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BEZPEČNOST

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EUROPEAN UNION SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY: NEW THREATS, NEW TOOLS, NEW STRATEGY

Bezpečnostná a obranná politika Európskej únie: Nové hrozby, nové nástroje, nová stratégia

Ján Brezula

Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovak Republic

ABSTRACT: This article analyses the evolution of the European Union's security and defence policy in the context of fundamental geopolitical shifts following 2022. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed the limitations of the current European security architecture and accelerated a reassessment of the Union’s strategic priorities, including the strengthening of domestic defence capabilities and ambitions towards greater strategic autonomy. The text identifies a new spectrum of security threats, encompassing not only conventional military risks but also hybrid threats, cyberattacks and information warfare, as well as energy and economic coercion. It further examines the EU's responses, including measures derived from the Strategic Compass, the strengthening of defence instruments, and increased political mobilisation of Member States. The research demonstrates that the EU stands at a strategic crossroads, where its ability to adapt to emerging threats and effectively implement new instruments will determine the trajectory and success of its future security and defence policy.

Key words: European Security and Defence Policy – changes – threats – attacks – coercion

ABSTRAKT: Článok analyzuje vývoj bezpečnostnej a obrannej politiky Európskej únie v kontexte zásadných geopolitických zmien po roku 2022. Ruská invázia na Ukrajinu odhalila limity súčasnej európskej bezpečnostnej architektúry a urýchlila prehodnocovanie strategických priorít Únie, vrátane posilňovania vlastných obranných kapacít a ambícií smerom k väčšej strategickej autonómii. Text identifikuje nové spektrum bezpečnostných hrozieb, ktoré zahŕňa nielen konvenčné vojenské riziká, ale aj hybridné hrozby, kybernetické a informačné útoky, a aj energetický a ekonomický nátlak. Analyzuje reakcie EÚ, vrátane opatrení vyplývajúcich zo Strategického kompasu, posilnenia obranných nástrojov a zvýšenej politickej mobilizácie členských štátov. Výskum ukazuje, že EÚ stojí na strategickej križovatke, kde schopnosť adaptovať sa na nové hrozby a efektívne implementovať nové nástroje bude určovať smer a úspešnosť jej budúcej bezpečnostnej a obrannej politiky.

Kľúčové slová: Európska bezpečnostná a obranná politika – zmeny – hrozby – útoky - nátlak

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is currently facing unprecedented challenges in the field of security and defence, driven by geopolitical shifts, great-power rivalry, multipolar competition, and increasing range of security and hybrid threats (Zajączkowski, 2024; Ivančík and Andrassy, 2025). These challenges are primarily linked to changing dynamics in international relations, where traditional balances of power are being replaced by more complex configurations. The growing rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia is reflected in the security strategies and policies of European states, requiring a reassessment of the EU's position and strategic orientation within this fragmented and volatile environment (Fiszer, 2020; Brender, 2025).

The overt Russian military aggression against Ukraine, launched in February 2022, represents a fundamental turning point. It has not only profoundly impacted the European security architecture, but has also significantly accelerated efforts to strengthen the Union’s security and defence policy. This aggression clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the European security system, which had previously relied largely on political agreements and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance, and highlighted the urgent need to develop more effective and autonomous EU defence capabilities (Ivančík, 2024; Bond, 2025).

Consequently, research on European security and defence has recently gained extraordinary relevance, given the current geopolitical climate characterised by the fragmentation of the international system and rising geopolitical tensions between the EU and the United States on one side, and Russia and China on the other. A significant contributing factor is the rise of complex hybrid threats, encompassing various forms of non-military, asymmetric attacks and activities. These include cyber operations, large-scale information and disinformation campaigns designed to destabilise social and political structures and manipulate public opinion, as well as economic coercion through trade restrictions and disruptions of supply chains and energy supplies. These threats are particularly effective in eroding public trust in democratic institutions and EU political cohesion, thereby undermining the foundations of democratic societies and creating conditions for further instability.

Increasing multipolar competition and rivalry, marked by the growing assertiveness of authoritarian regimes, pose risks that threaten the very essence of European stability and cohesion. The war in Ukraine has unequivocally exposed significant deficiencies in the functioning of the European security system and in existing defence capabilities. At the same time, it has underscored the urgent need for a fundamental strategic reassessment and investment in new military and civilian instruments and mechanisms to enable an effective response to current and future security threats (Hoeffler et al., 2024; Slusher, 2025).

There is broad consensus in the academic literature that the Russian military invasion of Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for significant changes in EU security and defence policy.

This has led to a reappraisal of the concept of strategic autonomy and initiated a new approach to strengthening defence capabilities (Ivančík, 2024). Having long been dependent on NATO security guarantees, and specifically on the military capabilities of the United States, the Union was forced to acknowledge its lack of strategic and operational self-sufficiency. This has intensified debates on the necessity of the EU ensuring its own security and defence capabilities autonomously (Bond, 2025).

European defence integration, a prerequisite for European strategic autonomy, is currently supported by various mechanisms and instruments such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), the European Peace Facility (EPF), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), as well as initiatives like ReArm Europe. These initiatives aim to strengthen the collective defence capabilities of EU Member States. However, they continue to face limitations in the form of budgetary constraints, technological challenges, and, notably, the reluctance of certain Member States to commit fully to collective defence efforts.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Against the aforementioned background, the aim of this article is to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate by analysing the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on the European Union's security and defence policy in a new geopolitical era. This era is characterised by intensifying multipolar competition, growing great-power rivalry, and regional fragmentation. The research methodology is based on a critical analysis of secondary data, a comparative assessment of EU and NATO strategic documents, and a review of relevant academic literature. Several research methods were employed in the preparation of this article, most notably content, thematic, and comparative analysis, with an emphasis on the systematic evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of the collected information and data. Furthermore, a formal document analysis was applied to provide a deeper understanding of strategic intentions and decision-making processes in the field of security and defence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed in the introduction, the EU is currently facing unprecedented security and defence challenges. The year 2022 marked a fundamental turning point in modern European history. The outbreak of a full-scale, high-intensity war in Ukraine following the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 signified not only the return of large-scale conventional warfare to the European continent but also a radical shift in the security order (Ivančík, 2024;

Zajączkowski, 2024). After decades of security cooperation based on the principles of multilateralism, respect for international law, and restraint in the use of force, Europe has once again found itself in a situation where power politics and coercion have emerged as prominent instruments of foreign policy and the pursuit of national interests.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has destabilised the post-Cold War security architecture and disrupted the multilateral rules-based order, within which European security norms played a central role (Hoeffler et al., 2024; Slusher, 2025). The Russian attack directly challenged the core values of the European order: respect for territorial integrity, political independence, sovereignty, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Furthermore, the conflict demonstrated that even explicit security guarantees or diplomatic frameworks, such as the Normandy Format or the Minsk Process, may prove insufficient to prevent aggression when one party is determined to pursue unilateral military action (Brender, 2025; Bond, 2025).

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE IN A NEW GEOPOLITICAL ERA

The war in Ukraine has accelerated the transition towards a multipolar order, characterised by a resurgence of power politics and confrontation among major powers. While multipolarity does not inherently imply instability, the absence of robust global rules and collective security mechanisms carries an increased risk of confrontation and escalating tensions. Trust in multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations (UN), is gradually eroding, most notably due to the inability of the UN Security Council to respond effectively to Russia´s aggression, as Russia, a permanent member, possesses the power of veto. This paralysis of the international system compels actors, including the EU, to assume greater responsibility for their own security and defence. In response to these developments, European states are increasingly turning towards regional security arrangements and strengthening their own security and defence frameworks. This trend is reflected in the reassessment of strategic documents, such as the Strategic Compass for EU Security and Defence, and in rising defence expenditure across the Union (Maurer et al., 2023; Arteaga, 2024).

At the same time, technological and industrial competition is intensifying, with actors such as the United States, China, and Russia utilising military, economic, technological, and cyber capabilities as instruments of strategic influence. Emerging threats encompass not only traditional military risks but also economic coercion, control over strategic supply chains, energy insecurity, and interference in domestic political processes through cyber, information, and psychological operations. In this context, the Union finds itself in a position where relying solely on economic diplomacy or soft-power instruments is no longer sufficient. Faced with escalating security challenges, it must pursue a more proactive security policy that incorporates hard-power instruments, namely the ability to act autonomously, swiftly, and decisively, including through the deployment of military assets (Velde, 2024; Scazzieri, 2024).

These global shifts have also affected transatlantic relations, which remains the cornerstone of European security and defence while simultaneously being subject to growing uncertainty. Following various "skirmishes" during Donald Trump´s first presidency, the administration of President Joe Biden restored and strengthened transatlantic dialogue. However, the return of Donald Trump to office following the 2024 US presidential election has heightened concerns about a renewed emphasis on unilateralism and isolationism tendencies, prompting a deeper debate with the EU regarding its strategic responsibility. This has led to a reappraisal of the concept of strategic autonomy and increased calls for the development of effective defence capabilities that would enable the EU to act more independently of NATO should circumstances require it (Everts et al., 2025; Jones, 2025).

THREATS TO EUROPEAN SECURITY

The conflict in Ukraine has clearly demonstrated that security threats facing the EU are not exclusively military in nature but possess a markedly multidimensional, hybrid, and asymmetric character. Beyond conventional military aggression by state actors, the attention of European institutions and Member States has shifted towards a broad spectrum of threats designed to deliberately undermine the internal cohesion, democratic legitimacy, and critical infrastructure of Member States (Scazzieri, 2025a).

Hybrid threats are considered among the most serious and pressing security challenges. These threats combine military and non-military instruments, involving both state and non-state actors, and exploit vulnerabilities in areas such as the information environment, energy security, cyberspace, and public health. Even before 2022, the Russian Federation had systematically employed elements of hybrid warfare as a tool to influence the geopolitical environment, not only in its immediate neighbourhood but also within the EU. This approach includes coordinated cyberattacks (Brezula, 2018), the dissemination of pro-Russian narratives and disinformation through social media and online platforms, interference in electoral processes, the targeted manipulation of public opinion, coercion through energy dependence, and campaigns aimed at polarising societies (Hellman, 2023; Andrassy and Ondruš, 2024).

Cyber threats constitute another pivotal security factor. Their intensity and complexity have escalated dramatically since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Ukraine has become a "living laboratory" of cyber warfare, where both state and non-state actors, including Russian intelligence services and hacking groups such as Sandworm, NoName057(16), and Killnet, have tested methods for disrupting critical infrastructure, communication systems, and supply chains. These activities have affected not only Ukraine but also EU countries supporting Kyiv, highlighting the increasingly transnational nature of cyber conflicts (Poirier, 2024).

Disinformation and psychological operations represent equally significant instruments for undermining the internal stability of the EU. They aim to weaken democratic institutions and values, create uncertainty, erode trust in public authorities, and reduce the willingness of citizens to support collective European (or Alliance) security policies. Disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories, and false narratives concerning the war, migration, sanctions, NATO, and Ukraine have been disseminated on a large scale through social media platforms, alternative media outlets, and so-called "troll farms". The primary objective of such campaigns is not necessarily to persuade individuals of a particular version of events but rather to generate cognitive chaos and reduce societal resilience to manipulation (Colomina et al., 2021; Hellman, 2023).

Alongside hybrid threats, conventional military risks remain highly relevant, not only because of the ongoing war in Ukraine but also due to the militarisation of the Kaliningrad region, the increased Russia´s military presence in the Arctic, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Western Balkans, as well as increasingly active military exercises conducted near the borders of EU Member States. Furthermore, deepening cooperation between Russia, China, and Iran is generating increasing concern, as it could give rise to coordinated security challenges with global implications.

Finally, energy and economic threats, which Russia has repeatedly used as instruments of coercion, remain an important security concern. In 2022 and 2023, significant disruptions to energy supplies exposed the extreme vulnerability of several Member States to energy dependence. This situation prompted efforts towards the diversification of energy sources, building of strategic reserves, and coordination in the field of energy security. At the same time, it highlighted the need to integrate economic and energy security more flly into strategic planning in the fields of security and defence (Rühle and Grubliauskas, 2025).

THE EU'S RESPONSE TO THE DETERIORATING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The response of the Union's Member States to the deteriorating security environment has been characterised by an unprecedented level of political, institutional, and budgetary mobilisation. The war in Ukraine has triggered a process of revising national security and defence strategies in many countries, intensified the development of new military capabilities, and led to a significant increase in defence spending. This development represents a notable shift from the preceding period of relative military restraint and chronic underinvestment in defence across Europe (Fiott, 2023; Ivančík and Andrassy, 2025).

One of the most visible manifestations of this response has been the substantial increase in defence budgets. For example, Germany announced the establishment of a special defence fund worth €100 billion and committed to meeting NATO´s target of allocating 2% of GDP to defence (Giegerich and Schreer, 2022). Poland adopted ambitious legislation to increase defence spending to approximately 4% of GDP, placing it among the states with the highest levels of defence expenditure not only within the EU but also within NATO. Similar measures have been adopted in France, Spain, the Netherlands, the Baltic States, and the Nordic countries (Fiott, 2023).

At the EU level, the *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence* (Strategic Compass), adopted in March 2022, has played a crucial role. This document identified key security threats, defined the EU's strategic objectives through 2030, and introduced concrete measures, including the establishment of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, the strengthening of cyber defence, enhanced cooperation with NATO and third countries, and increased investment in innovation, modernisation, and defence research (EEAS, 2022).

In parallel, the European Defence Fund (EDF) has been strengthened, becoming the Union´s principal instrument for supporting research and development in defence technologies. In 2023, additional initiatives, including the European Defence Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), further expanded support for joint procurement and the strengthening of defence-industrial production capacity. Member States were encouraged to engage in cross-border cooperation through calls for joint projects in areas such as armoured vehicles, air defence systems, ammunition production, and artificial intelligence (Schnitzer, 2025; Ivančík and Majchút, 2026).

