

# Chapter 8: Czech Republic

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## Introduction: 20 Years in the Union

The Czech Republic has been a member of the EU for twenty years. It is a continuing story of a complicated relationship that undoubtedly benefits the Czechs. On the contrary, the Czech Republic can sometimes be an incomprehensible partner for the European Union (EU). The Czech Republic has long presented itself as a Eurosceptic country, yet EU membership is seen by its citizens as conventional, necessary, and economically beneficial. Criticism or Euroscepticism has its roots in the rhetoric of the first MEPs (sentiments such as ‘Brussels dictates, Brussels says,’ were common, and they are often used by politicians as a figure of speech and even by media). It may also be an accidental legacy of many years of membership in various international organisations of which communist Czechoslovakia was a member (such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and others).

The decision to join the EU was taken in a national referendum in May 2003. For the public, entering the EU was not just seen as becoming a member of an international organisation but as an explicit ‘return’ of the Czech Republic to Europe. It corresponded to the feeling that the Czech Republic was forced to adopt a pro-Russian or pro-Soviet orientation after the Second World War. Joining the EU confirmed the Czech pro-Western value stance and a clear distinction against Russia, signalling that Czechia is part of ‘Western Europe’.

## Back to Europe

The Czechoslovak political representation expressed interest in membership in the European Community (EC) in 1990, just one year after the Velvet Revolution (that became a label for a peaceful transition from the communist regime to a democratic one). After the fall of the communist regime in the country, the ‘Return to Europe’ was part of one of the central conflict lines—communism vs. anti-communism. The carrier of the democratic transition and the dominant force on the political scene, the Civic Forum headed by Václav Havel, even chose the slogan ‘Back to Europe’ for the first democratic elections. Havel claimed that Czech Republic (Slovakia) has historically been an integral part of Europe; however, its connection was severed by the communist regime. He aspired to reclaim that historic alliance within Europe.

Although an association agreement was concluded in 1991 (then together with Hungary and

Poland), the split of the Czechoslovak Federation at the end of 1992 meant that the ratification process was suspended (Konrádová and Konrád, 2019: 1). However, returning to Europe was a priority for all Czech governments, and there was unprecedented political consensus on joining the EU. Of the parliamentary parties at the time, only the Communist Party (KSČM) had a long-standing ambiguous position on the issue of accession. However, it eventually launched a campaign against EU accession.

The application to join the EU was submitted by the right-wing government of Václav Klaus in 1996, and accession negotiations began two years later (under the leadership of then Deputy Foreign Minister Pavel Telička). Pre-accession negotiations were concluded at the end of 2002, and the European Council decided to admit the Czech Republic and nine other European states on 1 May 2004 (Euroskop, 2019). The Czechs approved the accession in a national referendum held in June 2003, with a turnout of 55.21% of eligible voters and 77.33% in favour of accession. The entry of the Czech Republic into the EU was essentially a continuation of the smooth development of the interwar political situation, which was only temporarily halted by the communist regime (Dyba, 2004: 80). This was also evident in the government’s ‘Welcome to the Community’ campaign (see Images 8.01), which was not merely informative—the ‘Objectives of the Communication Strategy’ document referred to the government’s programme statement, which identified EU accession as a programme priority. The campaign aimed to convince citizens of the benefits of joining the EU (Vilímek, 2005: 163). The government allocated roughly €8.3 million for the campaign, and it was handled by advertising agencies Leo Burnett, MARK/BBDO, and McCann Erickson Prague at cost only, without any fee, because they considered it too prestigious and essential for the entire country.

The government had been working on a comprehensive communication strategy since 1997 because the complex subject of accession could not be condensed into a ‘small’ conversation but would instead require long-term and multi-stage communication. The primary effect of the media campaign was to arouse citizens’ interest in the issue of the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU. Individual parliamentary parties organised various promotional campaigns, which were difficult to distinguish from those organised by the government. Economic

entities also joined the campaign; for example, the then semi-state-owned Czech telecommunication company Telecom (O2 today) undertook to provide a free information line. The EU itself also played a role. The Delegation of the European Commission has been in Prague since 1992 and has published many information leaflets and brochures about the EU and the consequences of accession for Czech citizens. The last actor can be identified as the mainstream media itself, which promoted the accession to the EU, provided varying degrees of space for supporters and opponents of the accession process, and engaged itself to varying degrees (Vilímek, 2005: 160-161).

