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**SUBMISSION OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
TO THE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
ON THE EXERCISE OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Public Defender of Rights of the Czech Republic (hereinafter the 'Ombudsman') is an independent institution established by law. Since July 2025, the Ombudsman has been exercising the mandate of a National Human Rights Institution, and his deputy has been performing the duties of an ombudsman for children. I would like to express my gratitude to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the opportunity to contribute to the study on the impact of mental health challenges on the enjoyment of human rights by young people. We welcome this opportunity to present key findings and insights from our monitoring activities.

Question 1

Growing vulnerability in the area of mental health among children and young people

1. Children and young people aged 11–25 in Czechia consider mental health to be the most problematic area of their lives.¹ Cyberbullying and hateful online content are widespread.² In 2023, up to 40% of ninth-grade primary school pupils showed symptoms of moderate to severe depression and 30% symptoms of anxiety, with girls affected twice as often as boys.³

Mental health care for young LGBTIQ+ people

2. The mental health of young LGBTIQ+ people in the Czech Republic is negatively affected by stigmatisation, discrimination and violence. These factors increase minority stress, incidence of mental disorders and risk of suicide.

1 Ombudsman's research report, [Ref. No. 1827/2025/VOP/BJ](#).
All Ombudsman documents are available in the ESO database: <https://eso.ochrance.cz/>.

2 [Ipsos, T-Mobile, In Iustitia: Cyberbullying and hate speech online](#).

3 [National Institute of Mental Health: National monitoring of mental health in children and adolescents](#).

Unavailability of services for people with autism, intellectual disabilities and challenging behaviour

3. The Czech Republic faces a collective complaint lodged with the European Committee of Social Rights by Autism Europe.⁴ This organisation points to the lack of social services for people with intellectual disabilities and autism, including children. Our statement to the Committee⁵ confirms, based on our inquiries and research, that the complaint is justified. No fundamental changes are underway in the availability and quality of social services in the Czech Republic. The state is taking partial steps towards improvement. However, these measures are neither systemic nor sufficiently comprehensive.

Child participation in decisions about the provision of healthcare

4. Children are generally not able to consent to hospitalisation. Given the ambiguous legal framework, it is crucial to assess their capacity. There is a lack of methodological support from the Ministry of Health, which would provide health services with clear guidelines for assessing a child's capacity to participate in the relevant decision-making process. Incorrect approaches can result in unjustified interference with the children's rights.

Unaccompanied and separated children

5. Since 2011, we have been highlighting issues of unaccompanied children's access to mental healthcare. These children are not admitted to psychiatric hospitals, and are instead sent back with pharmacological treatment. However, the staff at the educational facilities, where these children are accommodated, lack the necessary expertise to supervise the use of medication. In one facility we visited, nearly half of the children were taking medication.
6. Timely psychological intervention could prevent some mental health problems. The refugee facilities administration reports a lack of psychological care. Migrant children who have undergone mental health treatment in their home country sometimes obtain

4 [European Committee of Social Rights, pending complaint No. 245/2025 International Association Autism-Europe v. Czech Republic](#)

5 Ombudsman's opinion, [Ref. No. 76/2025/OZP/MBA, 20/2025/SZD/MBA](#).

medication themselves due to limited access to mental health services in the Czech Republic.

Rising crime among minors and an increasing number of child victims

7. In the Czech Republic, both crime committed by minors and the number of minors who are victims of crime are on the rise. These victims belong to a particularly vulnerable group and need specialised psychological, social and legal assistance as close as possible to their place of residence.

Shortage of child psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, including high-quality experts

8. The Czech Republic faces a severe shortage of child psychiatrists and, to some extent, child clinical psychologists. In addition, there are very few court-appointed experts in these fields, with only six child psychiatrists nationwide. These experts are overworked and the quality of their reports seems to be rather poor. This negatively affects the course of court proceedings, such as those concerning child custody and the imposition of forensic treatment. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an inter-ministerial strategy to support expert activities in these fields.

Question 2

9. We recommended that the Ministry of Health develop a methodology to support healthcare professionals in identifying and considering children's opinions on hospitalisation and care. However, no action has been taken to date. We also recommended disseminating professional practices for psychological support of LGBTIQ+ clients, and drew attention to existing barriers preventing them from accessing healthcare.
10. The Government of the Czech Republic (hereinafter 'the Government') has made official transition more accessible and strengthened protection against prejudicial violence. Some ministers have publicly supported equality and respect. The National Institute of Mental Health has assessed the situation of young LGBTIQ+ individuals. We are monitoring these steps and providing recommendations.