At the same time EU training and assistance missions have been expanded. The European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), launched in November 2022, had trained approximately 82,000 Ukrainian soldiers by the end of 2025. The mission's mandate was subsequently extended for a further two years, until 15 November 2026. In total, 24 EU Member States participated in mission activities, with Poland and Germany providing the largest share of training. Funding for activities with a budget exceeding €400 million was provided through the European Peace Facility (EPF), which has become an innovative mechanism for reimbursing Member States for the provision of military equipment, ammunition, training, and related support to Ukraine (EEAS, 2025).

A significant shift also occurred in the sphere of intelligence sharing, cyber-security coordination, and efforts to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure. The EU has established frameworks for simulations and responding to large-scale cyber incidents, thereby enhancing its ability to detect and counter complex threats in real time.

The common denominator of these measures is a new consensus among Member States that European security and defence cannot rely exclusively on NATO and transatlantic ties in the long term. Although the Alliance remains the cornerstone of Europe's collective defence, the EU is increasingly expected to contribute more actively to addressing emerging and multidimensional security challenges (Fiott, 2025). Consequently, the EU is gradually assuming greater strategic responsibility in security and defence, requiring not only political commitment but also the further development of European defence capabilities.

There is also growing recognition of the need for coordinated European strategic planning, joint investment in research and development, interoperable military systems, defence-industrial coordination, and greater operational autonomy. These elements can enhance the EU´s ability to respond rapidly and effectively to future crises and security challenges. This shift also reflects the broader pursuit of strategic autonomy, the aim of which is not to replace NATO but to strengthen the EU's capacity to act independently whenever necessary and appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Since 2022, the European Union's security and defence policy has undergone a fundamental strategic transformation, triggered by Russia´s aggression against Ukraine, which marked a watershed moment for the European security architecture. It has become increasingly evident that the long-standing reliance solely on NATO and US security guarantees may prove insufficient in an environment characterised by the resurgence of power politics, the increasing assertiveness of authoritarian actors, and the proliferation of hybrid threats affecting all key areas of societal functioning. The return of high-intensity conventional warfare has demonstrated that peace and stability in Europe cannot be taken for granted, and that prevention and deterrence must be supported by credible military capabilities if the Union is to protect its political system, values, and territory effectively.

Consequently, the EU has significantly strengthened its security ambitions through the adoption of mechanisms and initiatives aimed at developing modern defence capabilities, supporting research, strengthening the defence industry, and enhancing resilience against non-military threats. The *Strategic Compass* has established a new framework for EU action until 2030, while initiatives such as PESCO, the EDF, the EPF, and ReArm Europe contribute to the collective strengthening of European defence capabilities. In parallel, emphasis is placed on the need for increased resilience against hybrid threats, cyber incidents, and disinformation campaigns targeting the internal cohesion, decision-making processes, and democratic legitimacy of European states.

Despite visible progress, considerable challenges remain. The EU continues to face serious differences in the strategic priorities of Member States, fragmentation of the defence market, duplication of capabilities and procurement systems, and the long-term underfunding of military capacities. Therefore, the key factor will be the deepening of political coordination and the willingness among Member States to cooperate more closely in the field of security and defence. Equally important will be maintaining a robust and predictable transatlantic partnership while simultaneously strengthening the Union's capacity to act autonomously in situations where transatlantic cooperation and coordination may not be guaranteed.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that the EU finds itself at a strategic crossroads: it must either transform the current crisis into a catalyst for defence convergence and become a relevant security actor capable of responding autonomously to threats both in its neighbourhood and globally, or risk exacerbating its vulnerabilities and losing its geopolitical weight. The future form of ensuring European security and defence will thus largely depend on the willingness of Member States to pursue the current trend, intensify integration, and invest in collective security as a fundamental prerequisite for preserving peace, stability, and prosperity across the European continent.

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PÁTRÁNÍ Z POHLEDU OCHRANY OSOBNÍCH ÚDAJŮ

Investigation from a data protection perspective

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„Svět je nebezpečné místo k životu, ne kvůli lidem, kteří jsou zlí, ale kvůli lidem, kteří s tím nic neudělají.“ (*Albert Einstein*)

Abstrakt: Metoda pátrání je jednou ze základních policejních činností, která je teoreticky upravená kriminalistickou a bezpečnostní naukou v rozsahu nezbytném pro úspěšnou aplikaci v každodenní praxi příslušníků bezpečnostních sborů, kteří mají tuto oblast ve své gesci. Autoři předkládají odborné praxi rozšiřující pohled na zažitou a etablovanou metodu činností, a to v rozsahu práce s informacemi a ochranou osobních dat a údajů. Obsah článku vznikl na základě dlouholeté policejní praxe autorů, ale i na podkladě výzkumné činnosti konané na Vysoké škole finanční a správní v Praze, se studenty magisterského studijního programu[3] a je tak odrazem jejich teoretického zjištění komparovaného s odbornou policejní praxí.

Klíčová slova: bezpečnost – policejní činnosti – pátrání – osobní data – práce s informacemi – operativní pátrací činnost.

Abstract: The search method is one of the fundamental police activities, which is theoretically grounded in criminology and security studies to the extent necessary for its effective application in the daily practice of law enforcement officers responsible for this area. The authors offer practitioners an expanded perspective on this established and widely used policing method, focusing particularly on information management and the protection of personal data and information. The content of the article draws on the authors' extensive professional experience in policing as well as research conducted at the University of Finance and Administration in Prague, with students enrolled in a master's study program. The findings presented therefore reflect a comparison of theoretical insights with professional police practice.

Keywords: security – police activities – search operations – personal data protection – information management – operational search activities.

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Úvod

Jednou ze stálých a základních policejních činností je oblast pátrání po osobách a věcech, která je historicky spjata s každodenní činností příslušníků jednajících za policejní sbory, při jejich boji se zločinem, kriminalitou a společensky nežádoucími jednáními. Zároveň v oblasti dohledání objektů pohřešovaných, kde je účelné využití specializace, prostředků a dovedností policejních.

Oblast pátrání je oblastí, která je historicky vymezena v kriminalistické vědě, mezi metodami kriminalisticko-taktickými, které patří v systému kriminalistiky do *„obecné části“*, která staví na pilířích vymezených v části *„úvodu do kriminalistiky“* a to v nauce o stopách, kriminalistické identifikaci, ale i např. způsobu páchání[4]. Zúročena je pak metoda v oblasti zvláštní části kriminalistické vědy, která obsahuje jednotlivé metodiky vyšetřování trestných činů, které napomáhají úspěšného dohledání pachatele, objasnění skutku a zjištění kriminalisticky významných skutečností. Teoreticky je metoda pátrání, v oblasti kriminalistické taktiky vymezena jako: „*kriminalistická metoda nalézání hledaných objektů zahrnující komplex činností, opatření a úkonů směřujících k nalezení a zajištění objektu, po kterém se pátrá.*[5]“

Jde o metodu, která není upravena trestním řádem, ale je jím předpokládána[6]. Policii ČR náleží výlučná pravomoc v oblasti pátrání po osobách a věcech podle zákona č. 273/2008 Sb., o Policii ČR, a to konkrétně zmocněním uvedeným v § 68 zmíněného zákona.

Pouze Policie ČR má oprávnění pátrání vyhlásit, provádět úkony směřující k jeho úspěšné realizaci, a poté také tuto činnost ukončit nebo odvolat. Oblast pátrání je v současné době podrobně upravena interním normativním aktem řízení, a to Pokynem policejního prezidenta č. 235/2020, který obsahuje instruktivní návod a popis jednotlivých procedur.

Pátrání po osobách a věcech Policie ČR provádí jako součást plnění svých úkolů, s cílem:

- zjistit, kde se tyto osoby nebo věci nacházejí,
- nebo identifikovat osoby, mrtvoly, části lidského těla nebo kosterního nálezu neznámé totožnosti.

Pátrání po osobách a věcech Policie ČR provádí především prostřednictvím:

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[4] Blíže STRAUS Jiří, et. al. *Úvod do kriminalistiky*. 3. vyd. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 2012 s. 52-161, ISBN 978-80-7380-367-4.
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[6] Např. v § 76a, odst. 3) tr. řádu.

- hlídkové služby útvarů pořádkové, dopravní a cizinecké policie,
- silami a prostředky služby kriminální policie a vyšetřování (dále jen „SKPV“), s využitím kriminalistických metod a prostředků a postupů operativně pátrací činnosti[7].

V již naznačeném vymezení metody pátrání se hovoří o nalézání objektů. Primárně je teorií i praxí zažité pátrání po dvou základních skupinách objektů, a to po osobách a věcech. Někteří autoři též uvádí zvířata. Budeme-li vycházet z obecného zákonného předpokladu, že zvíře se nadále považuje za věc, za kterou má odpovědnost majitel, je vhodné ponechat vymezení v rozsahu osob a věcí. Z pohledu činností policejních, a především činností kriminální policie (která je součástí Služby kriminální policie a vyšetřování Policie ČR), je vhodné okruh objektů rozšířit i o „informace“. Dnešní společnost je též označována jako společnosti „informační“, kdy se den, co den probíráme značným množstvím informací, které díky současným technologiím, jsou nad míru dostupné, v některých okamžicích až neúnosné. Při práci s informacemi je potřebné zachovat čisté mysli a zdravého lidského úsudku, souvisejícího z pohledu policejních činností, s potřebou objektivity informací, založených na procesu ověřování informací a stanovení patřičné validity obsahu informace.

Detektivní práce příslušníků služby kriminální policie a vyšetřování (dále jen „SKPV“) by měla být založena na potřebných dovednostech k nalezení adekvátních informací, v souvislosti s projednávanou věcí „kriminalisticky relevantní události.[8]“

Proces pátrání po osobách a věcích, vymezený ve výše uvedené kriminalisticko-taktické metodě autoři navrhují rozšířit o proces pátrání po informacích, neboť tento postup vnímají, v optimálním případě, jako každodenní činnost detektivů SKPV jednajících v rozsahu zákonného zmocnění § 69 a násl. zákona č. 273/2008 Sb. o Policii ČR. V zájmovém prostředí detektivové jednají proaktivně s cílem získat „vypátrat“ informace o trestné činnosti v celém jejím rozsahu, a to vlastním působením či pomocí osob jednajících ve prospěch Policie ČR, nebo pomocí technických prostředků a postupů, k tomuto účelu určených a zákonem předpokládaných[9].

Oblast nakládání s informacemi (včetně osobních údajů) je oblastí regulovanou právem, a to i z pohledu policejních činností v oblasti pátrání. Autoři článku tedy odborné praxi níže předkládají nezbytné penzum informací k této regulaci.

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[7] ČÁP, Jan. *Finanční šetření. Kriminalisticko-taktický pohled*. Praha: VŠFS, 2025. s. 60 a násl., ISBN 978-80-7408-280-1.

[8] ČÁP, Jan. *OPERATIVNĚ PÁTRACÍ ČINNOST – „KRIMINALISTICKO TAKTICKÝ POHLED.“* In ČÁP, Jan, Jaroslav SUCHÁNEK a kol. Rozvoj kriminalistiky z pohledu českého a slovenského výzkumu – Sborník vědeckých prací a studií, s. 270–288, ISBN 978-80-7251-554-7.

[9] ČÁP, Jan. *Finanční šetření. Kriminalisticko-taktický pohled*. Praha: VŠFS, 2025. s. 60 a násl., ISBN 978-80-7408-280-1.

Z pohledu současných procesů digitalizace a využití AI technologií[10] je na místě zmínit potřebu udržení kroku při aplikaci do ochrany soustavy kamerových systémů již existujících a nově pořizovaných.

Ochrana osobních údajů při vyšetřování trestných činů Policií České republiky

Vyšetřování trestné činnosti je oblastí, ve které Policie České republiky (dále jen „PČR“) nevyhnutelně zpracovává velké množství osobních údajů – zejména o podezřelých, obviněných, poškozených, svědcích a dalších osobách dotčených trestním řízením.

Zákon č. 273/2008 Sb., o Policii České republiky (dále jen „zákon o Policii“), ukládá policii úkol chránit bezpečnost osob a majetku, předcházet trestné činnosti a plnit úkoly podle trestního řádu, a současně jí dává oprávnění tato data shromažďovat a používat pro plnění zákonných úkolů. Ochrana osobních údajů je upravena jak na úrovni Evropské unie, tak i na vnitrostátní úrovni.

Úroveň Evropské unie:

• Obecné nařízení o ochraně osobních údajů (dále jen „GDPR“)[11], které se uplatní zejména tam, kde se nejedná o trestní řízení.

• Trestněprávní směrnice (směrnice EU 2016/680).[12]

Vnitrostátní úroveň:

• zákon č. 110/2019 Sb., o zpracování osobních údajů.

• zákon č. 273/2008 Sb., o Policii České republiky.

Dalšími zákony, na základě, kterých PČR zpracovává osobní údaje, jsou např.

• zákon č. 141/1961 Sb., trestní řád,

• zákon č. 250/2016 Sb., o odpovědnosti za přestupky a řízení o nich,

•zákon č. 218/2003 Sb., o odpovědnosti mládeže za protiprávní činy a o soudnictví ve věcech mládeže a o změně některých zákonů,

• zákon č. 418/2011 Sb., o trestní odpovědnosti právnických osob a řízení proti nim,

• zákon č. 104/2013 Sb., o mezinárodní justiční spolupráci.

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[10] Umělá inteligence – artificial intelligence – AI, je inteligence projevovaná stroji, zejména počítači s vhodným programovým vybavením, ale i nově vznikají obor informatiky.

