacher. This sometimes causes problems as the teachers cannot take the leave when they really want but when they are allowed to. Sometimes they are encouraged to take the CPD in their own free time which can make problems in the work-life balance especially of women who usually carry the burden of the care of the family.

Policies regarding novice teachers

- Regional education has always been a priority for the governments of the Czech Republic. However, it was not until the last government when the priority began to be pursued on a greater scale, especially with regards to the salaries of pedagogical staff.
- We can get an idea regarding the direction of education in the Czech Republic from two fundamental documents. The first is the *Programme Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic from January 2022*, and the second is the *Czech Republic's Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+*.
- A more detailed concept regarding teachers is provided in the *Educational Policy Strategy until 2030+* under the strategic line “3: **Support for Pedagogical Staff**”. The strategy emphasizes the need for maximum support for teachers and principals throughout their careers.
- In relation to novice teachers, the new government has committed in particular to expanding professional support for teachers in schools, including support for novice teachers. Furthermore, in cooperation with pedagogical faculties and faculties retraining teachers for their future jobs, the Government plans to increase the motivation to select the path of a pedagogical worker among students and promote a reform of teacher training with an emphasis on practical skills. The Government also plans to draft and implement a system of professional growth for teachers as a professional support tool.
- In terms of salary development trends, the Government has committed to keeping teachers' salaries at 130 percent of the average gross monthly salary, with at least 20 percent of salary funds designated to cover the non-statutory components of the salary, and with the proviso that these funds should be used effectively.
- The teacher's competency profile has been launched. It can be used for self-evaluation and the achievement, maintenance, and quality increases of teachers' expertise. It describes the professional prerequisites and competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) of a teacher who is able to manage the workload of the profession, apply modern forms of teaching, and respond to the changing needs of a heterogeneous population of children, pupils, and students. Last but not least, the section covering novice teachers also becomes a decisive criterion for the accreditation of other than undergraduate teacher education programmes. The competency profile includes the professional prerequisites and competencies for all phases of the teacher's career, i.e., from their undergraduate education through the induction period to further education as part of the teaching profession continued progress.
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Recommendations

- Pre-gradual preparation and its link to the real world of schools.
- The leadership of school and their support for novice teachers.
- Atmosphere in schools, „company culture“, supportive collegial atmosphere.
- Further and continuous professional development and career prospects.

What do novice teachers think and what we can do about it?

- Pre- gradual preparation is not sufficient – it does not prepare for the real situation in schools/ is not aligned with the reality.
- Conflict between idealistic motivations and the realities of th school environment.
- Too many administrative tasks not related to teaching (e.g. data and statistical analysis, dealing with issues realted to the socio-economic background and family of students).
- Lack of soft-skills and legal awareness.
- Lack of resources to support new teachers, lack of mentoring and coaching.
- The school environment is not sometimes very supportive.

"I enjoy working with children as well as in the field (English) and constant development in both. I am glad that I can apply ample creativity and improvisation. I appreciate the immediate feedback from the students as to whether the lesson was successful or not. In the Primary School, where I had a week-long internship, I had a paired teacher who gave me all the support (especially psychological) and was of a similar mind-set as myself. I miss that in my current school, but I want to make up for it in a different way (I'm looking for an external mentor)."

"It's more demanding (time, energy-wise) than I imagined. In addition to teaching my subjects, I have to discipline students and communicate with their parents, which is quite exhausting."

"A lot of paperwork that takes a lot of time. Unfortunately, there aren't many people or 'sites' where you can get the right information."

There were comments indicating the cooperation with the guide teacher did not work

"I didn't get any useful information, I had to work hard asking around to learn everything I needed to know."

"I was assigned a guide teacher, but I was not informed of the fact. The teacher did not show the slightest intention to work with me or advise me."

"They threw me in the deep end, leaving me to my own devices. They bet on how long I would last."

"... (I had) a guide teacher colleague who devoted about an hour to me during the first year. The rest was more or less a hit and miss scenario."

Electronic handbook for novice teachers / Czech version

December 2023

Electronic Handbook for Novice Teachers

(ČMOS, 2023, 94 pages)

1. Virtual more “experienced colleague” and a source of further information
2. Written by both novice and experienced teachers
3. Seven chapters on the most relevant topics (Introduction, Mentoring, Rights and duties, Social dialogue, Soft skills, Digitalization, Future of the Profession).
4. At the moment being trained on the national level
5. Online version



<https://skolskeodbory.cz/prirucka-pro-zacinajici-ucitele-odkazy-a-materialy>



Acknowledgements to our foreign partners from the project

The project SupportTeachers was a wonderful experience and opportunity:

- to learn something new about other jurisdictions and educational systems,
- to meet new people and learn new things,
- to prepare a useful tool for our young colleagues and to show to the educational community and general public that trade unions really care about the profession,
- to re-think critically our own educational system and get an inspiration from abroad.

Our thanks go to all colleagues from LIZDA, LESTU and ZNP who cooperated with us on the project!



Thank you for your attention!

Gabriela Tlapová

ČMOS PŠ

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