The campaign was divided into three phases (Adamcová, 2003). The first wave included billboards, TV spots, and prints. The aim was to bring the EU brand closer to the ordinary Czech citizen. The government relied on the messages of model citizens of current member states (e.g., an Irish computer specialist, a Finnish manager, a Greek café owner, a Portuguese fisherman, an Austrian pensioner, and a Spanish bus driver). The visuals were accompanied by the logo - a yellow YES with stars in a circle instead of the letter O on a blue background. The logo's meaning was supposed to be 'everyone says YES to decide on this fundamental issue, YES to ask questions, and YES to come to vote in the referendum'. The second wave took place before the vote on accession to attract as many voters as possible to participate in the referendum, and its symbol was the knot on the European flag. The campaign was extended to radio and the internet. In the event of success, a third phase was planned after the referendum, with a billboard campaign with a simple 'Thank you'.

It must be said that the political consensus has disappeared with the accession to the Union. The EU has become another electoral playground in which the parties compete. Indeed, this election level is lucrative for the parties for several reasons. Firstly, entities that win at least 1.5% of the total valid votes in the European Parliamentary (EP) elections are automatically entitled to a 'contribution to the election costs' (the so-called 'vote allowance') from the state budget. This amounts to CZK 100 for each vote for that entity. The first elections to the EP were held in June 2004, just a month and a half after the Czech Republic's official accession. The harmonisation of Czech and European legislation that preceded the accession directly affected the election campaign. Candidates are legally guaranteed space within the airtime of Czech Television and Czech Radio. A total of 14 hours is reserved for both media. The official start of the campaign is sixteen days before the elections. Political promotion 48 hours before the elections is not allowed. The law also clearly stipulates



Image 8.01: European Union welcome and community campaign logos. Source: Adamcová (2003).

that polls and forecasts cannot be published three days before and during the voting (Law 62/2003, Article 59).

Thirty-one parties and movements stood for election to the EP in 2004. The interest of many entities is also due to the small electoral deposit. Some recessionary or folkloric groups used the candidacy to raise their profile. For example, the daily *Mladá Fronta Dnes* published profiles of individual candidates on its front page. In commercial advertising, small groups would not have paid for similar advertising. A maximum of 32 candidates could appear on the candidate list. However, many parties did not use the maximum number (Šaradín et al., 2004: 188). Domestic political issues dominated the election campaign. They had little to do with what was going on within the EU itself and with the position of a member state within it (Šaradín et al., 2004: 178).

By law, the election campaign started on Thursday, May 26. For example, the media reported, 'Politicians promise: the campaign will be different. Funny. Original' (Holecová, 2004a: 3). However, the campaign was a big disappointment. To some extent, the form, themes, and voter interest of the first Czech EP elections foreshadowed the subsequent movements. What was common for all political parties was that they resigned themselves to significant events, and their people addressed the voters face-to-face on the streets rather inconspicuously. Most political parties thus concentrated on meetings with citizens. Candidates did not 'pull' on Euro-politics or Euro-themed issues (Holecová, 2004b: 2). Despite the campaign leading up to the accession referendum a year ago, Czech citizens were not sufficiently informed about what Members of European Parliament (MEPs) do and considered Brussels a distant, disconnected place with no natural powers (Kašpar, 2010: 43).

Regarding the campaigns themselves, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) had bet on highlighting its political achievements in its campaign. However, this was not an appropriate step, as the EP elections were essentially a referendum on voters' satisfaction with the current government. The campaign lacked an original idea, a lack of a quality and attractive candidate list, and the expected low turnout also played a role, which certainly did not play into the party's ambitions. The party communicated mainly through public meetings. The Eurosceptic Civic Democrats (ODS) also chose traditional tools for campaigning. However, there was a noticeable effort to introduce new elements in this party. Compared to its competitors, the party relied more on the internet. However, as with other parties, the main emphasis was on

election meetings. The party did not use European issues but mainly attacked the ruling parties and declared its defence of national interests. The Christian Democratic Party (KDU-ČSL) surprised many with its campaign. The traditionally conservative party also tried to attract young voters by launching a competition on its website for the most beautiful girl in its movement. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia ran a modest election campaign, but it bet on a good theme and used its strong leader Miroslav Grebeníček. The Communist Party emphasised national issues and national interests. It also warned of a possible revision of the Benes Decrees, a traditionally sensitive case for the Czech public.<sup>1</sup> The party also spread fears of potential domination by large European states (Kašpar, 2010, ch. 4.1).