[11] EVROPSKÁ UNIE. 2016a. Nařízení Evropského parlamentu a Rady (EU) 2016/679 ze dne 27. dubna 2016 o ochraně fyzických osob v souvislosti se zpracováním osobních údajů a o volném pohybu těchto údajů a o zrušení směrnice 95/46/ES (obecné nařízení o ochraně osobních údajů).

[12] EVROPSKÁ UNIE. 2016b. Směrnice Evropského parlamentu a Rady (EU) 2016/680 ze dne 27. dubna 2016 o ochraně fyzických osob v souvislosti se zpracováním osobních údajů příslušnými orgány za účelem předcházení, vyšetřování, odhalování či stíhání trestných činů nebo výkonu trestů a o volném pohybu těchto údajů a o zrušení rámcového rozhodnutí Rady 2008/977/SVV.

Dalšími závaznými právními normami jsou taktéž Parlamentem České republiky schválené, ratifikované a vyhlášené mezinárodní smlouvy, jimiž je Česká republika vázána, a příslušné právní předpisy Evropské unie.

Evropský právní rámec

GDPR (EU 2016/679)

GDPR lze velmi stručně definovat jako unijní nařízení, které upravuje ochranu osobních údajů fyzických osob v EU/EEA – stanoví pravidla, jak mohou správci osobní údaje shromažďovat, zpracovávat, používat, uchovávat a předávat, a zároveň zajišťuje volný pohyb těchto údajů v rámci EU za jednotných podmínek.
Článek 2 GDPR (Věcná působnost) odst. 2. písm. d) uvádí *„Toto nařízení se* ***nevztahuje*** *na zpracování osobních údajů prováděné příslušnými orgány za účelem prevence, vyšetřování, odhalování či stíhání trestných činů nebo výkonu trestů, včetně ochrany před hrozbami pro veřejnou bezpečnost a jejich předcházení“.*

Z výše uvedeného textu vyplývá, že OČTŘ se budou řídit GDPR zejména v okamžiku, kdy budou zpracovávat "**netrestní agendu**", např.: personalistiku, mzdy, databáze zaměstnanců, kamerové systémy v budovách, běžná administrativa aj.

Trestněprávní směrnice (EU 2016/680)

Trestněprávní směrnice upravuje zpracování osobních údajů příslušnými orgány za účelem předcházení, vyšetřování, odhalování či stíhání trestných činů nebo výkonu trestů a stanoví pravidla pro volný pohyb těchto údajů mezi členskými státy.

Trestněprávní směrnice vyžaduje, aby zpracování osobních údajů v trestním řízení bylo založeno na zásadách zákonnosti, korektnosti, účelového omezení, minimalizace údajů, přesnosti a omezené doby uchovávání, obdobně jako GDPR, ale přizpůsobeně specifikům činnosti orgánů činných v trestním řízení. Dále ukládá členským státům povinnost upravit práva subjektů údajů (právo na informace, přístup, opravu, výmaz, omezení zpracování) a současně připouští jejich omezení, je-li to nezbytné k ochraně vyšetřování, veřejné bezpečnosti nebo práv a svobod jiných osob.

Trestněprávní směrnice je v českém právu transponována zejména hlavou III zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., o zpracování osobních údajů.

Národní právní rámec

Zákon č. 110/2019 Sb., o zpracování osobních údajů

Zákon č. 110/2019 Sb., plní dvojí roli:

a) „Adaptační“ zákon k GDPR

• Přizpůsobuje české právo GDPR a stanovuje např. výjimky, národní úpravy, postavení Úřadu pro ochranu osobních údajů (dále jen „ÚOOÚ“), přestupky, sankce.

b) Transpozice Trestněprávní směrnice 2016/680

• Upravuje zpracování osobních údajů OČTŘ pro účely prevence, vyšetřování, odhalování a stíhání trestné činnosti a výkonu trestů.

Dle § 2 písm. b) zákona č. 110/2016 Sb., se tento předpis vztahuje mimo jiné na zpracování osobních údajů příslušnými orgány za účelem předcházení, vyhledávání nebo odhalování trestné činnosti, stíhání trestných činů, výkonu trestů a ochranných opatření, zajišťování bezpečnosti České republiky nebo zajišťování veřejného pořádku a vnitřní bezpečnosti, včetně pátrání po osobách a věcech.

Klíčová je hlava III, nazvaná „OCHRANA OSOBNÍCH ÚDAJŮ PŘI JEJICH ZPRACOVÁNÍ ZA ÚČELEM PŘEDCHÁZENÍ, VYHLEDÁVÁNÍ NEBO ODHALOVÁNÍ TRESTNÉ ČINNOSTI, STÍHÁNÍ TRESTNÝCH ČINŮ, VÝKONU TRESTŮ A OCHRANNÝCH OPATŘENÍ, ZAJIŠŤOVÁNÍ BEZPEČNOSTI ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY NEBO ZAJIŠŤOVÁNÍ VEŘEJNÉHO POŘÁDKU A VNITŘNÍ BEZPEČNOSTI.“

Ustanovení § 24 uvádí, že „Nestanoví-li zákon jinak, ustanovení této hlavy se použijí při zpracování osobních údajů, které jsou nezbytné pro plnění úkolů a výkonu veřejné moci spravujícího orgánu stanovených jinými zákony za účelem předcházení, vyhledávání a odhalování trestné činnosti, stíhání trestných činů, výkonu trestů a ochranných opatření, zajišťování bezpečnosti České republiky nebo zajišťování veřejného pořádku a vnitřní bezpečnosti, včetně pátrání po osobách a věcech.

Toto ustanovení taktéž vymezuje tzv. „spravující orgán“, jímž se rozumí orgán veřejné moci příslušný k plnění výše uvedených úkolu, který není zpravodajskou službou nebo obecní policií.

Zákon č. 273/2008 Sb., o Policii České republiky

Zákon č. 273/2008 Sb., stanoví úkoly Policie České republiky a současně obsahuje speciální úpravu zpracování osobních údajů.

Dle § 79 odst. 1 může Policie zpracovávat osobní údaje, je-li to nezbytné pro předcházení, vyhledávání a odhalování trestné činnosti, stíhání trestných činů, zajišťování bezpečnosti České republiky nebo zajišťování veřejného pořádku a vnitřní bezpečnosti, včetně pátrání po osobách a věcech.

Zásady zpracování osobních údajů v rámci činnosti Policie České republiky

Zákonnost a právní titul zpracování

Policie zpracovává osobní údaje bez nutnosti souhlasu subjektu údajů; právním titulem je zejména plnění právní povinnosti a plnění úkolu ve veřejném zájmu nebo při výkonu veřejné moci ve smyslu čl. 6 odst. 1 písm. c) „zpracování je nezbytné pro splnění právní povinnosti, která se na správce vztahuje“ a e) „zpracování je nezbytné pro splnění úkolu prováděného ve veřejném zájmu nebo při výkonu veřejné moci, kterým je pověřen správce“ GDPR.

V § 25 (Zásady zpracování osobních údajů) zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., je uložena spravujícímu orgánu povinnost stanovit konkrétní účel zpracování osobních údajů a přijímat opatření zajišťující, aby osobní údaje byly přesné ve vztahu k povaze a účelu zpracování, a uchovávat osobní údaje v podobě umožňující identifikaci subjektu údajů jen po dobu nezbytnou k dosažení účelu jejich zpracování.

Účelové omezení a minimalizace

Účelové omezení znamená, že osobní údaje mohou být zpracovávány pouze pro zákonem stanovené účely – tedy zejména pro předcházení, vyhledávání a odhalování trestné činnosti, stíhání trestných činů, zajišťování bezpečnosti státu a veřejného pořádku, včetně pátrání po osobách a věcech (§ 2 zákona o Policii). V § 79 stejného zákona nalezneme další upřesnění k účelovému omezení a minimalizaci osobních údajů, např., že policie může zpracovávat osobní údaje jen je-ti to nezbytně nutné pro dosažení plněných úkolů, údaje o rasovém nebo etnickém původu, náboženském, filosofickém nebo politickém přesvědčení, členství v odborové organizaci, zdravotním stavu, sexuálním chování nebo sexuální orientaci lze pouze tehdy, je-li to nezbytné pro účely šetření konkrétního trestného činu nebo přestupku, nebo při poskytování ochrany osob[13], shromažďovat osobní údaje otevřeně i utajeným způsobem nebo pod záminkou jiného účelu nebo jiné činnosti …

V § 24 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., je např. uvedeno, že se zpracovávají osobní údaje, které jsou nezbytné pro plnění úkolu a výkon veřejné moci spravujícího orgánu …

Zásada minimalizace vyžaduje, aby policie zpracovávala pouze takový rozsah údajů, který je nezbytný pro daný účel; konkrétním projevem je právě povinnost pravidelného tříletého přezkumu dle § 82 zákona o Policii.

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[13] Zákon č. 137/2001 Sb., o zvláštní ochraně svědka a dalších osob v souvislosti s trestním řízením a o změně zákona č. 99/1963 Sb., občanský soudní řád, ve znění pozdějších předpisů, ve znění pozdějších předpisů.

Omezená doba uchovávání a likvidace údajů

Zásada omezené doby uchovávání ukládá policii povinnost uchovávat osobní údaje pouze po dobu, která je nezbytná pro účely uvedené v § 79 zákona o Policii; poté musí dojít k jejich likvidaci nebo anonymizaci (§ 82, § 87 zákona o Policii). Stejnou zásadu nalezneme i v § 25 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., a v čl. 5 odst. 1 písm. e) GDPR.

Práva subjektů údajů a jejich omezení. Právo na informace a přístup k informacím

Hlava III zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., zaručuje subjektům údajů právo na informace o zpracování osobních údajů (§ 27) a právo na přístup k osobním údajům (§ 28).

Spravující orgán musí na žádost subjektu údajů sdělit, zda o něm zpracovává osobní údaje, a pokud ano, poskytnout přiměřené informace o účelech, právním základu, kategoriích údajů, době uchování a příjemcích.

Omezení práv subjektů údajů z důvodu ochrany vyšetřování

Práva subjektů údajů nejsou absolutní. § 28 odst. 2 a § 29 odst. 5 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., umožňují omezit informace nebo přístup k údajům, pokud by jejich poskytnutí mohlo ohrozit účel zpracování (například probíhající vyšetřování), bezpečnost České republiky, veřejný pořádek nebo práva a svobody jiných osob.

ÚOOÚ vysvětluje, že v trestněprávní oblasti je nutné vyvažovat ochranu soukromí s potřebou efektivního vyšetřování, kdy omezení práv subjektů údajů musí být přiměřená a odůvodněná.

Oprava, výmaz a omezení zpracování osobních údajů

Dle § 29 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., má subjekt údajů právo požadovat opravu nepřesných nebo neúplných údajů, výmaz údajů zpracovávaných v rozporu se zákonem nebo údajů, které již nejsou potřebné, a dále omezení zpracování, například pokud zpochybňuje přesnost údajů nebo je potřebuje pro uplatnění svých právních nároků.

§ 30 ukládá spravujícímu orgánu povinnost vyřídit žádost bez zbytečného odkladu, nejpozději do 60 dnů; pokud není žádosti vyhověno, musí být subjekt poučen o možnosti podat podnět ÚOOÚ a domáhat se soudní ochrany.

Kontrola a dozor nad zpracováním osobních údajů

ÚOOÚ je dle zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., a dle GDPR dozorovým orgánem pro oblast ochrany osobních údajů v České republice.

ÚOOÚ má zejména povinnost monitorovat a vymáhat uplatňování předpisů na ochranu osobních údajů, provádět kontroly, vydávat závazná rozhodnutí a poskytovat metodickou podporu.

Tyto povinnosti se vztahují i na zpracování osobních údajů policií dle hlavy III zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., s výjimkou činnosti soudů při výkonu jejich rozhodovací pravomoci.

Subjekt údajů může dle § 31 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb., podat k ÚOOÚ podnět k ověření zákonnosti zpracování, pokud má za to, že policie nebo jiný spravující orgán porušil jeho práva.

Závěr

Autoři předkládají odborné veřejnosti základní informace a zjištění z oblasti aplikace kriminalisticko-taktické metody pátrání, se specifiky ochrany informací a osobních údajů dotčených subjektů.

Oblasti se autoři věnují i v rámci pedagogické a výzkumné činnosti se studenty navazujícího magisterského studia Vysoké školy finanční a správní v Praze, pod názvem „Nové trendy v oblasti finančního šetření“[14] a připravili speciální, nadstavbové předměty navazující na kriminalistické učení, především z oblasti kriminalistické taktiky a metodiky vyšetřování jednotlivých druhů trestných činů.

Ochrana osobních údajů při vyšetřování trestných činů Policií České republiky je založena na dvouúrovňovém systému, a to na evropské úrovni (GDPR a trestněprávní směrnici 2016/680) a na vnitrostátní úrovni, zejména na zákoně č. 110/2019 Sb., a zákoně č. 273/2008 Sb., o Policii.

Policie zpracovává osobní údaje bez souhlasu subjektů údajů, avšak striktně v mezích zákona a při dodržování zásad zákonnosti, účelového omezení, minimalizace, přesnosti a omezené doby uchovávání, jak je upravují § 25 zákona č. 110/2019 Sb. a § 79–82 zákona o Policii.

Práva subjektů údajů jsou v trestněprávním režimu uznána (informace, přístup k osobním údajům, oprava, výmaz, omezení zpracování), ale mohou být i zároveň přiměřeně omezena, pokud by jejich plné uplatnění ohrozilo vyšetřování nebo bezpečnost státu. Zákonnost těchto činností a omezení kontroluje dozorový úřad ÚOOÚ a v konečném důsledku soudy.

