

# **Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights implications**

## **National vaccine deployment**

**Czechia**

**5 May 2021**

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# 1 National vaccine deployment – planning and overview of priority groups

*Please provide the title and hyperlink of the national vaccine deployment plan/s in EN and the national language/s and indicate the date of publication of the plan/s including any updates.*

*Please provide information on the planned phases of vaccination with respect to the groups to be prioritised for vaccination.*

The final version of the Czech vaccination strategy for COVID-19 was published on 22 December 2020,<sup>1</sup> but the specific timeline was only revealed on 12 January 2021 (slightly updated on 5 March 2021).<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 vaccinations started to be administered on 27 December 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The vaccination plan has been scheduled into two phases: the first phase focused on high-risk groups, medical workers, and essential workers, and the second phase on the general population. People in homes for seniors and the elderly, people on a long-term hospital stay, and essential workers do not themselves need to register with the central registration system as their employer or care home registers them upon request.

The first vaccination phase took place in the period between January and May and the second phase, when vaccination will be open to the general population, starts in June. Prioritisation was based on a score system, in which people over the age of 80 have the highest scores.<sup>4</sup>

Specific groups identified in the national vaccine deployment plan	Date of plan	Date of new/revised plans
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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health (2020), 'Czech vaccination strategy for COVID-19' (Strategie očkování proti nemoci covid-19 v České republice), [6 December 2020](#) and [22 December 2020](#). Only available in Czech.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of health (2021), 'Methodological plan for the vaccination campaign (implementation plan)' ([Metodický pokyn pro očkovací kampaň \[Plán provedení\]](#)). An English-language description of the timeline is available on the government's central [COVID 19 website](#).

<sup>3</sup> Government of the Czech Republic (2020), 'Vaccinations against COVID-19 started in the Czech Republic, PM Babiš was among one of the first to be vaccinated' ([V ČR bylo zahájeno očkování proti onemocnění covid-19, mezi prvními očkovány byl i premiér Babiš](#)), press release 27 December 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Health (2021), 'Central reservation system – vaccination against COVID-19; Registering in the system' ([Centrální rezervační systém - Očkování proti COVID-19; registrace do systému](#)).

<p><b><i>older persons; indicate age groups specified</i></b></p>	<p>Registration from 15 January 2021: for persons 80+</p> <p>Registration from 1 March 2021: for persons 70+</p> <p>Registration from 14 April 2021: for persons 65+</p> <p>Registration from 23 April 2021: for persons 60+</p> <p>Registration from 28 April 2021: for persons 55+</p> <p>The dates indicate the day from which registration in the central reservation system was enabled for the specific age groups. People living in elderly homes are a priority group and can request to be registered through their care facility.</p>	
<p><b><i>persons with underlying health problems</i></b></p>	<p>From 24 March 2021 self-registration opened for high-priority patients with chronic diseases (e.g. obesity BMI &gt; 35 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, diabetes, oncological diseases, etc).</p> <p>From 12 April 2021 registration opened for lower-priority chronic patients (genetic disorders, intellectual disabilities, caregivers of chronic patients, etc.).</p> <p>On 15 May priority registration for chronic patients ends.</p>	
<p><b><i>persons with disabilities</i></b></p>	<p>Persons with disabilities are not recognised as a specific group.</p> <p>However, the clients of care facilities with a special regime (facilities housing people with diverse conditions ranging from Alzheimer’s disease to chronic health and psychological conditions or addictions), as well as clients of care facilities for</p>	

	<p>disabled people, are the top priority categories, who along with people living in elderly homes can request to be registered through their care facility.</p> <p>Disabled people belonging in the category of lower-priority chronic patients are a priority group for self-registration. This category includes people with the following conditions: people with psychotic disorders, people on the autistic spectrum, people with intellectual disabilities or dementia.<sup>5</sup></p>	
<p><b><i>key workers (on the basis of their job not their personal characteristics) – e.g. health workers; persons working in care homes; teachers</i></b></p>	<p>Registration for health-care professionals opened on 26 January.</p> <p>In phase 1A (January –March) the following professionals could request registration by their employers: health workers (including workers in public health facilities), employees of the Ministry of the Interior working in COVID-19 isolation facilities, employees of the prison service working in facilities where COVID-19 was identified, employees of care homes and inpatient social care facilities.</p> <p>In phase 1B (March – April) the following key workers could register individually: workers in critical infrastructure, police officers, firefighters, army personnel, prison service workers, teachers and other school employees, people working in funeral services. From 3 May university teachers are eligible.</p>	<p>Workers in public health facilities were originally supposed to be vaccinated in February; instead they were prioritised for January (into group 1A).</p>

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health (2021), 'Vaccination of persons with chronic diseases' ([Očkování osob s chronickým onemocněním](#)), only available in Czech.

