

# SITUATION REPORT ON INTERNAL SECURITY AND PUBLIC ORDER IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN 2021

**Prague 2022**

## Executive Summary

In 2021, internal security in the Czech Republic remained rather stable. A major impact on most aspects of internal security was the COVID-19 pandemic. Other significant factors which affected security in CR were external factors, especially the findings pertaining to the Russian involvement in the events in Vrbětice in 2014, the withdrawal of the Allied Forces from Afghanistan, and growing tension related to the accumulation of Russian forces at the border with Ukraine which escalated in an open aggression and a war in February 2022. In the long term, a negative element influencing internal security is growing inflation which can have an impact on the living standards of citizens and the development of criminal activity as a secondary effect.

According to the statistics of the Police of the Czech Republic criminal activity dropped by 7 per cent as compared to 2020, however this fact was to a large extent caused by major restrictions on social contacts caused by extraordinary and crisis measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and also by the increase of the damage limits set by the Penal Code. A shift of crime towards cyberspace continued in 2021.

As regards the completed legislative activities which have an impact on internal security of the Czech Republic, notably important are the amendments of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, the amendment of the Act on the Police of the Czech Republic, a change of the Act on Military Intelligence, the passing of the Act on Scrutinizing Foreign Investment, or changes in the area of addictive substances.

A major challenge for the Czech Republic in 2022 will be, besides a possible recurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic by the end of 2022, managing big flows of refugees who come to the Czech Republic from Ukraine due to the Russian aggression in the first half of 2022.

## Introduction to the Situation Report

The Situation Report on Internal Security and Public Order in the Czech Republic is an informative document of the Ministry of the Interior. Its purpose is primarily to provide an overview of the situation in the field of internal security and public order, give an overview of the development, structure and dynamics of crime, its perpetrators and victims, to inform about the identified damages, seized assets and proceed from crime, to inform about the activities of the executive and legislative branches in the field of security policy, and to identify risks and areas that warrant the concentrated attention of competent government authorities.

The introductory analytical part of the Report identifies major current security threats to the Czech Republic, predicts security development for the next year and sets the Internal Security Index. The 2021 Report was compiled by using background materials of state administrative authorities and other competent stakeholders, such as the Police Presidium, the Security Information Service (BIS), the Czech National Bank (ČNB), all relevant ministries, the National Office for Cyber and Information Security (NÚKIB), the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, the Prison Service, and the Mediation Service.

The Report contains the analysis of registered crime on Czech territory in 2021 as compared to 2020.

## Analysis of the Development in the Czech Republic

The situation of internal security in the Czech Republic in 2021 was influenced by several major factors and events. First to mention is **the COVID-19 pandemic** which affected practically all spheres of internal security, and generally the lives of all citizens not only in the Czech Republic but also in the world. **The state of emergency** was introduced throughout 2021 and related restrictions were in force on the whole territory of the Czech Republic from the beginning of the year through 11 April 2021, and then again from 26 November 2021 for 30 days.

Under the **Pandemic Law** passed on 26 February 2021 the Ministry of Health issued extraordinary measures. A **ban on movement of citizens from one district to another** was in force from 1 March 2021 through 11 April 2021, excepting some special cases. More than 35 thousand persons died since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 till the end of 2021, the precise number may be higher according to the Czech Statistical Office. Restrictions pertaining to the pandemic, including compulsory wearing of face masks and inoculation have stirred

**public tension and radicalization in society**, activation and rise of new protest political subjects, and decline of confidence in public institutions. A lack of communication of the need to introduce measures especially as regards their effectiveness, especially in the outset of the pandemic led to many protest gatherings.

A side effect of the pandemic and related restrictions was the general **drop in registered crime**, logically due to reduced mobility, economic activity, and meetings of citizens. On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of hate crime and other registered crime in the cyberspace, as well as unprecedented intimidation of some public authorities and medical experts.

Another significant event was the disclosure of the **involvement of officers of the Russian intelligence service G.U.<sup>1</sup> in the explosion of ammunition stores in Vrbětice**. Expulsion and reduction of the number of diplomats of the Russian Embassy in Prague followed. Consequently, speculations about imports of the Russian Sputnik vaccine stopped and a final decision was made on the exclusion of Russia from the completion of the Dukovany nuclear power plant.