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CIVILIAN CSDP AS A TOOL OF EUROPEAN SECURITY IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

Civilní SBOP jako nástroj evropské bezpečnosti v nebezpečném světě

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the European Union's civilian Common Security and Defence Policy in the context of a rapidly deteriorating security environment and increasing instability both in Europe and globally, characterised by the resurgence of interstate conflicts, hybrid threats, and intensifying geopolitical rivalry. The article aims to assess the extent to which the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy constitutes a relevant and sustainable instrument for addressing contemporary security challenges faced by the European Union. Methodologically, the article is based on a qualitative content analysis of key European Union strategic documents, complemented by a review of academic and professional literature on security and defence policy and civilian crisis management. This is supplemented by an analytical-synthetic approach and a comparison of normative ambitions with the practical implementation of civilian missions. The findings of the analysis highlight the considerable potential of civilian Common Security and Defence Policy in strengthening the rule of law, stability, and societal resilience. At the same time, they reveal persistent personnel, financial, and strategic constraints that continue to hinder its effective implementation.

Key words: Security studies – strategic studies – international relations – security science – interdisciplinary research

ABSTRAKT: Článek zkoumá civilní Společnou bezpečnostní a obrannou politiku Evropské unie v kontextu současného zhoršujícího se bezpečnostního prostředí a rostoucí nestability v Evropě i ve světě, charakterizované návratem mezistátní války, hybridními hrozbami a prohlubující se geopolitickou rivalitou. Cílem článku je analyzovat, do jaké míry představuje civilní Společná bezpečnostní a obranná politika relevantní a udržitelný nástroj reakce Evropské unie na moderní bezpečnostní výzvy. Metodologicky článek vychází z kvalitativní a obsahové analýzy klíčových strategických dokumentů Evropské unie, vědeckých a odborných prací zaměřených na bezpečnostní a obrannou politiku a civilní krizové řízení, doplněné o analyticko-syntetický přístup a komparaci ambicí s praktickou implementací civilních misí. Výsledky analýzy poukazují na významný potenciál civilní Společné bezpečnostní a obranné politiky při posilování právního státu, stability a společenské odolnosti, zároveň však identifikují přetrvávající personální, finanční a strategické limity, které negativně ovlivňují její efektivní uplatňování.

Kľúčové slová: Evropská bezpečnost – civilní SBOP – civilní krizové řízení – civilní mise – hybridní hrozby

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global and European security environment is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, instability, and dynamism, which is fundamentally altering established security paradigms. The escalation of armed conflicts, the return of interstate warfare to Europe, violations of international law, and the rise of hybrid, cyber, and non-military threats create a complex security landscape in which traditional approaches to security are no longer sufficient. The full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2022 marked a pivotal turning point in the European security architecture and demonstrates that the European Union (EU) can no longer perceive security exclusively as an external problem, nor rely solely on military instruments of collective defence (Schou, 2022; Ivančík, 2024; Bond, 2025). At the same time, the interconnectedness of the internal and external dimensions of security is deepening, as evidenced by the growing prevalence of hybrid operations, foreign information manipulation, cyberattacks, organised crime, migratory pressures, and the security implications of climate change (European Union, 2022).

In this context, the civilian dimension of European security and defence policy, which has gradually established itself as an integral part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), is of particular significance. Civilian CSDP constitutes a specific EU instrument for conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict stabilisation through non-military means, particularly in the areas of strengthening the rule of law, security sector reform, civilian administration, police cooperation, and the protection of the civilian population. Its importance lies in its ability to address complex security challenges in a manner that complements military instruments while adhering to the principles of the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises, which combines political, diplomatic, security, developmental, and humanitarian tools (EEAS, 2025).

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The objective of this article is to analyse the role and potential of civilian CSDP as an instrument of the EU's response to the deteriorating security environment in today’s increasingly unstable world. The article assesses the extent to which the civilian dimension of CSDP can effectively contribute to addressing contemporary security challenges and identifies its strategic limitations in the context of the EU’s growing geopolitical ambitions. The primary research question is as follows: To what extent does civilian CSDP represent a relevant and sustainable pillar of European security in an environment characterised by the resurgence of interstate warfare, the proliferation of hybrid and other threats, and intensifying systemic rivalry?

Methodologically, the article is based on a qualitative analysis of key EU strategic and policy documents, focusing particularly on the 2023 Civilian CSDP Compact and related conceptual and evaluative materials. An analytical-synthetic approach is employed to identify key trends, priorities, and internal inconsistencies within civilian CSDP. A crucial component of the methodology is the comparison of the normative ambitions articulated in EU strategic documents with the practical implementation of civilian missions in the field. The analysis is supplemented by the use of secondary academic literature and policy-oriented research, primarily from the fields of security studies and civilian crisis management research.

From a theoretical perspective, the article is anchored within the framework of security studies and draws upon an expanded understanding of security that extends beyond the traditional military dimension. Particular attention is paid to the concepts of civilian crisis intervention, resilience, and EU strategic autonomy, which provide the analytical framework for assessing civilian CSDP as a tool for addressing both current and emerging security challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The security environment of the 21st century is characterised by increasing complexity, uncertainty, and a high degree of interconnectedness among different types of threats, which increasingly transcend the traditional distinction between internal and external security. Contemporary security challenges are hybrid, multidimensional, and often non-military in nature, manifesting simultaneously at the local, regional, and global levels. Armed conflicts are increasingly accompanied by cyberattacks, foreign information manipulation, economic coercion, the weaponisation of migration, organised crime, and disruptions to critical infrastructure. This evolution fundamentally undermines the traditional understanding of security based on the territorial defence of the state and reinforces the need for integrated, flexible, and adaptive approaches to crisis management (Schreier, 2020; Ivančík, 2022; Koenders, 2024).

The nexus between the internal and external dimensions of security is particularly evident within the European space. Instability in regions neighbouring the European Union has direct consequences for the internal security of its Member States, whether in the form of migratory pressures, cross-border crime, radicalisation, or hybrid operations conducted by state and non-state actors (EU, 2022). Security threats are thus becoming less predictable and more difficult to detect, which significantly complicates response mechanisms based exclusively on military capabilities. In this environment, the importance of instruments capable of operating in the so-called "grey zone" between peace and war, addressing hybrid activities and emerging crises before they escalate into open conflict, is steadily increasing (Giannopoulos et al., 2021; Jungwirth et al., 2023; Ivančík & Nečas, 2025).

The full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2022 marked a watershed moment for the European security architecture. This development challenged assumptions about the stability of the European security order and reaffirmed the possibility of large-scale interstate warfare (Ivančík, 2024; Bond, 2025). At the same time, however, it highlighted that contemporary armed conflict extends far beyond the conventional battlefield but also involves massive hybrid operations, cyberattacks, information warfare, and systematic efforts to undermine state institutional resilience. The consequences of the war in Ukraine extend beyond the immediate conflict zone, affecting the broader European region and significantly increasing pressure on the European Union to strengthen its capacity to respond to crises through a wider range of non-military instruments (Rutigliano, 2023).

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has also exposed the limitations of traditional military instruments in addressing contemporary security challenges. Although military force remains an essential element of deterrence and defence, it is not sufficient on its own to ensure long-term stability, recovery, and resilience in conflict-affected states. Military operations cannot resolve deep-seated structural issues such as weak institutions, deficiencies in the rule of law, corruption, ineffective security sectors, or declining public trust in state institutions. Yet, these factors often represent the key drivers of instability and recurring crises (Fabbrini, 2025).

Consequently, the concept of civilian crisis management is increasingly coming to the fore as a complement to, and in many cases, an alternative to, military responses (EEAS, 2018). Civilian instruments allow for engagement throughout the entire conflict cycle: from early warning and prevention to crisis management, post-conflict stabilisation, and reconstruction (EEAS, 2025). Their objective is not merely to address immediate security risks, but primarily to strengthen the resilience of states and societies against future threats. This approach is fully consistent with the European Union’s Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, which emphasises the need for the coordinated use of political, security, developmental, and humanitarian instruments (Alametsä, 2023).

The scope for civilian crisis intervention in the current security environment is expanding significantly due to the growing importance of hybrid and non-military threats. Strengthening capacities in the areas of the rule of law, security sector reform, civilian administration, anti-corruption measures, and strategic communication has bcome a key prerequisite for long-term stability. In this regard, the European Union possesses a unique range of civilian instruments that allow it to act as a security actor without the necessity to rely on direct military intervention (Bálint, 2024). The civilian dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy thus represents not only a response to the limitations of traditional approaches but also a strategic adaptation to the evolving nature of 21st-century security challenges (EEAS, 2018).

This transformation of the security environment establishes the fundamental framework for analysing civilian CSDP as an instrument capable of addressing emerging threats to the security of Europe and its neighbourhood. However, it also places high demands on its effectiveness, strategic coherence, and ability to overcome its own institutional and resource constraints—issues that are examined in the following sections of the article.

THE EU'S CIVILIAN COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR RESPONDING TO THE DETERIORATING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The European Union's civilian Common Security and Defence Policy has gradually evolved into one of the key instruments through which the EU, either independently or with international partners, responds to complex security challenges in its neighbourhood and beyond (Ivančík, 2022). Its emergence and development are closely linked to the Union's ambition to promote stability, peace, and security through non-military means, reflecting the specific character of the EU as a civilian-normative actor (EEAS, 2025). Since the launch of the first civilian missions conducted under the CSDP at the beginning of the 21st century, civilian CSDP has developed into a flexible framework focused on security sector reform, support for the rule of law, strengthening police and judicial capacities, and enhancing civilian governance n fragile and conflict-affected environments (Alametsä, 2023).

The significance of civilian CSDP stems primarily from its ability to operate in areas where military instruments are either insufficient or politically undesirable. EU civilian missions enable long-term engagement in partner countries to address the structural drivers of instability, which are often linked to weak institutions, poor governance, human rights violations, and low levels of public trust in state authorities (Ivančík, 2022). In the context of the deteriorating security environment in Europe and its neighbourhood, civilian CSDP has acquired renewed strategic relevance. It provides the EU with a means of responding to crises without direct escalation of conflicts while simultaneously strengthening its own security through the stabilisation of neighbouring regions (Pirozzi, 2023).

A fundamental milestone in the evolution of civilian CSDP was the adoption of the Civilian CSDP Compact in 2023, which established a comprehensive framework for strengthening and adapting civilian crisis management to a rapidly changing security environment (Vorrath & Pietz, 2023). The Compact reflects lessons learned from previous civilian missions and responds to emerging security challenges arising from the resurgence of interstate warfare in Europe and the growing prevalence of hybrid threats. Its structure is based on four interconnected pillars—ACT, SECURE, INVEST, and PARTNER—which collectively define the EU's ambitions in the field of civilian crisis management:

- ACT emphasises the need to increase the capacity of civilian CSDP to respond rapidly, flexibly, and effectively to emerging crises. It focuses on streamlining decision-making processes, modular mission design, and strengthening operational capabilities to facilitate the rapid deployment of civilian expert teams within a short timeframe.
- SECURE addresses the growing need to protect civilian missions and host countries from hybrid, cyber, and information threats, while highlighting the nexus between internal and external security.
- INVEST seeks to strengthen the personnel, financial, and technological capacities of civilian CSDP through increased Member States contributions and the professionalisation of civilian crisis management.
- PARTNER underlines the importance of cooperation with host countries, international organisations, and like-minded partners to ensure local ownership, sustainability, and the legitimacy of civilian missions (EEAS, 2025).

Civilian CSDP is currently increasingly focused on addressing emerging security challenges that extend beyond the traditional scope of crisis management. Hybrid threats, cybersecurity, foreign information manipulation, and the security implications of climate change have become integral components of several civilian mission mandates. This shift reflects the EU's efforts to adapt its civilian instruments to the reality of a security environment in which destabilisation frequently results from a combination of military and non-military factors. Consequently, civilian missions thus no longer serve solely for post-conflict reconstruction, but also for strengthening state resilience against hybrid forms of coercion and long-term systemic risks (Karjalainen & Savoranta, 2021).

The contribution of civilian CSDP missions to stability and security of partner countries is particularly evident in the areas of rule of law promotion and security sector reform. Through advisory, training, and monitoring activities, civilian missions contribute to the professionalisation of police and judicial institutions, improve transparency, and strengthen civilian oversight of security institutions. Such measures are essential for building trust between the state and citizens, which remains a prerequisite for long-term stability. At the same time, they allow the European Union to promote its values and norms related to human rights and the rule of law through mechanisms that are less confrontational than military intervention.

In the context of the deteriorating security environment, civilian CSDP is profiling itself as an instrument that complements the Union's military capabilities and enhances its ability to act as a comprehensive security actor. However, its effectiveness ultimately depends on its ability to translate strategic ambitions into practical outcomes and on the political willingness of Member States to invest in its further development. It is precisely the tension between expanding expectations and existing constraints of civilian CSDP that creates space for critical reflection on its strategic limits and future prospects, which will be addressed in the following chapter.

STRATEGIC LIMITATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CIVILIAN CSDP IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

Despite the growing political significance of the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy and its gradual strengthening in response to a deteriorating security environment, civilian CSDP remains subject to several structural and strategic limitations. One of the most prominent challenges is the persistent discrepancy between the political ambitions articulated at the European Union level and the actual implementation capacities on the ground. EU strategic documents, including the Civilian CSDP Compact, set out ambitious expectations regarding rapid response, comprehensive crisis management, and the ability to operate in increasingly demanding security environments. However, these ambitions frequently encounter constraints in personnel, financial, and institutional resources, which hinder their effective realisation (Lazzaroni, 2023).

The gap between ambition and capacity is particularly evident in the ability of civilian CSDP to respond to emerging crises with sufficient speed and flexibility to emerging crises. Although the EU repeatedly emphasises the need to enhance its capacity for the timely deployment of civilian experts, decision-making and force-generation processes remain largely dependent on the political will and administrative procedures of Member States. As a result, the scale and mandate of civilian missions are often adjusted to available resources, rather than resources being mobilised according to operational requirements (Smith, 2023). Such an approach undermines the strategic rationale of civilian CSDP and diminishes its potential impact in environments where a swift and decisive response is critical.

