

IFLA/FAIFE World Report: Libraries and Intellectual Freedom



Czech Republic

08-02-2000

This report on the current situation in the Czech Republic in the area of free access to information and freedom of expression focuses on the public libraries.

Legislation in the area

Public libraries in the Czech Republic are managed by a significant legislative document which guarantee basic human rights of each individual in the Czech Republic, i.e. by the "Law no.2 of Coll.- Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms" and in their work respect wording of the UNESCO "Codex of Public Libraries" (1994).

A very important part of legislation in connection with a free access to information and freedom of expression is from a point of view of public libraries also the "Law on Copyright".

Due to necessity to carry out basic changes in wording of this law its new proposal was prepared and relevant legislative measures needed for its approval and passing are under way. (In this connection some measures are taken against discrimination of libraries as for lending, copying and posting of documents).

There is also "Law on Free Access to Information" (No.106/1999 of Coll.) and "Law on Right for Enviromental Information" (No.123/1998 of Coll.) in force in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic has also acceded to the „Convention on "Establishment of Organisation of Intellectual Property" and this legal document is a part of a legal order of the Czech Republic.

For a completeness it is necessary to add, that the "Law on Unified System of Libraries" which is in force till this time is obsolete and this question is not solved in it. Legislation schedule of the Government of the Czech Republic counts on a preparation of a new library law and a paragraph wording is to be prepared by the Ministry of Culture in 2000.

An effort to secure this problem as for a prevention against illegal practices is also refelected in the "Scheme of Non-Legislative Targets" of the Government of the Czech Republic. The part of this scheme is also "Concept of a Struggle against Crime in Intellectual Property."

Situation

Public libraries in the Czech Republic provide their users with a free access to information stored in their stocks without any reductions.

Some public libraries suffer in last years from financial reductions in purchase of foreign periodicals but also non-periodical literature (not only foreign), which decreases an offer of information sources above all in paper form. This is however a direct consequence of current financial problems of the Czech Republic and we cannot take it as infringing the access to intellectual property to all intents and purposes.

There is not secured an equal access of people to Internet and to world information sources in the Czech Republic. The number of Internet users is estimated to the extent 4-10 per cent of a total number of population in the Czech Republic.

Currently there are not known any cases of infringing the right of free access to information and freedom of expression by unlawful infringements in form of a censorship or limitation of access to information stored on new media (for example in an electronic form).

Population:	10,251,000 (1996)
GNP per capita:	\$ 4,740 (1996)
Government / Constitution:	Republic
Main languages:	Czech
Main religions:	Catholicism
Literacy:	
Online:	3,4% (March 2000)