A very rare occurrence of an extreme meteorological phenomenon – **tornado** – in Southern Moravia had an impact on the internal security in CR. A state of emergency was declared, including a heavy deployment of firebrigades and psychological assistance to people in distress.

At the end of 2021 **growing inflation** due to rising energy and food prices started to have a negative affect on internal security. Should this trend continue without a sensible interference of the administration, it could result in the rise of petty property crime.

A **high number of prisoners** has been a long standing problem in the Czech Republic, including a relatively high level of recidivism. A drop in registered crime due to the introduction of the amended Penal Code in 2020 became fully visible in 2021.

**Despite the above mentioned facts no significant violation of law and order occurred in the Czech Republic in 2021, and the security community assessed the situation in the long term as stable.**

## Internal Security Index

The Internal Security Index is a newly introduced tool for the assessment of internal security in the Czech Republic. It includes a statistical part and an expert assessment of the situation by individual parties involved in the preparation of this Report.

### Statistical Part

The statistical part describes trends in nine selected indicators showing how the security situation changed in 2021. They include public statistics and indicators based on expert assessment and sociological research.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as GRU.

Table 1

Monitored Field	Monitored Variables	Originator	Source
Crimes	Number of registered crimes	Police of the Czech Republic (PCR)	Statistics
Unemployment	Number of job seekers	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA)	Statistics
Burden on the social system	Number of benefits paid	MLSA	Statistics
Cyber security	Number of reported and registered incidents by NÚKIB	National Office for Cyber and Internet Security (NÚKIB)	Statistics
Burden on the prison system	Number of prisoners	Prison Service of the Czech Republic (VS ČR)	Statistics
Terrorism threat	Degree of terrorism threat	Joint Intelligence Group (SZS)	Expert assessment
Corruption	Corruption perception index	Transparency International	Expert assessment
Confidence in the state	Dissatisfaction with political situation	CVVM (research Our Society)	Sociological research
Confidence in the state	NON-confidence in democracy	CVVM (research Our Society)	Sociological research

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (MOI), 2022

Dates for 2019, 2020, 2021: less favourable values from the internal security point of view are marked in red, more favourable values are marked in green, comparable values are marked in yellow.

Table 2

Monitored Variables	2019	2020	2021
Number of registered crimes	199 221	165 525	153 233
Number of job seekers	215 532	291 977	258 173
Number of benefits paid	6 023 748	5 709 468	5 754 636
Number of reported and registered incidents by NÚKIB	78	99	157
Number of prisoners	21048	19286	18748
Degree of terrorism threat	1	1	1
Corruption perception index	56	54	54
Dissatisfaction with political situation	51	55	55
NON-confidence in democracy	20	18	23

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (MOI), 2022

The table below compares the values of the indicators in 2020 with the values in 2019 and 2021. The year 2020 is a basis with the value 100 for all indicators.

Table 3

Monitored variables	2019	2020	2021
Number of registered crimes	120	100	93
Number of job seekers	74	100	88
Number of benefits paid	106	100	101
Number of reported and registered incidents by NÚKIB	79	100	159
Number of prisoners	109	100	97
Degree of terrorism threat	100	100	100
Corruption perception index	104	100	100
Dissatisfaction with political situation	93	100	100
Non-confidence in democracy	111	100	128

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (MOI), 2022

The general internal security index is not a number but only the assessment of the question whether the situation has improved or got worse based on the selected indicators.

### Expert Assessment

This index was assessed by the MOI based on the expert assessment of all addressed authorities in the form of a structured questionnaire. The internal security situation was assessed on the following scale:

1 – significant improvement, 2 – improvement, 3 – similar situation, 4 – deterioration, 5 – significant deterioration

The authorities perceived security situation in the Czech Republic in 2021 mainly as similar to the year 2020 (assessment 3), in some cases as deteriorating (assessment 4). The absolute majority of the questioned authorities envisaged the outlook for 2022 as similar to the year 2021 (assessment 3).

The authorities have predominantly agreed that the security situation in the world in 2021 deteriorated as compared to 2020 (assessment 4). As regards the outlook for 2022, further deterioration has been envisaged (assessment 4), however, about one third of those questioned have envisaged a similar situation (assessment 3).

