

MEETING REPORT

Report of the Country Visit to Czechia of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

Introduction

On July 23–24, 2024, a delegation from the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) at New York University, serving as the secretariat for the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, participated in a country visit to Prague, Czechia. The visit was initiated by an invitation from the government of the Czech Republic in their capacity as co-chair of the Pathfinders Alliance Against Inequality and Exclusion. The delegation included Mr. Fernando Marani, Program Director, Inequality and Exclusion, and Mr. Nate Edwards, Program Associate, Justice for All.

The primary objectives of the visit were to identify good practices and support Czechia's priorities related to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16+ and explore inclusive policy making approaches to empower the voice of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

1. Meetings with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

The visit included a session on gender equality, where the delegation met with representatives from the Gender Equality Department of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. The discussion covered a range of topics, including **institutional arrangements for gender equality, gender financing, and the Czech Gender Equality Strategy for 2021–2030**. Emphasis was placed on integrating gender equality into policy areas and enhancing cooperation between government bodies and civil society. The delegation delved into issues such as the gender pay gap, increasing women's participation in decision-making positions, and combating gender-based violence. The session also addressed the importance of gender mainstreaming, assessments of bills with a gender perspective, and the roles of both women and men in promoting gender equality.

The delegation also engaged in a session focused on **human rights** in the Czech Republic with representatives from the Human Rights Department of the Office of the Government. Discussions centered on institutional arrangements to advance human rights implementation, human rights assessments of legislative initiatives, and support for national human rights councils. Key topics included collaboration with academia and civil society, financial support for vulnerable



populations, and issues concerning people with disabilities, minorities, the LGBTQ+ population, and Roma affairs. The delegation also discussed efforts to combat hate crimes and hate speech, as well as a holistic approach to housing and education for minorities.

2. Inter-ministerial roundtables

The delegation also participated in two inter-ministerial roundtable discussions. The **first focused on gender equality**, with participants from various ministries including Foreign Affairs, Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Interior, Justice, and the Public Defender Office. The conversation centered around measures to address the gender pay gap and strategies focusing on care, poverty, and the labor market. Discussions also covered pilot projects related to the role of employers, trainings, the importance of increasing women's participation on private company boards, and promoting diversity in the private sector. During the meeting regional differences and tools to provide legal assistance and judicial support to women were also discussed.

The **second inter-ministerial discussion centered on refugees**, involving representatives from several government departments and organizations including the Human Rights Department, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Czechia. Topics included adaptation and integration of refugees, temporary protection status, and inter-ministerial coordination. The discussion addressed special measures for Ukrainian refugees, communication monitoring, and support from UN agencies. Priorities discussed were language education, labor market integration, school attendance, health support, housing, and combating disinformation. The session highlighted children's protection measures, needs for financial support, the refugee registration process, and the use of AI and other tech tools.

3. Meetings with Civil Society and Academia

Additionally, the delegation participated in two closed meetings with civil society and academia. The first was a **roundtable discussion on gender equality** with representatives from Open Society Foundation, Czech Women Lobby, ProFem, Gender Studies, Gender Expert Chamber, and the Association for International Affairs. The conversation covered broad topics such as reproductive rights, the gender pay gap, representation in decision-making positions, and violence against women. Issues faced by Roma and migrant women, integrating a gender perspective into policy making, and combating gender-based violence were also discussed. During the meeting, the team addressed other relevant issues such as the importance of addressing climate and gender links, education, digitalization, data, gender stereotypes, labor market opportunities, parental leave, and justice for women.

Following this, the delegation participated in a **roundtable discussion on refugees with civil society**, including the Association for Integration and Migration, Association for International Affairs, The Organization for Aid to Refugees, People in Need, META, the Czech Red Cross, and a professor from the Faculty of Law of Charles University. The discussion focused on the education and integration of refugee children, particularly Ukrainian refugees. Other topics included as well training, sports, Czech as a second language, advocacy, counseling, assistance, and temporary protection. The delegation



addressed access to housing, labor and social rights, the rule of law for refugees and asylum seekers, psychological support, and solidarity with refugees. The session also covered communication strategies to support refugee integration, legal aid and support for refugees, the important role of the Ombudsmen's office in ensuring rights for refugees, and the interplay between European Union (EU) guidance and national refugee policies.

Roundtable discussion on SDG16+

The visit culminated in a final roundtable discussion co-hosted by the Pathfinders and the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, titled "A World in Crisis: Building Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies. New Trends, Solutions, and Findings to Advance the Implementation of SDG16+." The session aimed to share the latest findings on issues related to peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and discuss necessary inclusive policy responses to advance SDG16+.

The first panel included Margaret Williams, Associate Director at CIC, who emphasized the challenges and opportunities presented by the 2030 agenda, highlighting the importance of localizing the SDGs; Nathan Edwards, Program Associate at CIC, who discussed the need to transition from a justice system that favors the privileged to one ensuring equal access to justice for all; Luisa Portugal, Program Officer at CIC, who spoke on the significance of preventing violence and the findings of the recent flagship report on Halving Global Violence; and Fernando Marani, Program Director at CIC who presented the findings of the recently published report on polarization, division and inequality.

The second session included Vivi Alatas, senior advisor to National Team For Eradicating Poverty TNP2K, who addressed evidence-based policy making in Indonesia; Pia Devoto, Director of Association for Public Policies and the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) Latin America focal point, who highlighted the importance of addressing disarmament with a gender lens and the experience on the Latin American region; Paula Sevilla Nuñez, Researcher, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), who discussed housing justice and SDG16—with a particular focus in Sierra Leone; Boitumelo Mooketsi, Director of Governance, Public Safety and Justice Statistics of the Social Statistics Chief Directorate at Statistics South Africa, who presented about addressing legal needs surveys in South Africa; and Laura Ospina, Senior Program Officer at CIC, who discussed justice systems and community justice houses in Colombia.

The roundtables concluded with a consensus on the critical need for collaborative efforts and evidence-based policies to tackle inequality, injustice, and violence—thereby advancing the goals of SDG16+.

Conclusion

The country visit to Czechia provided valuable insights and fostered collaborative discussions with government departments and civil society organizations. The Pathfinders delegation emphasized the importance of inclusive policy making, evidence-based strategies, and multi-stakeholder engagement to advance the implementation of SDG16+. The discussions highlighted the need for continuous efforts in addressing gender equality, human rights, and refugee integration—ultimately contributing to the creation of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