The disappointment of the first Euro Campaigns was considerable. The vice-president of the Advertising Council, Jiří Mikeš, said bluntly: 'It was a great pity. The head of the Public Opinion Research Agency STEM, Jan Hartl, stated that 'the campaign for the European Parliament elections was generally deplorable and neglected by the political parties, despite their verbal proclamations about how much they cared about our representation in the EU, demonstrated the opposite' (Kramer, 2004: 1). Nevertheless, one can see the first glimpses of the professionalisation of election campaigning in the campaigns, which in general in the Czech Republic dates back to the national elections in 2006 (Matušková, 2010). In this context, it is also important to mention that the parties for the European elections released only one-tenth of the money they gave to campaigns before the national elections. It is not clear how much the parties spent. Still, the following information appeared in the media: the ČSSD had a total of 30 million, as did the ODS, the KDU-ČSL wanted to spend 10 million, while the KSČM wanted to spend 5 million, and the ruling Union of Freedom 6 million crowns (Kopecký and Dolejší, 2004: 2).

From a different perspective, the first elections to the EP represented an imaginary re-entry into the European Western family. The strongly right-wing ODS party won the election, which will continue to present itself as a Eurosceptic party. One of the narratives that is likely to persist in future campaign is that decisions are being implemented by Brussels with little opportunity for Czechs to inform EU policy.

### **Euroscepticism or Eurorealism?**

European integration has long been regarded as an elite project in which citizens could be ignored. This

<sup>1</sup> The Benes Decrees, or Decrees of the President of the Republic, were legal documents issued by President Benes during World War II in exile and later in 1945. The ones mentioned here are those that formulated the post-war removal of Czechoslovak Germans. These specific regulations remain highly controversial.

top-down perspective has resulted in describing the European Union (EU) as a compromise-seeking machine that produces ‘policy without politics’ (Schmidt, 2006: 5). This also applies to the Czech case, where the enthusiasm for joining the Union stemmed from the post-communist cleavage of the old vs. new regime. At the beginning of the Czech-EU relationship, it was challenging to find a political party or movement that would seriously consider alternatives to joining the EU in its then-current form; the mass public was overwhelmingly positive, too (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 298). At the same time, the Czechs’ relationship with the EU is most often described as sceptical. The result of the referendum to join was positive, but was only 55 percent, the third lowest amongst the new Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) member states.

There is an expression in the Polish language translated as ‘Czech movie’. It literally means chaotic,

difficult to understand, and very complicated, with absurd and awkward moments. This can be used to illustrate the first years of the Czech Republic in the Union. There was a clear will to join the EU. It was soon followed by the feeling that we had just escaped a totalitarian regime. Now, we are members of the new entity and are once again told how to behave and what to do. On top of that, the media and politicians used expressions such as ‘Brussels tells us’ and ‘The Brussel dictatorship’; a podcast produced by *Hospodářské noviny*, one of the most read media in the country, was even created under this title (Podcasty et al., 2024).

Another source of Czech Euroscepticism may be the feeling that we are a tiny country within the EU. Though Greece, Sweden, Hungary, and Belgium have the same number of MEPs (12) and Austria, Denmark, Slovakia, and many other countries have fewer, it is still deeply ingrained in Czech society that

<b>Party</b>	<b>Euroscepticism</b>
ANO	HARD
ČSSD	SOFT
ODS	HARD
Piráti	SOFT
TOP + STAN	SOFT
SPD	HARD
KDU-ČSL	SOFT
KSČM	SOFT-HARD

Figure 8.01: Czech Party-political positions in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: Shavit et al. (2022: 338).

we are a small and insignificant country within the EU. It is indeed necessary to recognise this starting point for forming national attitudes. The Czech Republic often presents itself as an illegible partner. This attitude has changed significantly recently, primarily due to foreign policy positions (see Figure 8.01 below).

