A QUIET LETTER ABOUT THE NUMBERS WE ALL PAY

The World Upside Down

Czechia · 2026

Dear stranger,

1. The price of a person

The Czech Ministry of Justice publishes, in the final account of its budget chapter, what the Prison Service spends on average to keep one person in detention.

One day in a Czech prison costs 1,886 K?.

One day in a primary school costs 318 K?.

The difference is 5.9 times.

That is the whole comparison.

Sources:

- Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, 2025: Final account of chapter 336 — Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic for 2024 (Záv?re?ný ú?et kapitoly 336 — Ministerstvo spravedlnosti ?R za rok 2024), table "Výdaje V?ze?ské služby na v?zn?nou osobu v K?/den": CZK 1,886 a day in 2024. The table's own formula is wages including allowances, plus social expenditure, plus other material expenditure, plus capital expenditure, divided by the converted number of prisoners and by the calendar days of the year. The same table reports a reduced figure of CZK 1,455 a day which leaves out the pay of the judicial guard and social benefits; this letter uses the full figure.
- https://psp.cz/sqw/text/orig2.sqw?idd=255362
- Eurostat, 2023: CZK 115,975.8 of public expenditure per primary-school pupil (educ_uoe_fine09, ISCED 1, national currency, full-time equivalent). The series ends in 2023 and the dataset, updated 2026-10-28, carries no 2024 observation for Czechia.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uoe_fine09/default/table?lang=en
- Calculation: 115975.8 / 365 = 317.74 koruna a day for a child; 1886 / 317.74 = 5.94, shown as 5.9.

2. The price of a job

A lawyer earns 3,886 K? a day.

An accountant earns 3,732 K? a day.

A teacher earns 2,567 K? a day.

A cleaner earns 1,246 K? a day.

All four are gross, before tax.

These four figures come from one survey with two pay spheres. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs publishes average gross monthly earnings by occupation twice: once for the business sphere, where the employer sets pay, and once for the public sphere, where pay follows the state's salary tables. The lawyer, the accountant and the cleaner are business-sphere figures. The teacher is a public-sphere figure, because most Czech teachers are paid from the state table. The lawyer is the group of corporate lawyers and other legal specialists; advocates in private practice mostly work as self-employed persons and are outside an employee survey, so their earnings are not this number. The accountant is the accounting specialists group. The teacher is the group of secondary-school teachers. The cleaner is the group of cleaners and helpers in hotels, offices and other buildings. Each monthly figure is multiplied by twelve and divided by two hundred and sixty working days.

The range itself is the story.

Sources:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2026: ISPV — Average Earnings Information System, annual results for 2025, results as of 25 March 2026. Business sphere table MZS-M8r, average gross monthly earnings by CZ-ISCO: 2619 corporate lawyers and other legal specialists CZK 84,201.76; 2411 accounting specialists CZK 80,852.62; 9112 cleaners and helpers in hotels, administrative, industrial and other buildings CZK 27,004.25. Public sphere table PLS-M8r: 2330 secondary-school teachers CZK 55,616.05. The same teacher group in the business-sphere table averages CZK 55,691.10, 0.13% higher; this letter uses the public-sphere table because that is where most teachers are paid.
- https://www.ispv.cz/archiv/CR_254_MZS_M8r.xlsx
- https://www.ispv.cz/archiv/CR_254_PLS_M8r.xlsx
- https://www.ispv.cz/vysledky.html
- Calculation: 84201.76 * 12 / 260 = 3,886.23; 80852.62 * 12 / 260 = 3,731.66; 55616.05 * 12 / 260 = 2,566.89; 27004.25 * 12 / 260 = 1,246.35.

3. The loop

The government takes in 3,526,622,000,000 K?.

The government spends 3,712,091,000,000 K?.

The difference is 185,469,000,000 K?.

This time the difference is a deficit. The state spent more than it took in.

The loop is not broken. It is simply pointed somewhere.

Sources:

- Eurostat, 2025: general government (S13) total revenue CZK 3,526,622 million and total expenditure CZK 3,712,091 million (gov_10a_main, national currency). State, local government and social-security funds together. Dataset updated 2026-10-21; no provisional status flag on the 2025 observations.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_main/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat, 2025: net borrowing of CZK 185,469 million, 2.2% of GDP (gov_10a_main, B9); general government gross debt 44.2% of GDP (gov_10dd_edpt1, sector S13, Maastricht definition).
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10dd_edpt1/default/table?lang=en
- Calculation: 3,712,091 - 3,526,622 = 185,469 million koruna.

4. Where the loop points

The single largest item is old-age pensions: 641,896,000,000 K?.

A lot of money goes to catching people after they fall.

Much less goes to making sure they do not fall in the first place.

This is not a conspiracy. It is a habit.