Another significant constraint is the persistent lack of strategic coherence. In many cases, decisions concerning the deployment of civilian missions remains reactive and ad hoc, shaped by immediate crises and political pressure rather than being the result of long-term strategic analysis and planning (Lazzaroni, 2023). This reflects a broader challenge: while the EU increasingly acts as a geopolitical actor, it often does so without clearly defined strategic objectives or a coherent prioritisation of instruments (Balfour & Ülgen, 2024). Consequently, civilian CSDP frequently serves as a mechanism for improvised crisis management rather than being systematically utilised as part of a broader and long-term security strategy.

Personnel-related constraints represent another fundamental obstacle to the further development of civilian CSDP. Civilian missions are heavily reliant on Member State contributions, which provide experts from national police, judicial, and administrative structures. A shortage of available experts, uneven participation among Member States, and variations in the quality of national contributions undermine both the continuity and effectiveness of missions (Smith, 2023). Although the Civilian CSDP Compact emphasises the importance of increasing the proportion of seconded personnel and achieving greater gender balance, the practical implementation of these goals remains inconsistent. Similarly, financial limitations present an additional challenge, as the budget allocated to civilian CSDP has long remained insufficient in relation to growing ambitions and the increasing number of civilian missions (Gatekane, 2025).

Institutional constraints are closely linked to the intergovernmental nature of civilian CSDP. Political control and strategic direction of civilian missions remain primarily in the hands of Member States, often leading to fragmented decision-making processes and compromise-driven solutions. Insufficient integration of civilian CSDP into broader EU policies and limited coordination with other EU external action instruments reduce its capacity to achieve synergistic effects. Although the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises provides the official framework for EU engagement, its practical implementation in the case of civilian missions continues to face institutional and jurisdictional barriers (Lazzaroni, 2023).

These limitations also raise questions about the extent to which civilian CSDP operates at the intersection of geopolitics and strategy. On the one hand, civilian missions are increasingly deployed in geopolitically sensitive regions, particularly within the EU's immediate neighbourhood, which increases their political visibility and strategic importance. On the other hand, the absence of a clearly articulated strategic vision and prioritised objectives weakens their capacity to contribute systematically to long-term security and stability. Civilian CSDP thus exists in a state of tension between the growing expectations generated by the worsening security environment and the constraints arising from its institutional and political framework (Smith, 2023).

Despite these limitations, civilian CSDP possesses significant potential to become one of the key pillars of security resilience for both the European Union and its neighbourhood. Its principal strength lies in its capacity for long-term, preventive, and comprehensive engagement, with a focus on strengthening institutions, promotion of the rule of law, and enhancement of societal resilience to crises. In an environment where security threats increasingly emerge below the threshold of open armed conflict, the EU's civilian instruments represent an indispensable means of stabilisation and escalation prevention. The future effectiveness of civilian CSDP will therefore depend on the EU's ability to address existing shortcomings, align political ambitions with available capabilities, and anchor civilian crisis management as an integral part of its security and strategic identity.

CONCLUSION

The present article has examined the role and significance of the EU's civilian CSDP within the context of the current, increasingly deteriorating security environment. Drawing upon the characteristics of contemporary security threats, the return of interstate warfare to Europe, and the growing importance of hybrid and non-military forms of threat (Ivančík & Nečas, 2025), the article has highlighted the profound transformation of security thinking that the EU has undergone in recent years. The analysis has demonstrated that while traditional military instruments remain essential for deterrence and defence, they are not, on their own, sufficient to address the complex nature of contemporary crises or to ensure long-term stability in conflict and post-conflict environments.

The examination of the civilian dimension of CSDP has confirmed that EU civilian missions constitute a vital and specific crisis-management instrument, enabling the EU to address the deeper structural causes of instability, including weak institutions, deficiencies in the rule of law, dysfunctional security sector, and limited societal resilience. In this respect, civilian CSDP profiles itself as an indispensable complement to military capabilities and a practical manifestation of the EU's Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises.

Through the adoption of the Civilian CSDP Compact in 2023, the EU has clearly articulated its ambition to enhance the effectiveness, flexibility, and strategic relevance of civilian crisis management, while the four pillars (Act, Secure, Invest, and Partner) provide a comprehensive framework for its further development.

The assessment of the relevance and sustainability of civilian CSDP as a pillar of European security in an era marked by the return of interstate warfare and the proliferation of hybrid threats suggests that although civilian CSDP has the potential to play a significant role in strengthening security within the EU and its neighbourhood, this potential remains only partially fulfilled. The discrepancy between political ambitions and operational capabilities, persistent reactivity in decision-making, and personnel, financial, and institutional constraints significantly weaken its strategic effectiveness. Consequently, civilian CSDP currently finds at the intersection of growing geopolitical relevance and insufficient strategic consolidation.

The evaluation of the role of civilian CSDP in the contemporary security landscape points to its growing importance, particularly in areas where security threats emerge below the threshold of open armed conflict. In such contexts, EU civilian missions can effectively contribute to preventing the escalation of tensions, stabilising partner countries, and strengthening their institutional resilience. Recent experience, including the expanded engagement of civilian missions within the EU's immediate neighbourhood, also show that civilian instruments provide the EU with a politically acceptable and legitimate means of operating in geopolitically sensitive regions.

In conclusion, in an era characterised by growing uncertainty, geopolitical rivalry, and hybrid threats, the EU's civilian security instruments are acquiring ever-greater significance. Civilian CSDP does not represent an alternative to military force, but rather its indispensable complement, enabling the EU to address security challenges in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. The EU's ability to effectively utilise civilian instruments in the field of security and defence will, in the coming years, be one of the key tests of its ambition to act as a responsible and credible security actor in an increasingly unstable world.

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FAILURE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SECTOR DIGITALIZATION PROJECTS BASED ON PUBLICLY AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Analýza neúspěšných projektů veřejné správy z veřejně dostupných zdrojů

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the causes of failure in selected digitalization projects within the public administration sector of the Czech Republic. Despite the growing importance of digital transformation in enhancing efficiency, transparency, and public value, many large-scale IT projects in the public sector fail or do not achieve their intended outcomes. The aim of this paper is to identify the key factors contributing to these failures and to determine whether they represent isolated incidents or systemic issues. The research is based on a qualitative comparative analysis of three case studies: the e-Legislativa project, the digitalization of agendas at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the electronic motorway vignette system. The analysis draws on publicly available data, including audit reports, official documents, and media sources. The findings reveal recurring structural problems, such as inadequate strategic planning, weak interinstitutional coordination, heavy reliance on external IT suppliers, limited internal technological capacities, and instability in project governance. The study concludes that these failures are not accidental but rather reflect systemic weaknesses in the management of public sector digitalization projects.

Key words: digital transformation – public administration – projects failure – e-government.

ABSTRAKT: Článek se zabývá příčinami neúspěchu vybraných digitalizačních projektů ve veřejné správě České republiky. Navzdory rostoucímu významu digitální transformace pro zvyšování efektivity, transparentnosti a veřejné hodnoty mnoho rozsáhlých IT projektů ve veřejném sektoru selhává nebo nedosahuje zamýšlených výsledků. Cílem tohoto článku je identifikovat klíčové faktory přispívající k těmto neúspěchům a určit, zda se jedná o ojedinělé případy, nebo o systémové problémy. Výzkum je založen na kvalitativní komparativní analýze tří případových studií: projektu e-Legislativa, digitalizace agend na Ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí a systému elektronických dálničních známek. Analýza čerpá z veřejně dostupných údajů, včetně auditních zpráv, úředních dokumentů a mediálních zdrojů. Zjištění odhalují opakující se strukturální problémy, jako je nedostatečné strategické plánování, slabá koordinace mezi institucemi, silná závislost na externích dodavatelích IT, omezené interní technologické kapacity a nestabilita v řízení projektů. Studie dochází k závěru, že neúspěchy nejsou náhodné, ale odrážejí systémové slabiny v řízení projektů digitalizace ve veřejném sektoru.

Klíčová slova: digitální transformace – veřejná správa – selhání projektů – e-government.

INTRODUCTION

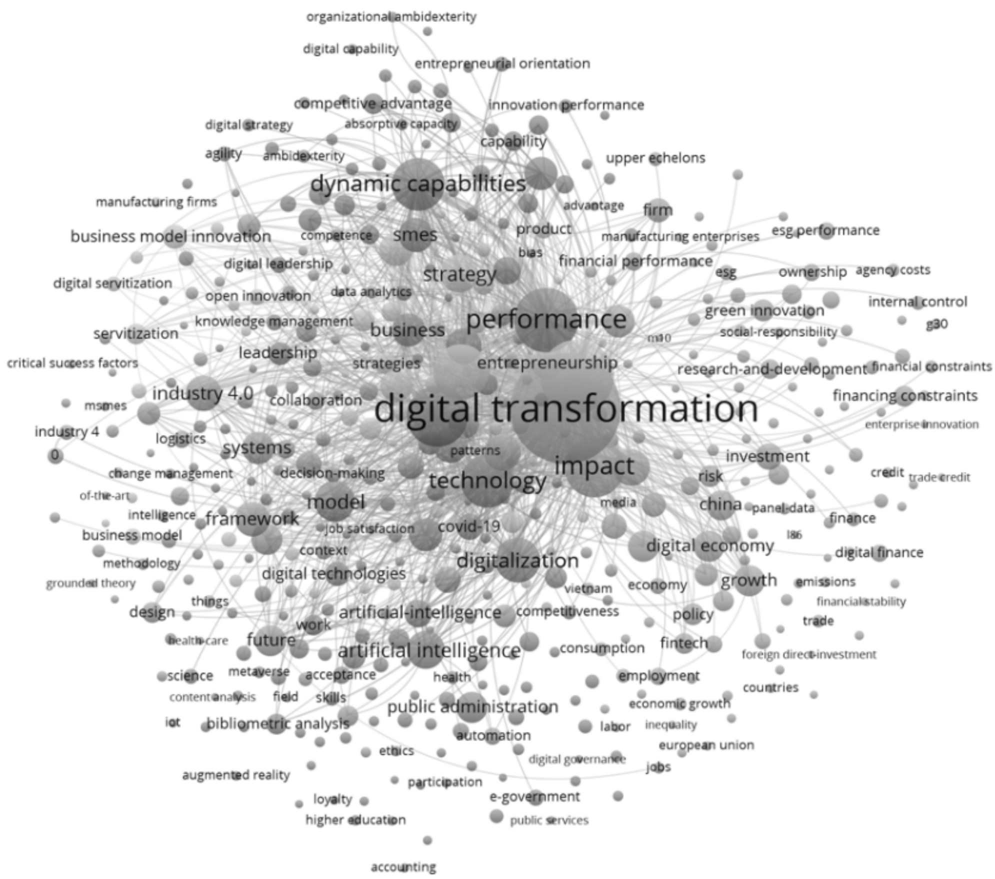
The digital transformation of the public sector currently extends far beyond serving merely as an instrument for enhancing the competitiveness of national economies. The experience of global digital leaders demonstrates that successful public sector digitalization functions as a fundamental development strategy that demonstrably stimulates economic growth and significantly reduces transaction costs across the entire market (Espinosa & Pino, 2024).

Despite its undeniable importance, government digital projects continue to exhibit high failure rates, as frequently reported in the literature. A systematic literature review covering 168 studies defines project failure as the inability to achieve predefined objectives, significant budget overruns, or substantial schedule delays (Haug et al., 2023). The causes of failure are typically multifaceted and involve interactions among technological, managerial, and institutional factors throughout the project lifecycle.

Previous research identifies poorly defined requirements, weak project management, and incomplete system functionality as common causes of project failure, particularly in contexts where institutional and technological constraints are more pronounced (Nyansiro, Mtebe & Kissaka, 2021). These shortcomings are often exacerbated by broader institutional constraints, including limited internal technological capacities and heavy reliance on external suppliers. In this context, failures in public sector digital systems can be understood as manifestations of deeper systemic deficiencies in public policy and institutional structures. Similar patterns of systemic deficiencies have been identified in other areas of public sector governance, such as healthcare systems, where institutional arrangements may foster inefficiencies and reduce transparency (Masár & Možíšek, 2025).

The spatial distribution and interconnections of key topics within the current academic discourse are illustrated in the conceptual map shown in Figure 1, which was generated through a keyword co-occurrence analysis using the VOSviewer software. The visualization reveals the principal thematic clusters addressed in contemporary research, ranging from technical and managerial aspects of project management to institutional and political dimensions of e-government.

Figure 1: Thematic Map of Key Concepts in the Literature on IT Project Failure in Public Administration



Data source: Authors.

For the identification of the main research themes, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software. The search in the database of scholarly literature was based on the keywords "*digital transformation*" and "*public administration*", and was limited to the categories of Management, Business, Economics, and Business Finance, as well as the period 2022–2026. A total of 8,340 publications were identified, of which 8,000 articles were exported for further analysis due to database export limitations. Based on the keyword co-occurrence analysis, a thematic map was created, showing that the most frequently occurring terms in this research area are *digital transformation (3,208 occurrences), innovation (1,435 occurrences),* and *performance (1,099 occurrences).*

In addition to project-level deficiencies, the literature emphasizes the importance of institutional coordination and system interoperability. Insufficient integration of information systems and weak coordination across public administration institutions may lead to fragmented data structures, duplicated investments, and reduced long-term sustainability of digital solutions (Oliveira et al., 2026). At the same time, traditional project management approaches often prove insufficient for addressing the complexity of digital projects. Empirical research indicates that overall project success rates remain relatively low and that the public sector does not achieve better outcomes than the private sector (Blaskovics et al., 2023). Failures are frequently associated with the inappropriate selection and insufficient experience of key personnel, problematic relationships among public agencies, suppliers, and legislators, and the absence of clear strategic planning (Irfan et al., 2021).