It is necessary to avoid simplified conclusions and get a clear picture of what the Czechs are sceptical about because it is not so much about whether being in the European Union has been good or bad. Instead, it works as an institution. There is a significant disparity between the positive evaluation of membership and the institution's negative assessment (Czech Radio, 2019). Traditionally, Euro-optimism demonstrates trust in the EU and confidence about its economic and social future; Euroscepticism reflects a negative attitude toward the effectiveness of the EU integration and enlargement. Without relying on any specific ideology, Eurosceptics fear the dilution of national sovereignty, heavy administrative bureaucracy, unequal approach to the different member states, refugee problems, etc. (Shavit et al., 2022: 321-22). Within these two basic categories, we can further distinguish. In our case, the subdivision of Euroscepticism is important: hard Euroscepticism implies the outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU; soft Euroscepticism is defined as involving 'contingent or qualified opposition to European integration; Taggart and Szczesniak 2001: 5-6). It is interesting how Czech political parties move in these categories. Among many political elites in the Czech Republic, Euroscepticism is widely understood as a 'healthy criticism'. None of the parties openly advocate exiting the EU (Shavit et al., 2022, p 337). Simplification is problematic in the Czech case, as the attitude of one particular party towards the EU differs ideologically during the campaign and on individual issues. The terms 'hard' and 'soft' focus on further European integration, membership, eurozone, etc. The development of these terms and approaches has to be further analysed, and we know this is just an introduction to a much bigger topic. When we say 'complex', we are referring to the rejection of the EU project in terms of administration, the dictates of Brussels, and critical issues (such as adopting the euro). Soft means criticism of ad hoc topics, often somewhat inflated by the media, but also (and above all) marketing attitudes during election campaigns.

Due to previous research and especially data from the Election Monitoring Center, it is possible to divide Czech political parties into the whole group of Euroscepticism (soft and hard; Shavit et al.,

2022: 334-339).

It is important to investigate political marketing and campaign techniques to understand Euroscepticism with all its angles and shades. In some ways, the issues are used pragmatically during the campaign, basically to promote the candidates and keep the ideological integrity of the party (Shavit et al., 2022: 334-339). The second EP election campaign (in 2009) in the Czech Republic occurred under specific political conditions. First, it coincided with the Czech presidency of the EU (January–June 2009), which ensured that the European agenda was much more at the centre of the media and public discourse than ever before. Another effect of the presidency was that the leader of the governing coalition, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), had to hold back its traditionally critical stances towards the EU and, in the campaign, tried to profit from the fact that the party leader, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, was the President of the European Council at the time of the elections. However, even more important was the unexpected vote of no confidence in the ruling government on March 24, which the Social Democratic Party brought about as a result of long-lasting disputes over domestic policy issues. After the government's fall in March, a provisional government was installed, and the Parliament decided to hold early elections in September 2009 (later postponed until the regular term in 2010). In effect, what were initially expected to be standard second-order elections became quasi-first-order elections, at least from the perspective of the leading parties, which used the EP elections as a practice for the forthcoming national elections (Negrine et al., 2011: 79).

The fringe parties ensured the visibility of Europe, with the anti-European parties being more active in communicating their statements. This was apparent not only in the television spots, where the leaders of the three Eurosceptic parties targeted the EU or the Lisbon Treaty much more directly and dramatically, but also on election posters (Negrine et al., 2011: 85). The Social Democrats and the Civic Democratic Party approached the campaign merely as a practice for the upcoming national elections rather than a battle for EP seats.

The main highlights of the 2009 campaign were the ODS election team's placed emphasis on the internet, which was inspired by the Obama campaign, and tried to benefit from social networking tools. It set up a unique election website, created a website criticising its main competitor (ČSSD), and set up a special website offering solutions to the financial crisis. Another unique feature, following the example of Barack Obama, was the establishment of a team of volunteers, the so-called Blue Team. At the same time, the ODS clearly acknowledged its



Image 8.02: ČSSD 2009 election billboard: ‘Prevent the return of the ODS. No more child benefit cuts.’ Source: Lidovky (2009).

Eurosceptic position when it declared its intention to co-found a new, relatively sceptical faction in the EP together with the British Conservatives (Kašpar, 2010: 50). The KDU-ČSL also tried to modernise its campaign and made extensive use of the internet. They had two communication channels on the YouTube video server: ‘one party’ and ‘one European’.

The left-wing parties, ČSSD and KSČM, relied on traditional election meetings and did not bring anything new regarding political marketing. However, the Green Party, which lost the 2009 Euro elections, took advantage of the growing trend of personalisation in the Czech environment and its campaign, compared to ODS or ČSSD, which also relied on their leaders, can be considered a successful example of a personalised campaign using the personal brand of its leader Ondřej Liška.