<i>persons belonging to ethnic/national minorities</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<i>persons experiencing homelessness</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<i>persons with drug addiction dependencies</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<i>persons with low literacy levels</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<i>persons deprived of their liberty</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<i>persons without residence or with insecure legal status (such as refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants)</i>	Not recognized as a priority group	
<b><i>OTHER – not specified above; e.g. ‘Persons living in crowded accommodation’; etc. Please insert . . .</i></b>	Not recognized as a priority group	

Please briefly indicate here:

- *the reasons behind major changes with regard to priority groups– as announced by the government.*

Only minor changes with respect to the timing were made, no major changes occurred regarding priority groups.

- *the overall approach behind the definition of priority groups: please identify the main ground for identifying groups as priority group (vulnerability to infection; social vulnerability; multiple criteria).*

The national vaccination strategy does not give a comprehensive explanation of the criteria that form the basis on which the priority groups were identified. After listing the priority groups the plan merely mentions that the prioritisation stems from the World Health Organization’s recommendations (without giving a specific reference). It also claims that a similar approach was taken by the United Kingdom and Israel (without reference).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Health (2020), ‘Czech vaccination strategy for COVID-19’ ([Strategie očkování proti nemoci covid-19 v České republice](#)), version 22 December 2020, p. 13.

## **2 Vaccination rollout – communication, targeted outreach, registration, and administration of vaccinations**

*For each of the subsequent questions (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) please indicate:*

*Languages: If information in different languages is available. Please list those languages in which information is available (e.g. languages of recognised national or ethnic minorities and immigrant communities; as well as English and other dominant international languages).*

*Accessibility for persons with disabilities: If information is provided in accessible formats to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities (including easy read, in braille, sign language etc); are physical venues made accessible for persons with disabilities?*

### **2.1 Channels, means and measures to inform about the national vaccination plan**

*Please provide information on channels, means and measures taken by the government or public authorities to inform the public about the national vaccination plan, its rollout strategy and vaccination awareness raising campaigns; e.g. traditional postal letters; online information; telephone calls; public information campaigns etc.*

- Access to information

Information on the COVID-19 pandemic and the pertinent measures, including the vaccination rollout, has been published in widely accessible language on a [website](#) set up by the government in November 2020. The website has an English-language version, although not all information is fully available in English. The website includes external links, for instance to a [leaflet](#) prepared in an accessible, easy to understand format by the Association for the Support of People with Mental Disabilities in the CR (Společnost pro podporu lidí s mentálním postižením v ČR). The leaflet contains information on the importance of vaccination, but it does not contain information on the registration or rollout as such. The leaflet is only available in Czech.

Information relevant to the pandemic and vaccinations is still published on the website of the Ministry of Health, but much of this information is conceived in overly formal language and/or not available in other languages than Czech.

- Awareness raising

A national information campaign called 'Let's End This' (Udělejme tečku) was launched on 12 April and it will be implemented until September.<sup>7</sup> Its main focus is the media, including social media, and in its initial phase the campaign has sought to address the elderly population segment. It aims to gradually encompass the general population. The intensity of the campaign will allegedly respond to the availability of vaccines and the population's interest in vaccination. The campaign is constructed around providing answers to questions regarding vaccination (in a FAQ style), and some of the issues are explained also in a video spot. Sign language interpretation is included in the video spots.<sup>8</sup> The campaign is only available in the Czech language.

## 2.2 What are the (pre-) registration channels for vaccination put in place?

- a) What registration channels for vaccination are in place e.g. websites, apps, hotlines/call centres, letters, via family doctors, etc.?

The main channel for registration is through the Ministry of Health's central reservation system, which is an online platform that connects people who want to be vaccinated to vaccination sites. The access site for the registration is only available in Czech.

- b) Are any alternatives to digital access to vaccine registration in place e.g. appropriate support for those who need it (such as the elderly; those without access to the internet); physical locations for registration etc?

