

# Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC)

## RCE Czechia



### Situation

The Czech Republic (or Czechia) is a high-income country with a high standard of living. Located in Central Europe, the nation is landlocked and experiences a temperate climate characterised by warm summers and cold winters. Its transition to becoming a liberal market economy starting in 1989 facilitated a shift towards becoming a consumer-based society. These newer consumption patterns are often in accordance with economic

Students at Ratibořická Primary School working on an activity, 'Saving resources (in and outside) the school'.



policy priorities. Due to this specific economic environment, consumerist desire has manifested as quantitative expansion rather than a qualitative shift in lifestyles. In this fast transition process, environmental concerns and global solidarity have continuously decreased, resulting in a challenge for policy makers to follow European green policies without losing the support of voters.

### Issue/s

Approaches to sustainable consumption are insufficiently developed to engage with individual consumers meaningfully, which is often an entry point for many education initiatives on the topic. Since little educational content has been designed to address individual consumption patterns, this makes tackling community consumption patterns all the more challenging. Consumers are thus not fully prepared to make informed decisions on everyday consumption of products and services, whilst alternative lifestyle models are almost non-existent. Therefore, knowledge and skills for qualitative lifestyle change at both the individual and community level are needed. Education is an important tool for changing consumer behaviour in order to minimise and reorient consumption and reduce its environmental impacts. However, in the Czech education system, the topic of sustainable consumption is virtually absent, appearing only sporadically in curricular documents and not as a fully-fledged part of the educational system.



Students at Ratibořická Primary School conducting an ecoteam planning session (analysis of the school environment).

### Responses/Actions Taken

In order to create a knowledge base of which interventions have been proven effective, RCE Czechia conducted a literature review on consumer behaviour and how education can make their behaviour more sustainable. This step included consultations with researchers in this area to implement the most recent scientific knowledge in practice. Once the literature review was conducted, the researchers began a process of dialogue with teacher education institutions, teachers already working in the country's school system, and other actors involved with education on sustainable consumption. This interaction was essential to lay out which best practices were relevant to the Czech education system, what modifications were needed to make them more effective in a Czech context, and what potential barriers existed in implementing these measures. The dialogue between the researchers and the educators addressed not only what should be updated in curricular content, but how best to promote a whole-institutional approach as a tool to align the learning objectives from curriculum with the values and environment of the whole school. As the curricular documents are not supportive for these types of innovations, dialogue with policy makers has been initiated to update the curriculum.

### Results

As a result of the RCE project, a [methodological toolkit](#) was developed in dialogue with teachers and teacher



Country: The Czech Republic

SDG(s):  
3 Good Health and Well-Being,  
4 Quality Education,  
12 Responsible Consumption and Production,  
13 Climate Action,  
17 Partnerships for the Goals

Theme(s):  
Curriculum Development,  
Waste

Target audience(s):  
Community, Primary,  
Secondary, Higher Education,  
Teacher Education,  
Youth (Non-Formal)

Ecosystem(s):  
Urban/Peri-Urban

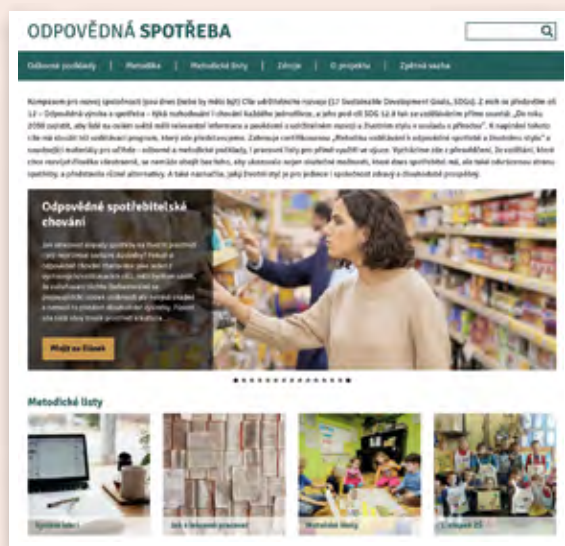
GAP / ESD for 2030 Priority  
Action Areas: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Language(s) of project:  
Czech

Contributing organisation(s):  
• Charles University Environment Centre  
• TEREZA, Educational Centre  
• University of J. E. Purkyně (UJEP)  
• Society for Sustainable Living

Linkages to education and/or sustainable development policies:  
• Policy recommendations delivered through the Committee for Education of the Government Council for Sustainable Development.

Duration of project:  
January 2018 – ongoing



The methodological toolkit, 'Odpovědná Spotřeba', featuring materials for educators.

trainers. This toolkit focused on sustainability values, competencies for education for sustainable development (ESD), creativity for innovation, critical thinking, and orientation to information in a high-information environment. This toolkit has been tested and reflected upon by educators from different levels of education (pre-primary, lower and higher primary, secondary), and its impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour has been evaluated by an



Odpovědná Spotřeba

Students at Primary School Svatý kopeček using t-shirts creatively as they learn about upcycling.

independent expert. The material is currently being used within the EcoSchool network which includes over 400 schools and is disseminated to a number of other educational institutions. Furthermore, RCE Czechia made policy recommendations to the Committee for Education of the Government Council for Sustainable Development in regards to which curricular updates and best practices should be formalised going forward.