The 2004 and 2009 Czech EP elections were framed very expressly - the former took place just one month after EU accession, and the latter was held within the Czech EU Council Presidency. Thus, the 2014 EP elections were, from this perspective, the first ‘normal’ EP elections as they were not affected by any important EU-related event as in the previous cases (Kaniok, 2015: 7). The Czech party landscape had almost wholly transformed during the five years since the 2009 EP elections. Almost all relevant parties changed their leaders (some of them not only once), and the arrival of new parties and political movements introduced new strong figures. There were 39 lists registered for the EP election altogether;

however, most did not have a real chance to reach the 5% threshold from the beginning of the campaign. The new political actors, especially the ANO movement—a strongly personalised party classified as a business firm—built their political success on political marketing in the primary elections.

The EP election in 2014 was the least visible and interesting campaign in modern nationwide elections held in the Czech Republic, with the lowest voter turnout (18.20 percent) in history. It does not mean that both the parties and media ignored the election, but the intensity of coverage through billboards, adverts, meetings, and TV debates was notably reduced. Only those engaged in politics and European integration and, of course, the politicians themselves demonstrated interest (Kaniok, 2015: 14). General valence statements and empty slogans prevailed within party manifestos (Havlík, 2014). Concerning governmental parties, it was sometimes challenging to distinguish amongst them, especially in the case of ANO 2011 and ČSSD. Relevant parties stressed the same topics (and policy agendas) that were important in the case of the 2013 parliamentary election. As Kaniok and Havlík (2014) identified, parties preferred the European level of governance as a governmental frame. The campaign preceding the election was hardly visible, lacking any contentious issues—the previous campaigns financially exhausted parties who could not pump much money to keep voters engaged. The ruling parties were consumed more with their intra-governmental agenda and dis-

**ANO BUDE LIP** Aby i naše děti měly v Evropě šanci  
 POLITICKÉ HNUTÍ

Andrej Babiš Pavel Telička

**10. dubna 18:00** Dělnický dům Jihlava Žižkova 15, Jihlava

Bliží se volby do Evropského parlamentu a my opět vyrazíme za vámi. Členství v EU bychom chtěli využít především k prosazování českých zájmů a prestiže v Evropě i ve světě. Proto vám představíme naše myšlenky a budeme naslouchat vašim potřebám a názorům, které bychom měli v Evropském parlamentu prosazovat. Abychom byli silní doma i v Evropě. Pojdme se potkat. Bude lip.

23. - 24. května 2014 Volby do Evropského parlamentu

[www.anobelip.cz](http://www.anobelip.cz) [www.facebook.com/anobelip](http://www.facebook.com/anobelip)

Image 8.03: ANO election billboard. 2014. European Parliamentary elections. Source: Authors' archive.

V Bělohovsku 100 m

**Nespravedlivé mzdy jsou faul!**

ČSSD PRO FÉROVOU EVROPU

RNDr. Pavel Poo kandiduje do Evropského parlamentu

Image 8.04: ČSSD election billboard. 'Strike to unfair wages. For a fair Europe'. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections Source: Chrudimské Noviny (2019).



Image 8.05. SPD 2019 billboard: ‘Czech Republic first! Together against the Brussels dictate.’ European Parliamentary elections. Source: SPD (2019).



Image 8.06: ANO election billboard: ‘We will protect Czechia. Tough and uncompromising.’ 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: Deník N (2019).





Image 8.07: Top 09 election billboard. ‘Vote for allies, vote for EU, stronger together.’ 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: TOP 09 (2019).

putes (Kaniok, 2015: 16).

The 2019 elections were a clear victory for the ANO movement. It also led to the election of the Pirate Party and the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) movement. Turnout was significantly higher, and the campaign was visible, sophisticated, and surprisingly dominated by European issues. At the same time, many parties began to present themselves as increasingly Euro-realist. This is an effort to distinguish themselves from parties that are critical of the EU in an unambiguous way and, on the contrary, to present themselves as a party that can effectively identify the problems of the Union and offer constructive solutions. Parties were divided into pro-EU

candidates and those labelling them Euro-realist. The SPD here also used their international colleagues, Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini. Nationalism and ‘protection’ of the Czech values were the strongest motives of this campaign.

