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# CZECH REPUBLIC

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## Czech Republic

**Population:** 10.2 million (2.0 million under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 57,050

**Compulsory recruitment age:** 18

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** ratified 30 November 2001

**Other treaties ratified** (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ILO 182

***There were no reports of under-18s in the armed forces.***

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## Context

There were reports of ill-treatment of members of the Roma community. In January 2003 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed regret that some of its recommendations had not been sufficiently addressed. These included the development of awareness-raising campaigns aimed at reducing discriminatory practices against the Roma and the implementation of special programs to improve the standard of living, education and health of Roma children.<sup>1</sup>

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## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

The 1992 Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Constitutional Order of the Czech Republic, states that “Nobody shall be subject to forced labour or services” but also that this provision shall not apply to “military service or to any other service established by law in place of military service” (Article 9).<sup>2</sup>

The 1993 Law on Military Service states that all men between the age of 19 and 28 are liable for compulsory military service.<sup>3</sup> The government reported to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2002 that military service legislation, which came into force on 1 December 1999, specifies that military service duty “does not apply to a child”, who therefore “does not become a soldier and cannot participate in armed conflict”. The report, which defined 18 as the age of majority, stated that a child “cannot accept military service voluntarily”.<sup>4</sup> On ratifying the Optional Protocol the government declared that the minimum voluntary recruitment age, as prescribed in law, is 18 years.<sup>5</sup>

### Military training and military schools

The minimum age for enrolment in military secondary school is 15, and the minimum age

for enrolment in military university is 18. In 2004 around 800 students under 18 were attending military secondary schools. Students at military university receive weapons training; such training is not given at secondary schools. As part of plans to professionalize the armed forces, the Defence Ministry developed new recruitment programs for these institutions and was targeting 15 to 25-year-olds.<sup>6</sup>

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## Developments

### International standards

On 30 November 2001 the Czech Republic ratified the Optional Protocol and specified in its declaration “that the minimum age at which voluntary recruitment into its armed forces is permitted is 18 years. This age limit is prescribed by law.”<sup>7</sup>

- 1 *Amnesty International Report 2004*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.
- 2 Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, at Parliament of the Czech Republic (in English), <http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/docs/laws/listina.html>.
- 3 B. Horeman and M. Stolwijk, *Refusing to Bear Arms: A World Survey of Conscription and Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, War Resisters International, London, 1998, <http://www.wri-irg.org/co/rtba>.
- 4 Second periodic report of Czech Republic to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/83/Add 4, 17 June 2002, <http://www.ohchr.org>.
- 5 Declarations and reservations to the Optional Protocol, <http://www.ohchr.org>.
- 6 Communication from Defence Ministry, 20 April 2004; Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, report by Working Group on Military and Society, 15-19 November 2002, <http://www.dcaf.ch/news/miso/presentations>.
- 7 Declarations to the Optional Protocol, op. cit.