From a governance perspective, successful digital transformation requires not only technological innovation but also organizational learning and institutional adaptation. The ability to evaluate failures and incorporate lessons learned into future projects represents a key prerequisite for improving the effectiveness of public sector IT governance (Mergel, Edelmann & Haug, 2019). From the perspective of administrative law, it is important to distinguish between the organizational structure of public administration (i.e., the system of administrative bodies, their hierarchical relationships, and institutional forms such as ministries, agencies, and specialized offices) and the separate issue of administrative competences, which concern the legal powers and jurisdictions of individual administrative actors. While competence-related issues are closely linked to organizational structure, they do not constitute the organization itself. An adequate analysis of the public administration must therefore address not only the distribution of responsibilities and powers but also the structural and institutional framework within which these responsibilities are exercised.

The effectiveness of public administration processes is further influenced by internal capacities and organizational conditions, which shape the quality and outcomes of administrative performance (Liptáková & Drocárová, 2025). In the Czech context, additional challenges include a declining number of ICT graduates and insufficient digital competencies in selected areas of public services, including education, where limited confidence in new technologies may hinder the effective implementation of ICT (Červinka & Novák, 2022).

The consequences of failed IT projects are severe. Research indicates that some projects experience extreme cost overruns and schedule delays, resulting not only in direct financial losses but also in opportunity costs (Flyvbjerg & Budzier, 2011). Analysis of project failure dynamics further demonstrates a clear differentiation between successful and unsuccessful projects and highlights the importance of systematic failure analysis (Abitbol & Arod, 2025).

To mitigate these risks, scholars recommend adopting hybrid IT governance models that combine traditional management approaches with agile elements while simultaneously strengthening internal digital competencies. An organizational culture that learns from failure rather than concealing it is essential for effective digital transformation (Mergel, Edelmann &

Haug, 2019). Effective governance therefore requires a balance between strategic control and operational flexibility in day-to-day management.

A further dimension of growing relevance concerns contemporary administrative-legal trends in public sector governance, particularly the increasing role of digital tools and artificial intelligence in administrative processes. The integration of AI-driven decision-support systems, automated data processing, and intelligent workflow management into public administration represents not merely a technological shift but a fundamental structural transformation of administrative system and procedures. These developments raise important questions of legal certainty, accountability, and the allocation of competences within public bodies. As AI tools become embedded in administrative decision-making, from processing benefit applications to managing legislative databases, they challenge established frameworks of administrative law and require updated regulatory approaches. Integrating these trends into the theoretical framework of this study further enhances its relevance and situates the analysis of project failures within the broader context of digital transformation challenges that public administrations face today.

Based on the above considerations, three research questions are formulated:

RQ1: What are the most common causes of failure in digitalization projects across the examined cases?

RQ2: Is there a systematic relationship between violations of public procurement rules and subsequent cost overruns or schedule delays in digitalization projects?

RQ3: Which institutional and managerial factors contribute most significantly to the failure of digitalization projects in public administration?

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

This study employs a qualitative comparative analysis of publicly available secondary data with the aim of identifying, describing, and comparing the causes of failure in selected digitalization projects within public administration in the Czech Republic.

The data were systematically collected from multiple types of publicly available sources to ensure sufficient coverage and triangulation. These included official documents, such as audit reports of the Supreme Audit Office (NKÚ), annual reports of relevant ministries and public authorities, and records from government and parliamentary committee meetings. In addition, media sources were used, particularly analytical and investigative articles published in reputable Czech outlets (e.g., *Hospodářské noviny*, *Aktuálně.cz*, *Deník N*, and reports by Czech Television). The analysis was further complemented by materials from suppliers and professional organizations, including press releases, annual reports of IT solution providers, and expert statements issued by organizations such as ICT Unie. Finally, information published on official public administration websites, including ministry portals and institutional project pages, was also included.

The selection of case studies was based on their relevance to the digital transformation of public administration in the Czech Republic and on the availability of sufficiently detailed public sources that allow for an in-depth analysis of project development and outcomes.

The analytical procedure consisted of structured content analysis of the collected materials. Relevant passages describing manifestations and causes of project failure were systematically identified and coded. The main analytical categories included cost overruns and schedule delays, deficiencies in public procurement procedures, operational and technical issues in information systems, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders combined with high personnel turnover.

For the evaluation of the case studies, a simple classification framework of digitalization project failure factors was applied. Identified issues were categorized into four analytical dimensions: strategic factors (project planning and definition of objectives), institutional factors (inter-institutional coordination and political influence), economic factors (project financing and public procurement), and technological factors (technical infrastructure and system integration). This framework provides a structured basis for comparison across individual projects and facilitates the identification of recurring patterns of failure.

A key stage of the research involved comparative analysis, in which data from individual projects were systematically examined to identify recurring patterns, typical causal relationships, and case-specific differences. This approach enabled the assessment of whether similar institutional and managerial mechanisms repeatedly occur across projects and determining whether failures of different projects share common root causes and comparable developmental trajectories.

The research adopts an exploratory case study design, which is particularly suitable for the analysis of complex institutional processes and the identification of broader systemic patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Project e-Legislativa

The e-Legislativa project represents one of the most prominent and best-documented cases of systemic failure in the digital transformation of public administration in the Czech Republic. It was conceived as an ambitious digitalization initiative aimed at introducing a modern electronic Collection of Laws (eSbírka) and a comprehensive system for electronic legislative drafting (eLegislativa). The system was intended to provide the public with continuously updated and legally valid versions of legislation while significantly streamlining the legislative process. Although the original plan envisaged deployment of the system between 2016 and 2019 with a budget of CZK 482 million, the project was from the outset affected by extensive delays, nearly doubled costs, technical deficiencies, and serious shortcomings in project governance. These problems not only undermined public trust but also raised concerns regarding the transparency of the legislative process (NKÚ, 2022). An analysis of the project's development reveals failures across all key stages, from preparation through implementation and financing to system deployment and public reception, providing important lessons for future digitalization projects in public administration.

Already in the preparatory phase, fundamental deficiencies were identified, particularly the absence of detailed user need analysis, overly general project specifications, and the lack of pilot testing. These shortcomings were further exacerbated by pressure to absorb European Union funding, which led to prioritizing deadlines over project quality and resulted in insufficiently prepared implementation (ICT Unie, 2021).

During implementation, the project was market by high turnover of management, weak inter-institutional and supplier coordination, and repeated changes in scope, leading to delays exceeding six years. The absence of systematic testing resulted in serious technical deficiencies, including incomplete functionality, outdated legislative data, and poor usability, which ultimately increased administrative workload instead of improving efficiency (NKÚ, 2022).

From a governance perspective, the project failed to meet key project management principles, particularly in terms of management stability, risk management, and stakeholder coordination. The lack of clearly defined responsibilities and insufficient oversight of suppliers further contributed to project inefficiencies (NKÚ, 2022).

The financial dimension further confirmed the extent of failure. The total cost increased to approximately CZK 903 million, with up to CZK 581 million assessed as inefficient expenditure. Violations of public procurement rules, particularly repeated non-transparent contract amendments, contributed directly to cost escalation and supplier dependency. Additional inefficiencies arose from insufficient system integration, which led to delays in legislative publication and increased operational costs (NKÚ, 2022). At the same time, reliance on European Union funding created pressure on deadlines, negatively affecting both planning and testing phases.

Deployment was gradual and prolonged, with system implementation continuing between 2023 and 2026 and full functionality still not achieved (Ministry of the Interior, 2024). Even after deployment, technical deficiencies persisted, particularly incomplete legislative data and insufficient alignment with legal timelines.

Overall, the project failed across all key dimensions—strategic, institutional, economic, and technological. The combination of inadequate preparation, weak governance, procurement deficiencies, and technical shortcomings resulted in long-term inefficiencies and erosion of public trust (NKÚ, 2022).

Digitalization of the Agendas of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

The digitalization of the agendas of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs represents one of the most significant and financially demanding examples of systemic failure in public sector IT projects in the Czech Republic. More than a decade of efforts to modernize key systems for the administration of social benefits, pensions, and employment-related services (systems affecting millions of citizens and administering hundreds of billions of Czech crowns annually) has been marked by repeated implementation failures across the terms of at least seven ministers (Seznam Zprávy, 2021). These digitalization projects were associated with wasted investments exceeding CZK 300 million, inefficient operating costs amounting to hundreds of millions, violations of public procurement legislation, and, in extreme cases, even criminal proceedings involving senior public officials. Despite partial progress in recent years, such as the introduction of the client portal Jenda, substantial technological debt persists, with several key systems continuing to operate on technologies dating back to 1993. As a result, administrative processes remain heavily dependent on manufacturing processing, contributing to operational inefficiencies and delas in service deliver (NKÚ, 2024).

Fundamental deficiencies were already evident during the preparatory phase, particularly insufficient analysis of user needs, vaguely defined project specifications, and unrealistic planning assumptions. Early reform efforts were further undermined by irregularities in public procurement procedures, which in some cases led to criminal proceedings and weakened trust in project governance (NKÚ, 2024).

During the implementation phase, the projects were characterized by repeated failures to deliver key information systems and by significant instability in project management. Several major projects, including the Information System Employment (IS ZAM), were discontinued after substantial financial resources had been already expended, while others, such as the Information System for Social Benefits (IS DAV), remained unresolved due to prolonged procurement disputes (NKÚ, 2024).

A critical structural issue consisted in the long-term dependence on a single supplier, OKsystem, which has provided key systems for the ministry since 1993. This vendor lock-in effect limited the ability of the ministry to modernize its IT infrastructure and led to repeated reliance on non-competitive procurement procedures to maintain operational continuity (NKÚ, 2024). As a result, modernization efforts were repeatedly postponed, and the system remained technologically obsolete.

The financial dimension confirms the extent of inefficiency. According to the Supreme Audit Office, at least CZK 310 million was invested in projects that were never completed, while inefficient operating costs reached up to CZK 650 million due to continued reliance on obsolete systems. Additional violations of public procurement rules and budgetary discipline were identified, including non-transparent contract extensions and expenditures incurred without compliance with statutory procedures (NKÚ, 2024).

Between 2018 and 2023, the ministry spent approximately CZK 3.4 billion on IT systems, with up to 80 % of these resources allocated to maintenance rather than innovation (NKÚ, 2024). This allocation reflects a structural inability to transition from legacy systems to modern digital infrastructure.

From an operational perspective, the failure resulted in limited system integration, extensive manual data processing, and reduced efficiency of public administration. Despite the introduction of partial digital tools, such as the Jenda client portal, key processes continue to require manual intervention, while system fragmentation persists (NKÚ, 2024). This has direct consequences for service delivery, including delays in processing applications and a deterioration in user experience.

Overall, the case demonstrates the interaction of strategic, institutional, economic, and technological failures. Weak project preparation, procurement deficiencies, vendor lock-in, and insufficient internal capacities collectively created a persistent cycle of inefficiency. The findings confirm that the identified failures are systemic rather than project-specific and reflect broader structural limitations affecting the digital transformation of public administration (NKÚ, 2024).

Electronic Motorway Vignette Project in the Czech Republic

The electronic motorway vignette project (e-známka), launched in the Czech Republic on 1 January 2021, represents an important yet controversial milestone in the digital transformation of public administration. Its objective was to replace the obsolete system of paper motorway coupons, which had been in operation for more than twenty-five years, with a modern, efficient, and user-friendly digital solution (iROZHLAS, 2021). Although the project ultimately fulfilled its primary financial and modernization objectives, its implementation was accompanied by significant technical and organizational shortcomings. These shortcomings not only undermined public trust in the initial phase but also created new categories of digital risks. The experience derived from this project therefore provides important lessons for future strategic public sector IT projects.

The preparatory phase was characterized by deficiencies in public procurement procedures. The original tender, with an estimated value exceeding CZK 400 million, was cancelled due to concerns about excessive pricing. Subsequently, responsibility for the project was transferred directly to the state-owned enterprise CENDIS under significant time pressure, with only nine months allocated for development and deployment (NKÚ, 2023). This reactive approach created conditions that later contributed to subsequent implementation problems.

The system launch in December 2020 revealed serious technical deficiencies. The official sales portal became temporarily unavailable due to system overload, revealing insufficient testing and inadequate operational readiness. A major structural weakness consisted in the absence of full integration with the Road Vehicles Register, which prevented automated validation of vehicle data and required manual intervention in key processes (NKÚ, 2023).

This deficiency had direct implications for users, as the system initially did not allow correction of incorrectly entered registration numbers, resulting in financial losses for some users. Full functionality was introduced only after more than one year of operation.

Despite these shortcomings, the project generated positive economic outcomes. Total implementation costs amounted to approximately CZK 329 million, while annual savings compared to the previous system were estimated at CZK 120 million (NKÚ, 2023). At the same time, the system generated stable revenues and demonstrated a high level of user adoption.

However, the project also revealed limitations in system integration and enforcement mechanisms. Although the system was connected to monitoring infrastructure, certain processes remained dependent on manual intervention, thereby reducing overall efficiency (NKÚ, 2023).

The project further introduced new digital risks, including fraudulent websites and phishing attacks targeting users. These risks required reactive mitigation measures and highlighted the need for improved cybersecurity governance.

Overall, the project represents a mixed outcome. Although economically successful and widely adopted, its implementation exposed weaknesses in project preparation, procurement, system integration, and risk management. The case demonstrates that even relatively successful digitalization projects in public administration may exhibit significant structural deficiencies, particularly under conditions of time pressure and insufficient preparation (NKÚ, 2023).