### Second-order Elections in Practice

What can we say about the Czech elections to the European Parliament? It shows that there is a lack of voter interest, with turnout much lower than in the general elections (historically the lowest turnout in the European elections was 18.20 percent, while the highest turnout in the parliamentary elections was 65.43 percent). The campaign’s topics often focus

on domestic issues rather than European agendas. Moreover, the ruling government parties are penalised electorally at the expense of opposition or non-parliamentary parties. This fully reflects the theory of ranked choice voting as defined by Reif and Schmitt in 1980. Although we have no ambition to prove the validity of the unidimensional criteria of the theory in the Czech Republic, the trend is clear. Nevertheless, what is the consequence?

The Czech Republic has been a member of the European Union for 20 years and faces its fifth European Parliament election. As a country, Czechs are perceived as Eurosceptics. This is proven not only by the voter turnout figures, which have not exceeded the 30% threshold since accession and the first elections in 2004 and even reached only 18.2% in 2014, the second lowest of all member states, but also, as we described above, by the attitude and mindset of the leading political heavyweights in the country. Political parties, or political representation in general, need to sufficiently communicate the benefits and importance of EU membership and use elections to the European Parliament and election campaigns as a tool of domestic political struggle. With few exceptions, Czech politicians have made the EU a scapegoat on which they blame their purely domestic failures. They have failed to understand, or more accurately admit in their hunt for votes in the next elections, that the interests of the Czech Republic can only be defended within the framework of a much stronger union (Šabata, 2019).

On an individual level, however, the reputation of the Czech MEPs in the Union is outstanding. They are perceived as hardworking, fast, reliable, and always strive to get results when possible (Euroskop, 2023). In 2020, the influential Politico server ranked two Czech women among the 20 most influential women in the European Union. Dita Charanzová, an MEP for ANO, is said to have a 'leading role in the European Parliament on technological issues'. This is at a time when support for digitalisation and new technologies is becoming one of the key issues in politics today (Houska, 2020). In 2023, she finished sixth in the ranking of the most active MEPs (EUMatrix, 2023). The second Czech on the list was EU Commissioner Věra Jourová. She even appeared among the 100 most influential people in the world in 2019 (Gavenda, 2019).

The current political representation of the Czech Republic also contributes to their good reputation. The Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union was considered successful (Europeum, 2023), focusing, amongst other issues, on imposing additional sanctions against the Russian Federation. Prime Minister Petr Fiala was also one of the first European politicians to visit Ukraine in

March 2022 (ČTK, 2022). The current government is powerful in its support for Ukraine and, currently, Israel and thus represents a strong voice in Europe. However, these attitudes significantly impact the local economic situation, and we can assume that the elections will be crucial for the opposing parties. The 2024 elections will undoubtedly be extremely important in European and local terms.

## Conclusion

What can we conclude about the Czech EU membership? According to the Czech Centre for Public Opinion Research CVVM, more than two-fifths (41%) of Czech citizens are satisfied with the Czech Republic's membership in the European Union, more than one-fifth (21%) are neutral, and more than one-third (36%) are dissatisfied. Approximately two-thirds of the public think that European integration is beneficial in the areas of defence (65%) and culture (64%). In comparison, most respondents positively assess cooperation in ecology (55%) and the economy (53%). The least frequently assessed area of European integration by the Czech public is politics, which is perceived as beneficial by more than two-fifths (44%) of respondents. A comparable proportion (46%) believe it to be harmful. The most common view of the Czech public's attitudes towards strengthening or weakening integration is that the level of EU integration should remain about the same as in the future. Approximately two-thirds of Czech citizens (66%) believe the Czech Republic should be a member of the European Union. In contrast, the opposite opinion, i.e., that the Czech Republic should not be a member of the EU, was expressed by three-tenths of respondents (30%) (Čadová, 2023).

Another interesting fact is that Czechia is not a Eurozone member and is one of the few countries with its currency. Czech society still has a largely negative attitude towards adopting the Euro. Almost three-quarters (73%) of Czech citizens are not in favour of adopting the Euro as the currency of the Czech Republic, while less than a quarter (22%) of Czech citizens are in favour of adopting the Euro (Čadová, 2023). In his New Year's Speech, President Petr Pavel expressed that this should change soon (Novinky, 2024), surprising many.

The election campaign in 2024 will likely focus on pro-western values, expressing the need for additional support for Ukraine by some parties and strong protection of the Czechs by other parties with strong criticism of the governing parties. Another crucial issue will be migration and the sustainability of the life standards.

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