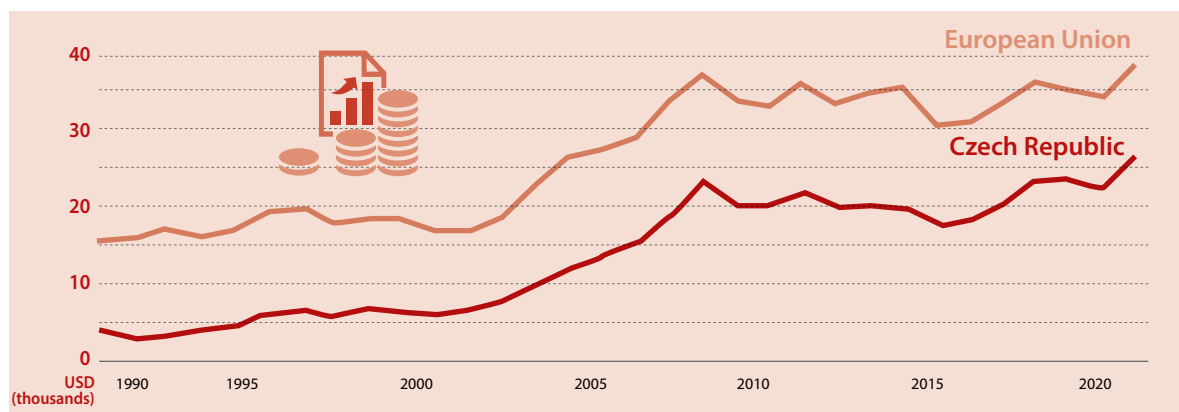


Figure 23. GDP per capita (current US\$) – Czech Republic. (Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, 2021).

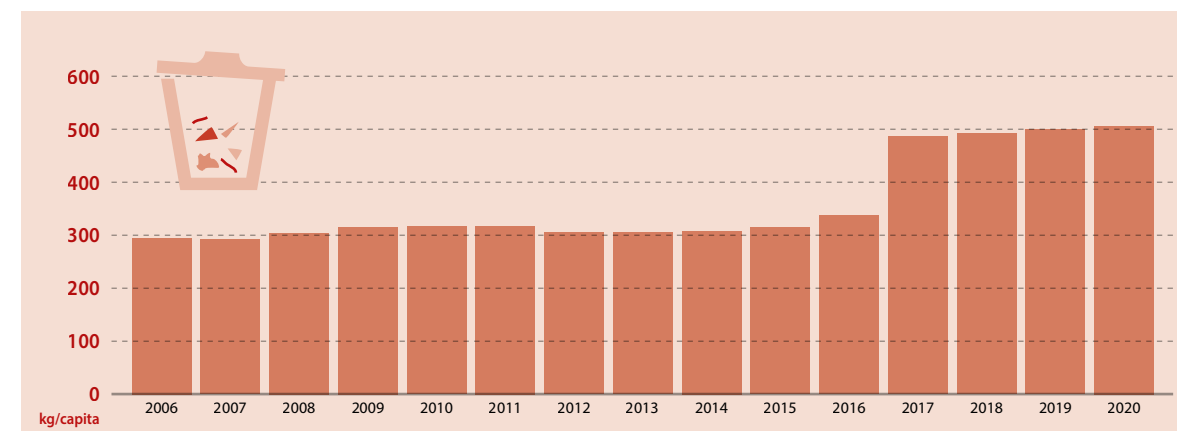


Figure 24. Municipal waste production in the Czech Republic between 2006–2020 (kilograms per capita). (Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

### Lessons Learnt:

In the initial phase of a project such as this, transdisciplinary dialogue between key stakeholders is needed in order to bridge difference in understanding of basic terms and assumptions. While research into literature can provide the basic input to take to stakeholders, the active involvement of multiple stakeholders (teachers, teaching training institutions, administrators, policy makers, and other actors) is needed for the actual creation and implementation of a curricular toolkit and a

whole institutional approach to education for sustainable consumption. Reflection and research on the implementation is the basis for developing messages for policy makers. In addition, the project's focus is on household procurement, which may need to utilise a gender lens to better understand the consumption patterns of all genders. If consumption is more discussed as an opportunity for innovation and change of practices, engagement strategies for all genders will be essential.

### More Information:

- [Odpovědná Spotřeba](#) (Materials for educators e.g. thematic and methodological resources, methodological sheets, feedback)
- [Enviwiki - Portál: Odpovědná spotřeba](#) (Portal for sustainable consumption)
- Dlouhá, J., Henderson, L., Kroufek, R., Jančaříková, K., & Neprašová, S. (2021). [Vzdělání k udržitelné spotřebě a životnímu stylu – cíle a výstupy](#). (Education for Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle Change - Educational Goals and Outcomes) *Envigogika*, 16(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14712/18023061.619>

- Dlouhá, J., Henderson, L., Kroufek, R., Jančaříková, K., & Neprašová, S. (2020). [Udržitelná spotřeba a životní styl jako vzdělávací téma: Jaké vzdělávací cíle si stanovit, když chceme předjímat společenské změny?](#) (Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle as a Theme in Education. What educational goals do we set when we want to anticipate social change?) *Envigogika*, 15(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14712/18023061.608>