Common Causes of Failure Across Projects

In order to systematically compare the analysed cases, a comparative table was compiled summarizing the main failure factors of the individual projects. The table facilitates the identification of recurring patterns of problems across the projects while simultaneously capturing their specific manifestations within different institutional contexts.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Failure Factors in Public Sector Digitalization Projects

Key Failure Factor	Project e-Legislativa	Digitalization of the Agendas of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Electronic Motorway Vignette Project
Insufficient preparation and analysis	Overly general project specification, missing analysis of user needs, absence of pilot testing.	Overly ambitious and unprepared projects, unclear specifications (e.g., EKIS system).	Reactive crisis management following the cancellation of the tender, unrealistic project timeline (9 months).
Violations of public procurement rules and financing problems	Illegal contract amendments, inefficient expenditure of CZK 581 million.	Systematic circumvention of procurement rules, purposeful contract extensions without competition.	Cancellation of the original CZK 400 million tender due to overpricing.
Vendor Lock-in	Strengthened by non-transparent contract amendments that prevented the entry of competitors.	Extreme dependence on the supplier OKsystem since 1993, the main cause of project stagnation.	Not observed; the project was implemented by the state-owned enterprise CENDIS after the failed tender.
Political influence and instability	High turnover of managers, personnel instability, pressure to absorb EU funding.	Changes of 7 ministers, lack of political continuity and accountability, criminal proceedings against deputy ministers.	Political pressure to deliver a rapid solution after the failed tender and to avoid political failure.
Cost overruns	A near doubling of the original budget from CZK 482 million to CZK 903 million.	Wasted investments of CZK 310 million; inefficient operating costs higher by CZK 650 million.	Financially beneficial for the state (estimated annual savings of approx. CZK 120 million), but financial losses for the state-owned supplier CENDIS.
Schedule delays	Extension of the project timeline by more than six years; full functionality planned for 2026.	Key systems have not been replaced even after more than 10 years of attempts.	Launched on schedule, but at the cost of significant technical and functional compromises.

Insufficient functionality and operational problems	Outdated legislative data, missing system integration, reliance on manual administrative processing.	Manual transcription of data by officials, significant delays in service delivery to citizens (e.g., pension processing).	System outage at launch, missing integration with registers, inability to correct errors, emergence of new digital threats.
Negative impact on users	Loss of trust, frustration among public officials, threats to legal certainty.	Slow processing of applications, requirement for citizens to submit data already available to public authorities.	Financial losses for citizens (errors in vehicle registration numbers), exposure to fraudulent websites and phishing attacks.

Data source: Authors.

The comparative analysis (Table 1) reveals that the examined projects share a set of recurring failure factors, indicating that their outcomes are not isolated incidents but manifestations of broader systemic weaknesses.

Across all cases, the most consistent issue is insufficient preparation, particularly the absence of detailed analysis of user needs, unclear project specifications, and unrealistic planning assumptions. These deficiencies created structural conditions for subsequent failures during implementation.

A second dominant factor concerns deficiencies in public procurement processes. In all projects, procurement-related deficiencies contributed to cost escalation, delays, or inefficient allocation of resources. In two cases, these issues further resulted in long-term dependency on specific suppliers, significantly limiting the ability of public institutions to modernize their systems.

Managerial and implementation failures represent another recurring pattern. Weak project governance, instability of project leadership, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders repeatedly contributed to delays, incomplete systems, and operational inefficiencies.

Finally, political and institutional factors played a significant role across all cases. Frequent changes in leadership, pressure to deliver results under unrealistic timelines, and limited accountability weakened strategic continuity and increased project risks. Notably, in all three cases, political pressure regarding delivery schedules directly contributed to the abandonment of systematic testing phases and pilot operations. In the e-Legislativa project, pressure to absorb EU funding within prescribed deadlines resulted in the omission of pilot testing, which contributed to technical deficiencies identified at launch. Similarly, in the digitalization of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs agendas, politically driven timelines consistently constrained adequate testing of new systems before deployment. In the e-známka project, the nine-month delivery implementation window following the failed tender left insufficient time for comprehensive testing, as evidenced by the system issues observed at launch. This pattern represents one of the most consequential recurring mechanisms of failure across the analyzed cases: the subordination of quality assurance processes to political imperatives.

Despite these shared patterns, the consequences of failure vary across projects. While the e-Legislativa project and the digitalization of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs were associated with substantial cost overruns and long-term inefficiencies, the electronic motorway vignette project achieved positive financial outcomes despite notable technical shortcomings.

Overall, the findings confirm that the failure in public sector digitalization projects are systemic in nature. The interaction of strategic, institutional, economic, and technological factors creates an environment in which risks accumulate and reinforce one another, thereby increasing the likelihood of project failure.

Correlation between Public Procurement and Project Failure

The analysis indicates a linear relationship between deficiencies in public procurement and the failure of digitalization projects, particularly in terms of cost escalation and schedule delays. These deficiencies represent not merely procedural issues but a key mechanism generating inefficiency and increasing project risk.

The e-Legislativa project illustrates this mechanism clearly. Repeated contract amendments, identified as by the Supreme Audit Office as unlawful, led to an increase in project costs from CZK 482 million to CZK 903 million. At the same time, these amendments reduced competitive pressure and strengthened dependency on the existing supplier, thereby limiting the state's ability to control both costs and project scope (NKÚ, 2022).

A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, where persistent failures in procurement procedures resulted in long-term dependence on the supplier OKsystem. In order to ensure continuity of service delivery, the ministry was forced to conclude disadvantageous contracts for the operation of outdated systems, leading to inefficient expenditures amounting to hundreds of millions of Czech crowns (NKÚ, 2024).

These findings demonstrate that non-transparent and non-competitive procurement practices systematically contribute to cost overruns, delays, and supplier lock-in. Public procurement thus emerges as a central structural factor influencing the success or failure of digitalization projects in public administration, providing a clear answer to the second research question.

Institutional and Managerial Factors of Failure in Digitalization Projects

In order to systematically address the third research question, a comparative synthesis of the problems identified across the analysed projects was conducted. The findings were structured according to the four analytical dimensions defined in the methodology of the study: strategic, institutional, economic, and technological factors. Table 2 summarizes the main characteristics of the individual projects and enables their direct comparison.

Table 2: Key Characteristics of the Analysed Digitalization Projects

Project	**e-Legislativa**	**Digitalization of the Agendas of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**	**Electronic Motorway Vignette Project**
Project type	Legislative infrastructure of e-government	Social welfare systems	Transport-related digital public service
Main objective	Digitalization of the legislative process	Modernization of social benefit administration systems	Digitalization of motorway vignette sales
Budget/costs	CZK 482 million - CZK 903 million	Billions of CZK in operating costs	Approx. CZK 329 million
Key failures	Schedule delays, weak project governance, integration problems	Vendor lock-in, unfinished projects	Technical problems at system launch
Institutional responsibility	Ministry of the Interior	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Labour Office	State administration through CENDIS

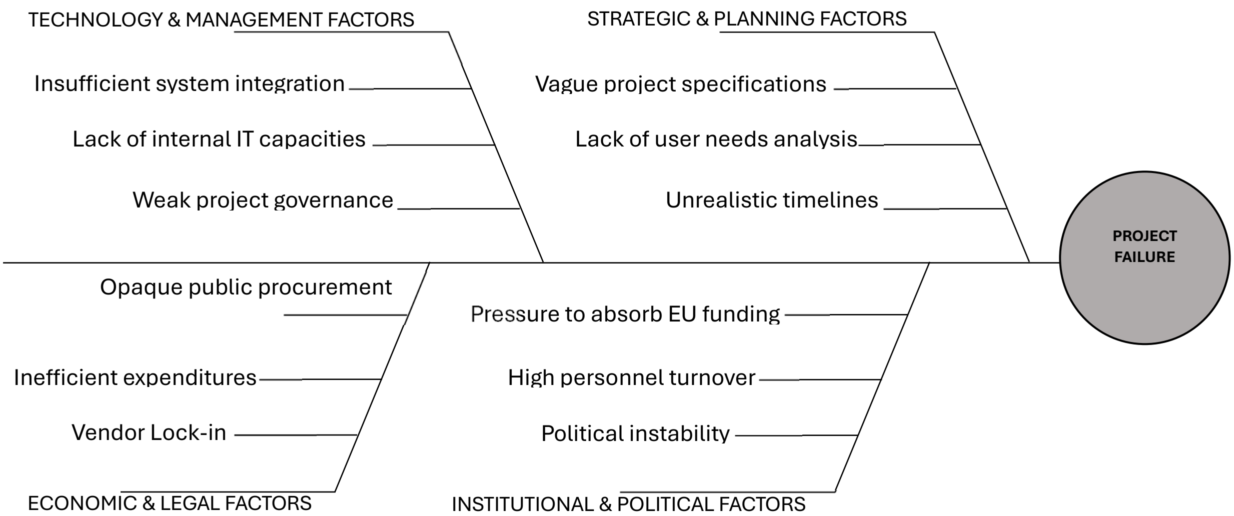
Data source: Authors.

The analysis shows that the failure of the examined projects cannot be attributed solely to isolated managerial shortcomings but rather reflects systemic weaknesses in the governance of public sector digitalization. Across all cases, recurring structural factors can be identified, including insufficient strategic planning, weak inter-institutional coordination, high dependence on external suppliers, limited internal technological capacities, and political instability. These factors jointly create an environment in which project risks accumulate and reinforce one another.

At the same time, the analyzed projects should not be understood as isolated cases but rather as part of a broader institutional ecosystem. Similar patterns of failure are repeatedly reproduced across different digitalization initiatives. For example, supplier dependency observed in the case of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs case is similarly reflected in the e-Legislativa project, while the motorway vignette project illustrates how insufficient system integration and time pressure can lead to technical shortcomings even within otherwise functional solutions.

These findings indicate the existence of structural weaknesses in public sector IT governance, where projects operate within the same institutional framework, procurement system, and capacity constraints. The dominant factors and their interrelationships are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Underlying Causes of Failure in Digitalization Projects in Public Administration



Data source: Authors.

The first key factor is insufficient strategic governance. Projects are frequently initiated without thorough analysis of user needs and without realistic planning assumptions, resulting in scope changes, delays, and cost escalation. The second factor is institutional weakness, reflected in limited internal capacities and reliance on external suppliers, which reduces the ability of public institutions to effectueky control project outcomes. The third factor consists of deficiencies in public procurement procedures, including non-transparent practices and repeated contract amendments, which contribute to cost overruns and vendor lock-in.

The interaction of these factors significantly increases the likelihood of failure in public sector digitalization projects compared to projects implemented in the private sector.

The results of the comparative analysis are consistent with the existing literature, which identifies insufficient requirements definition, weak governance, and incomplete functionality as key drivers of project failure (Haug et al., 2023). Similar conclusions are reported in studies examining e-government implementation (Nyansiro, Mtebe & Kissaka, 2021). These institutional barriers limit the ability of the public sector to fully exploit the potential of digital transformation as a strategic development tool (Espinosa & Pino, 2024).

Particular attention should be paid to vendor lock-in as a structural risk factor. As demonstrated by the analyzed cases, long-term dependence on external suppliers limits institutional flexibility, reinforces cost escalation, and generates persistent inefficiencies. This mechanism operates as a self-reinforcing cycle, as illustrated in Figure 3.

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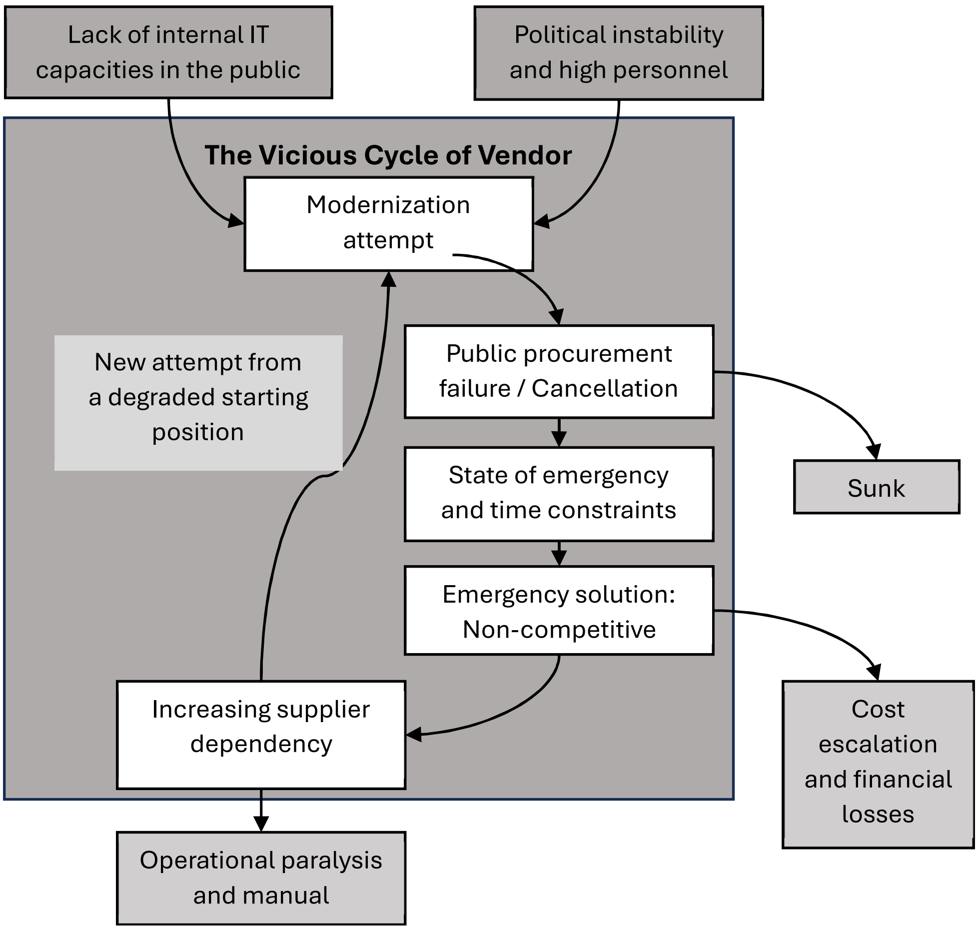

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Another significant challenge is the insufficient integration of information systems and weak coordination among individual public administration institutions. Limited interoperability between information systems may lead to fragmented data standards, duplicated investments, and reduced long-term sustainability of digital solutions (Oliveira et al., 2026). In the analyzed cases, these issues were reflected, for example, in the need for manual data transcription between systems or in the limited functionality of certain digital services.

