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Analýza trendů kriminality v České republice v roce 2019
Analysis of Trends in Criminality in the Czech Republic in 2019
ISBN 978-80-7338-187-5

Summary

The analysis of trends in criminality in the Czech Republic is one of the traditional topics of the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention (ICSP) and has been published annually for almost three decades. The publication is based on existing statistical data from the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, including non-standard statistical reports prepared at the request of ICSP. It also uses information from the annual documents of the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office and the Government of the Czech Republic, as well as data from the Czech Statistical Office.

In addition to the above data, another source of information for the analysis is ICSP's own research and studies, professional literature and the opinions of experts from the ranks of the Czech Police and judiciary.

In addition to gathering and processing available data on the state and development of crime and criminal policy, the analysis also includes comments on development trends, along with a summary of possible factors affecting these trends.

The opening chapter, which is largely based on police statistics of registered crime, shows that after several years of declining numbers, there was a slight increase of 3.5% in the Czech Republic in 2019. This is the first time we have recorded an increase in crime since 2013. The structure of crime remains unchanged, with just over half being property crimes, these contributing most to the overall increase.

Moral crime continued to grow steadily (although it only represents 1% of criminal offences), where this type of crime is detected through social networks. This also relates to the overall increase in cybercrime, which has risen significantly in previous years, most recently by almost one quarter (23.5%).

Damages of over CZK 24 billion were caused by criminal activity in 2019, which is six and a quarter billion crowns more than in the previous year.

The number of people investigated and prosecuted also increased slightly year-on-year - by almost 1.5%. The proportion of recidivists among known offenders was 39%; recidivists

committed over 46% of crimes. The proportion of women that committed crimes in the Czech Republic stagnated at slightly above 17%, while individuals under the age of 18 make up a stable 5% of all investigated and prosecuted offenders.

In real numbers though, the increase in crime only represents single figures per day, so there is no immediate threat to security. However, the risk in the future appears to be cybercrime, which has penetrated into almost all areas of crime.

The third chapter on developments in criminal policy shows that the number of charged, prosecuted and convicted individuals in the criminal justice system increased in 2019 after a long-term downward trend, which generally relates to the increase in registered crime in the year in question. The number of charged, prosecuted and convicted legal entities also increased. However, this is a continuation of a longer-term trend. An increase in diversions with restorative elements was evident again in pre-trial proceedings in 2019. In terms of the structure of sanctions imposed as the main sentence, there were no significant changes; the share of imposed financial penalties continued to increase, but does not as yet work well in relation to the reduction of unconditional prison sentences, but rather as an alternative to suspended sentences. Even before the increase in absolute numbers, sentences to house arrest still played a marginal role.

At the same time, however, there was an evident decrease in the number of imprisoned offenders in 2019, both in the case of those in custody and in prison, which can probably be attributed to a reduction in the number of transformations and the increased use of parole. However, the Czech Republic still remains at the forefront in the number of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants compared to the rest of Europe. Discussion of the possibilities for improving this situation, such as decriminalising the evasion of mandatory alimony payments, changing the approach to the punishment of recidivism or changes in legislation relating to the problem of cumulative penalties, is still relevant.

The fourth chapter on juvenile crime shows that, following a slight increase in the number of juveniles charged and prosecuted in the previous year, a small decrease was evident in 2019. In the case of convicted juveniles, however, there was a continued slight increase, which also applied when calculated against the relevant adolescent population. After a certain departure in 2018, the share of diversions with restorative elements applied to juveniles stabilised again, but still has not reached the level in 2009 and especially the period before that. The structure of sanctions imposed by juvenile courts remains virtually unchanged compared to the previous year. General changes in sanctions policy concerning the imposition

of financial penalties have not yet had a significant impact in the case of juveniles. House arrest is rarely imposed for juveniles.

The fifth chapter deals with the issue of seniors - people over the age of 65. In 2017 to 2019, the proportion of solved crimes committed by individuals over the age of 65 of all crimes committed in the Czech Republic remained roughly the same, both in percentage (approx. 1.7%) and absolute numbers (approx. 1,600 crimes). Compared to the previous two years, the percentage of prosecuted individuals over the age of 65 of all prosecuted offenders was similar in 2019.

The proportion of prosecuted individuals over the age of 65 of the total number of prosecuted offenders was approximately 2% of all crimes in 2019. In absolute numbers, this was approx. 1,900 offenders. A smaller proportion, less than one fifth, were women.

It is clear from the above that the proportion of solved crimes committed by individuals over the age of 65 of the total number of solved crimes was low. In the same way, the proportion of prosecuted individuals over the age of 65 of all prosecuted offenders was low.

The sixth chapter summarises the views of judges and prosecutors, expressed in a survey conducted among the highest judicial and prosecuting bodies. In addition to a number of specific findings, which can be used as the basis for the preparation of legislative measures or case law, there was relatively broad agreement among representatives of the highest bodies of the criminal justice system regarding the perceived absence of a conceptual criminal policy, the need to prepare a new penal code, to reconsider the method of imposing and enforcing sentences and the need to address new phenomena relating to the increase and shift of crime to cyberspace. Conversely, the need to consider the decriminalisation of certain criminal offences was also mentioned repeatedly.

Chapter seven deals with the findings of a review of the effectiveness of changes made in the prison system on the basis of the amendment to the Criminal Code effective from 1 October 2017, when the types of prisons were reduced from four to two, specifically close security and high security prisons. Close security prisons have sections with different levels of security, namely low, medium and high security. The distribution of prisoners in the period before and after the change was evaluated. Although it would be logical to assume the distribution would remain more or less the same, a tendency to "widen the gap" at the expense of medium security is evident. The number of inmates in low security increased from 3.6% to 5.3%, with a decrease in medium security from 34.5% to 28.2% and increase in high security from 55.8% to 59.1%, i.e. an increase of more than three percent.

