



Czech Republic — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[also known under its official short name Czechia]

01/01/1993 Start Liberal Democracy [as Czech Republic]: After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, on this date, the Czech Republic became independent.¹ From its inception, it functioned as a liberal parliamentary democracy with competitive multiparty elections and respect for civil liberties. According to LIED and our own assessment, all executive and legislative elections during this period were multiparty and competitive. Women have held full voting rights and electoral eligibility since the country's foundation, continuing the franchise legacy of the Czechoslovak era. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the Czech Republic underwent a process of democratic consolidation marked by the institutionalization of constitutional courts, stable parliamentary procedures, and a pluralistic party system. The country's accession to the European Union on 01/05/2004 further embedded liberal-democratic norms, particularly in areas such as judicial independence, administrative transparency, and electoral integrity (Kopeček 2016). In the mid-2010s, however, the political landscape began to shift. The rise of populist movements, most notably the ANO party led by billionaire businessman Andrej Babiš, blurred the boundaries between political authority and economic influence. Babiš served as prime minister from 2017 to 2021 amid widespread concerns over clientelism, media concentration, and conflicts of interest (Havlík 2019).² Despite these challenges, electoral competition remained intact, and institutional checks, particularly from the judiciary, civil society, and the EU framework, helped preserve the regime's liberal-democratic core. Indeed, over time, several prime ministers were forced to resign due to corruption scandals, most notably Stanislav Gross in 2005, Petr Nečas in 2013, and the temporary fall of Andrej Babiš's minority government in 2018 following conflict-of-interest allegations. In all cases, however, executive turnover occurred through constitutional procedures and without extralegal disruptions. These episodes underscore not only the continued relevance of political accountability mechanisms, but also the resilience of formal democratic institutions. The regular alternation of governing parties and coalitions, ranging from center-right to center-left and populist formations, further reflects the enduring competitiveness of Czech national elections. The presidency of Miloš Zeman (2013–2023) was marked by polarizing rhetoric, pro-Russian and anti-EU positions, and frequent tensions with the parliamentary government. Yet the presidency remained formally constrained, and Zeman's style did not translate into institutional backsliding. In January 2023, former NATO general Petr Pavel won the presidential election, defeating a candidate aligned with Babiš. The campaign was marked by polarization, but the outcome was widely interpreted as a reaffirmation of Czech democratic and Euro-Atlantic commitments in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.³ In the senate election on 09/20/2024 and 09/21/2024 the populist opposition party ANO secured a historic victory, winning eight seats and becoming the largest single party in the Senate for the first time.⁴ V-Dem's EF&FI has consistently scored elections as free and fair, with the exception of the phase from 2018 to 2021 where they were scored only somewhat free and fair. V-Dem's CEI has always scored them as clean. According to FH, for the assessed regime period, the country is categorized as free with a score between 2 and 4, which corresponds to our interpretation of free. LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classify political liberties as present. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Lebeda 2010)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissolution_of_Czechoslovakia

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/czech-republic/freedom-world/2022>;
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Czech_Republic_2013?lang=en

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_Czech_presidential_election

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Czech_Senate_election

References

Lebeda, Tomáš (2010): Czech Republic, in: Nohlen, Dieter & Stöver, Philip (Hrsg.), Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook. 1. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 453–500.