## Trends Abroad and their Impact on the Security Situation in the Czech Republic

In 2021 security situation abroad developed rather dramatically. One of the major events with an impact on the situation in CR was **taking power in Afghanistan by the Taliban movement in August 2021**. As a consequence, many citizens, diplomatic missions, and local collaborators with Western countries, including CR, were rapidly evacuated. Due to the change of regime in Afghanistan, the number of incoming migrants to CR applying for international protection increased. In the longterm, this change can also have an impact on the accessibility of some opium-based drugs which are smuggled from Afghanistan to the CR, and also on activities of radical and terrorist groups on Afghan territory, in neighbouring states, and worldwide. **Bad humanitarian situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover can cause the rise of the number of persons leaving the country.**

A new phenomenon in 2021 was an increase in illegal migration from Belarus, especially to Lithuania, Poland, and partly also to Latvia. In the context of EU sanctions on the Belarus regime because of the local presidential election followed by brutal suppression of civil society, the Belarus regime has actively and purposefully organized illegal border crossings to the EU in order to exert pressure on the Member States and destabilize the EU.

Especially at the close of 2021 we noticed a **concentration of military troops of the Russian Federation at the Ukrainian border**, and a more violent rhetoric of Russian officials towards that country. In February 2022 the situation turned into an open military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine which will be a subject of a more detailed analysis in the next Situation Report. Deterioration of relations with the Russian Federation resulted in increased concerns of securing the Czech Republic's and the EU energy security due to a possible immediate shutdown of the Russian gas supplies.

**The COVID-19 pandemic** played also a significant role in the area of foreign policy. Many countries experienced new and often more serious mutations of this disease which progressively spread on Czech territory. Insufficient vaccination coverage and a low level of health care especially in poorer countries cause a risk of spreading new mutations in the Czech Republic in the future. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the **disruption of supply chains**, price increase of commodities, and restrictions on travel. Disinformation campaign related to this phenomenon had an impact on the reaction of Czech society on the pandemic. It was used for attacks against the EU, and through pharmaceutical companies against the West in general.

Growing **territorial ambitions of China** towards some islands in the South China Sea and also towards Taiwan, as well as the state-sponsored cyber attacks and cyber espionage which is most often linked to China and the Russian Federation, are perceived negatively.

Increasing occurrence of **extreme climate phenomena** (such as tropical storms, draught, floods,...) which from the long-term perspective can result in rising migration from more afflicted countries to the EU including the Czech Republic, can also pose a risk. Financial crisis

including a high inflation in Turkey can also trigger an increased migration flow from Turkey to the EU.

## Outlook for the Next Year

Predictions for the internal security situation in the Czech Republic in 2022 are **similar to that in 2021**, without any significant deterioration or improvement. In view of the expected gradual cancellation of restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of crime can be expected to grow slightly, like before the pandemic. A possible increase of the level of crime can be related to a growing number of persons facing poverty due to a high and growing inflation. These persons are likely to resort to committing petty crime. Inflation and a growth of energy prices can be used by the pro-Kremlin quasi-media elements to launch manipulative and disinformation campaigns with the aim to undermine confidence in democracy and rule of law, or the CR membership in the EU and NATO.

A secular trend of **shift of crime to cyberspace** will continue. The Czech Republic will face consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic also in 2022, confidence of citizens in a quality functioning of the state will continue to be probably on a relatively low level which can result in a **possible growth of extremist attitudes in society**.

A significant event in the second half of 2022 will be **the Presidency of the Czech Republic of the Council of the European Union**. As regards internal security, there will be a bigger movement of foreign protected persons in the country, and a higher number of protest actions against the EU can be expected.

At the start of 2023, the Czech Republic will elect a new president. The second half of 2022 will therefore be dominated by the election campaign. The presidential election may be an opportunity for a foreign power to intensify subversive activities including disinformation campaigns.

During drafting of this report, the Russian Federation launched a military attack against Ukraine. **The ability of the Czech Republic to effectively deal with a huge number of Ukrainian refugees will have a big impact on many areas of internal security.**