The eighth chapter deals with the tasks and activities of the Probation and Mediation Service. Two significant trends have been evident in the development of the Probation and Mediation Service agenda long-term. The first is a slight decrease in the supervision of community service due to a decline in 2010 and an ongoing fall in the number of these imposed sentences. The second trend is the gradual increase in the imposition of supervision by a probation officer, which has had a significant impact on the increasing average workload of Probation and Mediation Service officers.

An essential part of criminal policy is crime prevention. Therefore, the ninth chapter deals with the current state of the crime prevention system and preventive activities. Crime prevention in the Czech Republic is implemented at national and international level. The Czech Republic is a member of the European Crime Prevention Network. At inter-ministerial level, crime prevention is sponsored by the National Committee for Crime Prevention, which is composed of representatives of individual ministries and chaired by the Minister of the Interior.

Every year, the Ministry of the Interior announces a subsidy programme in the area of crime prevention. The main priority for 2019 was the prevention of crimes committed against the elderly and working with particularly vulnerable victims. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior announced a Crime Prevention Programme offering subsidies at local level, as well as supporting and implementing a number of specific crime prevention projects (Crime Prevention Assistant, Caretaker-Prevention Officer, Crisis and Assistance Lines, Safe Location - Safe Country, Map of the Future Project II).

The analysis in the tenth chapter traditionally deals with the proportion of foreign nationals involved in crime. This slightly exceeds the proportion of foreign nationals with permanent and long-term residency in the total population of the Czech Republic, which was 5.5% in 2019.

The share of foreign nationals involved in the number of criminal offences has not exceeded 7% for a long time, which also applied in relation to the proportion of known and prosecuted offenders. The proportion of foreign nationals involved in the number of offences in 2019 increased to 8.7% and the proportion of prosecuted individuals rose to 9.4%. The number of detected crimes committed by foreign nationals increased year-on-year, as did the number of prosecuted foreign nationals, but their percentage share of the total number of offences and prosecuted individuals only increased slightly (by 0.3% for offences and 0.2% for prosecuted individuals). Despite minor fluctuations, the share of crime committed by foreign nationals over the last five years has been relatively stable, with a certain increasing

tendency in their share of the number of prosecuted individuals and offences. The structure of detected crime by foreign nationals has been stable long-term. With regard to illegal migration, the number of detected cases of illegal migration increased somewhat in 2019, but not significantly.

Traditionally, the analysis also deals with trends in the development of organised crime. The opinions of experts on the development of organised crime in the Czech Republic expressed in chapter eleven more or less confirmed current trends. According to experts, the degree of organisation of criminal groups has increased slightly, which may be reflected in the declining proportion of outsiders, while the proportion of women remains relatively constant, as does the proportion of Czechs and foreign nationals. There have also been no significant changes in the top ten most widely represented nationalities in organised crime, and foreign nationals from four countries remain dominant, as has been the case for several years. It is important to draw attention to the order of the most widespread activities, with an increase in crime associated with the use of information and communication technologies. The predominant activities of groups comprising foreign nationals retain more or less the same focus. Questions aimed at determining the level to which bribery/corruption are used have shown that most experts believe the level of corruption used by organised crime is relatively stable, with efforts at corruption primarily aimed at making a profit. Respondents had a relatively balanced consensus on the development of organised crime over the next five years in that the scope of organised criminal activities would increase or remain the same. Basically, a decrease is not expected. The causes of a possible increase are associated with the pandemic and its economic impacts, the impact of a possible further wave of migration and a further increase in cybercrime.

The publication concludes with the twelfth chapter, which presents the main findings of repeated public opinion surveys on crime and crime prevention. In the last six years or so, there have been several positive shifts in the perception of the security situation in the Czech Republic. The public is more optimistic about the security situation and compared to the previous survey, we registered a decrease in the feeling of threat in relation to most criminal acts. The public view of the work of police officers also improved and people are more prepared to testify in case of a committed crime. A significantly lower number of respondents assumed the existence of corruption among public officials, police officers and judges, although the view of judicial authorities is only improving slowly. People consider the increase in the number of patrols on the streets, monitoring public spaces and the improvement of public lighting, i.e. situational preventive projects, to be important activities

in the area of crime prevention. However, knowledge of local crime prevention projects is still low among residents.

A negative aspect of the findings remains the increased level of vigilantism, where some groups of the population (especially minorities and foreign nationals) are a priori seen as a possible source of security risk. This is also reflected in low support for the establishment of various support facilities for such groups of the population, as well as major division on accepting migrants in the Czech Republic.

With a certain degree of caution, the relative stabilisation of trends in the development of crime can be considered as a reflection of the relative stabilisation of the social and economic situation in the Czech Republic in 2019 (and previous years). There were no major social and economic upheavals in 2018 and 2019, which can also be said of trends in crime.

Nevertheless, attention should be drawn to certain facts that emerged in terms of the development of crime in 2019. Statistical data and experts agree on the continuing increase of criminal activity in cyberspace, which is clearly confirmed by findings from abroad. This shift is reflected in all forms of crime, from property crime, through economic crime to moral crime; from "simple" crime to organised crime. A question also arises in the context of criminal policy, which concerns the effectiveness of imposed and enforced sentences, where current practice keeps the Czech Republic at the top of the index of prisoners in Europe. However, 2020 has brought new problems in the form of the pandemic and its subsequent economic impacts, which may also be reflected in the development of crime.

Translated by: Presto