Registration for vaccination is possible for people who have difficulties communicating in writing (elderly people, people with a hearing disparity) via a telephone [hotline](#) (only in Czech).

The general population is encouraged to facilitate the online registration of elderly people.<sup>9</sup>

Since March, general practitioners can register their patients for vaccination, especially patients with mobility difficulties or patients with underlying health

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<sup>7</sup> Government of the Czech Republic (2021), 'The national campaign on vaccination is launched, it mainly aims at answering questions regarding vaccination' ([Startuje národní informační kampaň k očkování, chce především odpovídat na otázky kolem vakcinace](#)), press release 12 April 2021.

<sup>8</sup> See the campaign's website [Česko očkuje](#).

<sup>9</sup> Covid.gov.cz, [I would like to help the elderly to register on the vaccination booking system](#), last updated 19 April 2021.



problems. The practitioners may themselves invite patients to register or the patients may apply for registration.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.3 How are the vaccinations administered?

- a) Where are the vaccinations administered e.g. vaccination centres, via mobile units, via family doctors, etc.?

Vaccination centres are the main sites where the vaccinations take place. Many vaccination sites are barrier-free, but the list of such sites is only available in Czech.<sup>11</sup> The City of Brno initiated the in-home vaccination of people with mobility problems over the age of 80 on 26 January. Persons who are interested in this must call the designated telephone number to register.<sup>12</sup> Vaccinations are also administered in the consulting rooms of general practitioners who chose to participate in the vaccination as described above.

- b) For those being vaccinated - how is information about the actual vaccination process, the vaccine and any potential side effects provided?

Information on the vaccination process is provided mainly on the government website on the COVID-19 pandemic. The website contains information about the vaccination including the types of vaccines and the potential side-effects.<sup>13</sup> The page is accessible in both [Czech](#) and [English](#). The vaccination process is also described on vaccination campaign website<sup>14</sup> and in a manual on the registration webpage.<sup>15</sup> A 13-second summary in Czech of the potential side effects of vaccines (in general) is provided by the Minister of Health in a YouTube [video](#).

- c) Are there any circumstances where fees are applicable for receiving the vaccine – e.g. for third country nationals?

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Health, Portal for patients and patient organisation – vaccination by general practitioners ([Portál pro pacienty a patientské organizace – očkování praktickými lékaři](#)).

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Health, Central reservation system – an overview of vaccination sites ([Centrální rezervační systém - Přehled očkovacích míst](#)).

<sup>12</sup> Brno (2021), [‘Immobile seniors can get vaccinated at home, two vaccination teams at the disposal’](#), 28 January 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Covid.gov.cz., [Information about the vaccine](#), last updated 18 May 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Česko očkuje – FAQ ([Česko očkuje – často kladené otázky](#)).

<sup>15</sup> Central reservation system – guidance for vaccination applicants ([Centrální rezervační systém – návod pro zájemce o očkování](#))

No fees apply. However, the first version of the national vaccination strategy suggested that those who do not qualify as a priority group would need to purchase the vaccine at their own cost.<sup>16</sup>

## 3 Challenges and promising practices

### 3.1 Challenges

- Unequal access of third-country nationals not covered by public health insurance

Vaccines are available only to third-country nationals who are registered in the public health insurance system. Most third-country nationals who do not have a permanent residence permit are privately insured, and they are thus currently not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination. EU citizens insured in the public-health system of another EU country are eligible, provided they have the S1 standard form.<sup>17</sup>

- Limited possibilities for vaccine access for seniors above 80

According to a 2 May 2021 debate broadcast on the national public television<sup>18</sup> 60,000 people over the age of 80 years who have already registered for the vaccination have still not been vaccinated, even though they are the highest priority group. Moreover, out of this number, 58,000 people have not even received information on their vaccination date.

### 3.2 Promising practices

No promising practices were identified.

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Health (2020), 'Czech vaccination strategy for COVID-19' ([Strategie očkování proti nemoci covid-19 v České republice](#)), version 7 September 2020, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Covid.gov.cz, [Vaccination for foreign nationals](#), 25 February 2021.

<sup>18</sup> National Public Television (2021), Questions by Václav Moravec, part 2. ([Otázky Václava Moravce 2. Část](#)), 2 May 2021.