11. The Government has adopted systemic measures to support people with intellectual disabilities and challenging behaviour.⁶ These measures address multiple areas, including access to services. The state is currently preparing an action plan with specific steps and measures.
12. The Government has pushed through a change in the law to secure a new source of funding for supporting particularly vulnerable victims, among other things. We publicly supported this change. However, a long-term strategy for victim care and a clear support framework for organisations assisting victims are still lacking.
13. The Government has struggled to recruit new experts in child psychology and psychiatry. In an effort to retain at least the existing experts in these fields, the Ministry of Justice does not provide sufficient oversight of their activities. Consequently, poor-quality, unverifiable expert opinions often go unpunished. Some courts rely on these opinions without sufficient scrutiny, despite their significant impact on people's lives.

Question 3

Critical gaps in mental healthcare for children and adolescents

14. The ongoing shortage of child psychiatrists, child clinical psychologists, and beds in child psychiatric facilities is alarming, given the worsening mental health of children and young people.⁷ There are currently only 157 child psychiatrists nationwide and nearly half may retire within five years. Additionally, there is a shortage of around 300 beds and 23 residential care facilities.⁸

Mental healthcare for young LGBTIQ+ people

15. Barriers include limited mental healthcare capacity, insensitive and disrespectful care, fear of discrimination, mistrust and insufficient strengthening of preventive care. The lack of systematic consideration of the specific needs of young LGBTIQ+ people prevents the creation of a space that respects diversity.

6 [Government of the Czech Republic, Systemic measures.](#)

7 Ombudsman's submission within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review, [Ref. No. 37491/2022/S](#), para. 21 *et seq.*

8 [Czech News Agency: Half of child psychiatrists may soon retire, 300 beds are missing.](#)

Systemic shortcomings in ensuring accessible services for people with mental disabilities and autism

16. The responsibility for planning the availability of these services lies with individual regions rather than the state, resulting in an uneven coverage. Financing of the social services system is not entirely predictable. Service networks are inflexible, which makes it difficult to respond to users' individual needs. The amount of the care allowance, which is used to pay for social services, is not individualised and often does not correspond to people's actual needs. Another significant issue is the shortage of qualified professionals to provide effective support of sufficient quality. A system of support for informal carers must be created, and community services must be developed.

Child participation and restraints in psychiatric care

17. Admission forms for child psychiatric facilities usually do not include a section for the child's own consent. At the same time, these forms include a preliminary consent of the legal guardian to the use of restraints on the child.

Insufficient funding for organisations assisting victims of crime

18. Services for victims of crime are provided by non-governmental, non-profit organisations (NGOs), whose operation depends on adequate state funding. However, this funding has been dramatically reduced to its current, completely inadequate level. Consequently, services are often unavailable, leaving many underage victims without support. This leaves them to cope alone with the trauma caused by the crime, which can have serious consequences for their mental health.

Question 4

19. The previous Government did not adopt a mental health strategy for children and young people. In 2025, the National Council for Mental Health at the Ministry of Health

addressed this issue.⁹ The new Government dissolved the council and replaced it with a new advisory body based on political rather than professional qualification.¹⁰

Question 5

20. The 2013 Victims Act established subsidies for NGOs to provide legal aid to victims, fulfilling the state's obligation under European directives to support victims. Initially, EUR 2 million (approximately CZK 50 million) was planned, but this target was never reached. In 2024, NGOs stated that they needed around EUR 580,000 (CZK 14 million) to maintain their services. However, for 2025 and 2026, the Government has only allocated around EUR 325,000 (CZK 7.9 million). This means that for several years, NGOs have received merely about a half of the necessary funding.

Question 6

21. Our recommendations are included within my answers, and are not repeated here.

Question 7

22. We have repeatedly provided comments on laws and strategies aimed at improving the mental health of young people. We continuously monitor the situation and comment on related issues, such as bullying, and hate speech. We also monitor the situation in treatment facilities and collect suggestions from citizens.

23. Our research has focused on the availability and planning of social services, and we are currently preparing follow-up recommendations. We have also conducted research¹¹ on the fulfilment of Article 19 of the CRPD and provided comments on the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services;¹² the Action Plan for

9 [Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, Minutes from the 18th meeting of the National Council for Mental Health held on June 24, 2025.](#)

10 [Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, press release of 14 January 2026.](#)

11 Ombudsman's research report, [Ref. No. 73/2024/OZP](#). Available in English [here](#).

12 [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs \(MoLSA\) of the Czech Republic, National Strategy for the Development of Social Services.](#)

Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services in Czechia;¹³ and the National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.¹⁴

24. In 2022, we published a summary report from visits to five child and adolescent psychiatric care facilities.¹⁵

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13 [MoLSA, Action Plan for the Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services in the Czech Republic 2026-2028.](#)

14 [Government Committee for Persons with Disabilities, National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities for the period 2021–2025.](#)

15 Ombudsman's Report, [Report on visits to facilities.](#)