Sources:

- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF1002 (old age), general government, CZK 641,896 million — 18.6% of total expenditure and the largest single sub-function. The whole social-protection function (GF10) is CZK 1,065,382 million, 30.8% of the total. For comparison: health (GF07) CZK 727,675 million, education (GF09) CZK 365,755 million, hospital services (GF0703) CZK 331,932 million, transport (GF0405) CZK 291,427 million, pre-primary and primary education (GF0901) CZK 94,591 million, defence (GF02) CZK 105,070 million, police services (GF0301) CZK 66,036 million, prisons (GF0304) CZK 12,147 million, 0.4% of the total. Total expenditure across all COFOG functions is CZK 3,453,578 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en

5. Five lines worth naming

Pre-primary and primary education: about 259,153,425 K? per day (94,591,000,000 K? per year).

Transport: about 798,430,137 K? per day (291,427,000,000 K? per year).

Hospital services: about 909,402,740 K? per day (331,932,000,000 K? per year).

Defence: about 287,863,014 K? per day (105,070,000,000 K? per year).

Police services: about 180,920,548 K? per day (66,036,000,000 K? per year).

Some are large. Some are small. Each of them is a decision, written down.

Sources:

- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF0901 (pre-primary and primary education), CZK 94,591 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF0405 (transport), CZK 291,427 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF0703 (hospital services), CZK 331,932 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF02 (defence), CZK 105,070 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en
- Eurostat, 2024: COFOG function GF0301 (police services), CZK 66,036 million.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gov_10a_exp/default/table?lang=en
- Daily figures divide each annual amount by 365.

6. The habit

We are all part of this habit.

We pay taxes. We vote. We work. We accept the numbers.

Not because we consciously chose them, but because we were born into them.

No one ever showed us the whole picture at once. This letter is that picture.

7. The other number

One cent per day. That is 89 K? (€3.65 at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026) per person per year.

The idea is simple: instead of paying 1,886 K? every day for the end of someone's story, what happens if many people each give one cent a day for the beginning of the story?

You give one cent every day. Over a full year that is 89 K? (€3.65 at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026).

No promises. No guarantees. No returns.

Just a place, a question, a group of people, a very small amount of money, and the freedom to stop at any time.

Sources:

- Calculation: one cent per day, multiplied by the days in a year, is EUR 3.65; at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026 that is 88.85195 koruna, shown as 89.
- Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, 2025: the prison daily cost quoted above (CZK 1,886 a day in 2024).
- https://psp.cz/sqw/text/orig2.sqw?idd=255362
- European Central Bank, 2026: euro reference rates for 3 November 2026.
- https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/index.en.html

8. What this letter is not

It is not a business plan. It is not a political programme. It is not a religion. It is not a solution.

It is a mirror.

9. What you can do

Nothing. Or something. That is the whole choice.

You can look at the public numbers. You can join the experiment and give one cent a day, 89 K? (€3.65 at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026) a year. Or you can close this letter and forget it.

No one is obliged. That is the point.

10. The world upside down

It costs more to keep someone in a cell than to teach a child.

It costs more to treat people after they fall than to prevent the fall.

It costs more to argue than to listen.

It costs more to count the money than to spend it well.

This letter does not turn the world the right way up. It only shows you that it is currently upside down.

11. One last number

One cent. Per day. Per person. 89 K? (€3.65 at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026) per year.

That is all that is asked. Not because it is enough, but because it is honest, and because it is completely yours to choose.

Sources:

- Calculation: one cent per day, multiplied by the days in a year, is EUR 3.65; at the European Central Bank reference rate of 24.343 Czech koruna per euro on 3 November 2026 that is 88.85195 koruna, shown as 89.

12. The layer underneath

The differences are psychotic. Extreme is not too strong a word.

One day in a Czech prison costs almost six days in a Czech classroom. A lawyer's day is worth about three times a cleaner's, and a teacher's day is worth two thirds of a lawyer's. These are not small gaps. They are public, they are measured, and they were chosen.

Money is not the problem. The money exists. The state takes in more than three and a half trillion koruna a year and spends nearly three and three quarter trillion; its debt is about two fifths of everything the country produces. The loop turns. The problem is where the money goes.

The price is not the problem either. The price of a prisoner, a teacher, a child or a cleaner is not a natural law. These prices were decided. They can be decided differently.

What lies underneath is consent, choices, expectations, input.

We consent to these numbers, not because we voted for them, but because we never refused them. We make choices, or we let others make them for us. We carry expectations about what work is worth, who deserves what, what a child needs, and what a prisoner costs. And we either give input into the system, or we stay silent.

The numbers are not the problem. Our consent is the material. Our choices are the shape. Our expectations are the weight. Our input is the only thing that can change it.

With quiet hope, A stranger