The results of the study also confirm that the digitalization of public administration is not merely a technological initiative but rather a broader institutional transformation process.

The successful implementation of digital solutions requires not only technological innovation but also changes in organizational culture, the development of internal digital competencies, and systematic evaluation of implemented projects. As emphasized in the literature on the digital transformation of the public sector, the ability of organizations to learn from failure represents a key prerequisite for the long-term improvement of governance in public sector IT projects (Mergel, Edelmann & Haug, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to analyze the causes of failure in selected digitalization projects in public administration in the Czech Republic through a qualitative comparative analysis of three case studies: the e-Legislativa project, the digitalization of the agendas of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the electronic motorway vignette system.

The findings indicate that the failures of these projects cannot be interpreted as isolated incidents confined to individual institutions. Rather, they represent a systemic problem related to the institutional framework governing IT project management in public administration. Across the analyzed cases, similar structural factors repeatedly emerged, including insufficient strategic project planning, weak coordination among public administration institutions, high dependence on external IT suppliers, insufficient internal technological capacities within the state, and political instability affecting project governance.

Public procurement issues also emerged as a significant contributing factor. The analysis suggests that violations or circumventions of public procurement rules may lead to cost escalation, prolonged project timelines, and the emergence of long-term technological dependence on specific suppliers. This mechanism was particularly evident in the case of the digitalization of the agendas of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the e-Legislativa project.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that the success of digitalization projects in public administration cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of economic indicators. For example, the electronic motorway vignette project generated significant financial benefits for the state budget; however, its implementation revealed significant technical and organizational shortcomings. The evaluation of digitalization projects should therefore consider not only economic outcomes but also system functionality, quality of service delivery, and the broade institutional impacts on the functioning of public administration.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest several key recommendations for the future governance of public sector digitalization projects. The most important ones include strengthening the state's internal technological capacities, improving strategic project planning, increasing the transparency of public procurement procedures, and ensuring greater stability of project governance across political cycles.

Future research could focus on broader comparative analyses of digitalization projects across different countries or on quantitative examinations of the relationship between institutional factors and project outcomes. Another promising direction for future research involves examining the impact of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, on the governance and management of digitalization projects in the public sector.

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IMPACTS OF INFLATION 2019–2024 ON HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Dopady inflace 2019–2024 na spotřebitelské chování domácností a rozpočty obcí v ČR

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the impact of the elevated-inflation period between 2019 and 2024 on Czech household consumption. The study utilizes annual data from the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) on household final consumption expenditure per capita, categorized by COICOP, along with data on average annual inflation rates. Nominal expenditures are deflated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) with 2019 as the base year (2019 = 100). The analysis focuses on both the level and structure of real expenditures, distinguishing between essential and non-essential consumption categories.

The findings indicate that elevated inflation in 2022–2023 led to a temporary decline in real household consumption. Real total expenditure per capita fell below 2019 levels in both 2020 and 2022, returning to pre-crisis level only in 2024. These trends in real consumption were accompanied by significant shifts in the money supply: while 2020–2021 saw a sharp accumulation of liquidity (M1 aggregate), 2022 was characterized by negative M1 growth. The divergence between M1 and the broader M3 aggregate reflects a reallocation of household savings from current accounts to interest-bearing deposits in response to tightening monetary policy.

Furthermore, the share of expenditure on housing, water, energy, and fuels increased from approximately 24% to 26%, indicating that these items now constitute a larger portion of household budgets. Overall, the findings suggest that high inflation reduces real consumption and shifts household budgets toward essential goods and services at the expense of discretionary expenditure.

Key words: Inflation – household consumption – real expenditures – consumer behavior – M1 – M3.

ABSTRAKT: Tento článek analyzuje dopady období zvýšené inflace v letech 2019–2024 na spotřebu českých domácností. Studie využívá roční data Českého statistického úřadu (ČSÚ) o výdajích na konečnou spotřebu domácností na obyvatele podle klasifikace COICOP spolu s údaji o průměrné roční míře inflace. Nominální výdaje jsou očištěny o inflaci pomocí indexu spotřebitelských cen (CPI) se základním rokem 2019 (2019 = 100). Analýza se zaměřuje na úroveň i strukturu reálných výdajů, přičemž rozlišuje mezi nezbytnými a zbytnými kategoriemi výdajů.

Výsledky naznačují, že vysoká inflace v letech 2022–2023 vedla k dočasnému poklesu reálné spotřeby domácností. Celkové reálné výdaje na obyvatele klesly pod úroveň roku 2019 v letech 2020 i 2022 a na předkrizovou úroveň se vrátily jen v roce 2024. Tyto trendy byly doprovázeny významnými změnami v agregátech peněžní zásoby: v letech 2020–2021 docházelo k výrazné akumulaci likvidity (agregát M1), zatímco v roce 2022 se růst M1 dostal do záporných hodnot. Rozdíl mezi agregátem M1 a širším agregátem M3 potvrzuje výraznou realokaci úspor domácností z běžných účtů do úročených vkladů v reakci na zpřísnění měnové politiky. Dále se zvýšil podíl výdajů na bydlení, vodu, energie a paliva z přibližně 24 % na 26 %, což ukazuje, že tyto položky tvoří větší část rozpočtů domácností. Celkově výsledky podporují závěr, že vysoká inflace snižuje reálnou spotřebu a přesouvá rozpočty domácností směrem k nezbytným statkům a službám na úkor diskrečních (volnočasových) výdajů.

Klíčová slova: inflace – spotřeba domácností – reálné výdaje – spotřebitelské chování – M1 – M3

INTRODUCTION

Inflation is defined as a steady increase in the price level that reduces the purchasing power of money and influences the decision-making of households, companies and governments. Macroeconomic literature distinguishes between demand-pull and cost-push inflation, with inflation expectations embedded in wages and prices playing a key role (Galí, 2015; Mankiw, 2021). In Central and Eastern European countries, including the Czech Republic, household inflation expectations are closely linked to personal experience with price developments and overall economic sentiment (Allinger & Rumler, 2025).

Before 2020, inflation remained low and relatively stable in many advanced economies. This stability was linked to globalization, cheaper foreign production, and credible monetary policy (Auer, Pedemonte, & Schoenle, 2024). After 2020, this environment changed substantially. Dao, Gourinchas, Leigh and Mishra (2024) show that the initial increase in inflation was primarily driven by cost-push shocks, especially energy prices increases, supply chain disruptions and rising food prices, while demand-side factors became more important at a later stage. Long-term analyses confirm the importance of global factors, with a common global component explaining a substantial share of inflation variability across countries (Auer et al., 2024). Accordingly, inflation developments in the Czech Republic after 2020 can be partly interpreted as a reflection of external environment. In addition, Eickmeier and Hofmann (2025) and Ferreira, Abreu and Louçã (2025) show that the recent episode of elevated inflation was predominantly cost-driven and associated with weaker economic growth.

Inflation has a direct impact on household budgets. It reduces real disposable income and leads to adjustments in consumption and savings behavior. Within a microeconomic framework, the income effect (overall reduction in consumption) and the substitution effect (shift towards cheaper goods and services) are typically applied (Mankiw, 2021). Empirical evidence for EU countries shows that the relationship between inflation and inequality is not linear: inequality may decrease at low inflation, while itty increases at higher inflation levels, especially due to changes in the proportions of the poorest and richest groups (Simionescu, 2025). Carloni (2025) documents that low-income households experience higher "intrinsic" inflation, as a larger share of their expenditures is allocated to food, energy and housing, where price shocks are most pronounced.

Consumer behavior in a period of rapidly rising prices is summarized by Dekimpe and van Heerde (2023), who show that households tend to shift spending from non-essential goods and services to essential items, increase purchases of private-label and discounted goods, postponing purchases of durable goods, and partially finance consumption through savings or debt. In the Czech context, key data sources include the CZSO data, which publishes time series of consumer price indices by COICOP groups and statistics on household budgets detailing the structure of household expenditures (Czech Statistical Office, 2025). The CNB's analysis shows that in 2022 real household incomes as a whole lagged behind inflation, with the most pronounced decline in real incomes affecting employees, while incomes of self-employed persons increased on average (Kábrt, 2023).

These findings form the basis for an empirical analysis of changes in the consumption structure of Czech households in the period 2019–2024. They suggest a shift in expenditure towards essential items and heterogeneous effects of inflation depending on income levels and the composition of the consumer basket.

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to describe and analyze changes in the structure of household consumer expenditure across main categories (food, housing, energy, non-essential items) in the context of inflation shocks.

The data for the analysis are derived exclusively from the Czech Statistical Office. Household consumption data are based on the Household Budget Survey, providing information on average annual expenditure per capita in CZK for the period 2019–2024. The classification follows the twelve COICOP groups (01 Food and non-alcoholic beverages to 12 Other goods and services) and the aggregated item "Total", which represents the sum of expenditure categories.

Information on price developments was obtained from the CZSO dataset "Average annual inflation rate 2000–2025". For the years 2019–2024, the average annual inflation rates, defined as year-on-year changes in the average consumer price index expressed in percentages, were used. Based on these values, a base CPI index was constructed with 2019 as the reference year (2019 = 100). Index values for 2020–2024 were calculated using a chained approach according to the relationship CPIt = CPI2019 · (1 + inflation).

Nominal household expenditure was subsequently converted into real values at constant 2019 prices. For 2019, real and nominal values are identical, because $CPI_{(2019)}$ = 100. For subsequent years, expenditures were adjusted for price level changes, especially in 2022 and 2023. The same procedure was applied to the aggregate item "Total", enabling the analysis of real developments in total household consumption expenditure per capita.

The structure of expenditure was also calculated from the same nominal dataset. For each group and year, the share of total household consumption expenditure was calculated using the formula share,t = $C_{components}$/ C_{total} · 100. This yields a distribution of expenditure shares where the sum of all categories in a given year equals 100%. The structure allows for the analysis of changes in the relative importance of individual expenditure categories, such as food, housing or recreation.

For the purposes of interpretation, two aggregated categories were constructed from the twelve COICOP groups. Essential expenditure is defined as the sum of groups 01 Food and non-alcoholic beverages, 04 Housing, water, energy, fuels and 06 Health. Non-essential expenditure is the sum of groups 09 Recreation and Culture, 11 Meals and Accommodation and 12 Other Goods and Services. For both aggregated categories, nominal expenditure, real expenditure at 2019 prices and their share in total household expenditure are analyzed. These aggregations are not an official category of the CZSO but represent a simple analytical construct developed for the purpose of distinguishing between essential and non-essential components of consumption.

In addition to consumption and price data, the analysis is extended to monetary statistics, which allow for the interpretation of shifts in consumer behavior within a broader macroeconomic framework. Data on monetary aggregates are sourced from the Czech National Bank's (CNB) ARAD database.

For the selection and definition of indicators, M1 (narrow money, comprising currency in circulation and overnight deposits) and M3 (broad money, comprising M1 as well as deposits with agreed maturity of up to two years and deposits redeemable at notice of up to three months) are used to capture liquidity conditions in the economy and the response of households to the interest rate environment.

As for data processing, the original monthly time series were transformed into year-on-year growth rates (percentage change) for the purposes of this analysis. While consumption data (CZSO) are available on an annual basis, monetary data were retained at a monthly frequency to more precisely identify turning points in monetary policy and institutional responses (e.g., the sharp liquidity outflow from current accounts during 2022).

Monitoring the divergence between M1 and M3 dynamics serves as an indicator of the shift in the allocation of funds between transactional (non-interest-bearing) and savings (interest-bearing) instruments. This methodological approach enables relating changes in real household consumption to the reallocation of financial assets driven by rising interest rates and households´ efforts to hedge savings against inflation.

The CNB data cover the period from January 2019 to early 2026, which allows for the observation of the monetary expansion phase, the subsequent tightening, and the period of renewed stabilization of monetary growth in the post-inflationary period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the average annual inflation rate and the corresponding CPI index in 2019-2024. In 2019-2021, inflation remained in the range of 2.8-3.8%, indicating a relatively moderate but stable increase in prices. During this period, the CPI index rose from 100.0 to 107.1 in these years. The years 2022 and 2023 represent a clear turning point. Inflation reached 15.1% in 2022 and 10.7% in 2023, resulting in a rapid increase in the price level, with the CPI index rising to 123.3 in 2022 and 136.5 in 2023. In 2024, inflation slowed to 2.4%, while the CPI index increased further to 139.8. Despite the deceleration in price growth, the overall price level remained almost 40% higher than in 2019.

These figures confirm that households faced exceptionally strong price pressure in 2022-2023. The subsequent analysis of consumer expenditure shows how the structure of household budgets adjusted to this environment.

Table 1: Average annual inflation rate as increments in the average consumer price index

Average annual inflation rate as increments in the average consumer price index						
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
The value of infl.	2.8%	3.2%	3.8%	15.1%	10.7%	2.4%
CPI index	100.0	103.2	107.1	123.3	136.5	139.8

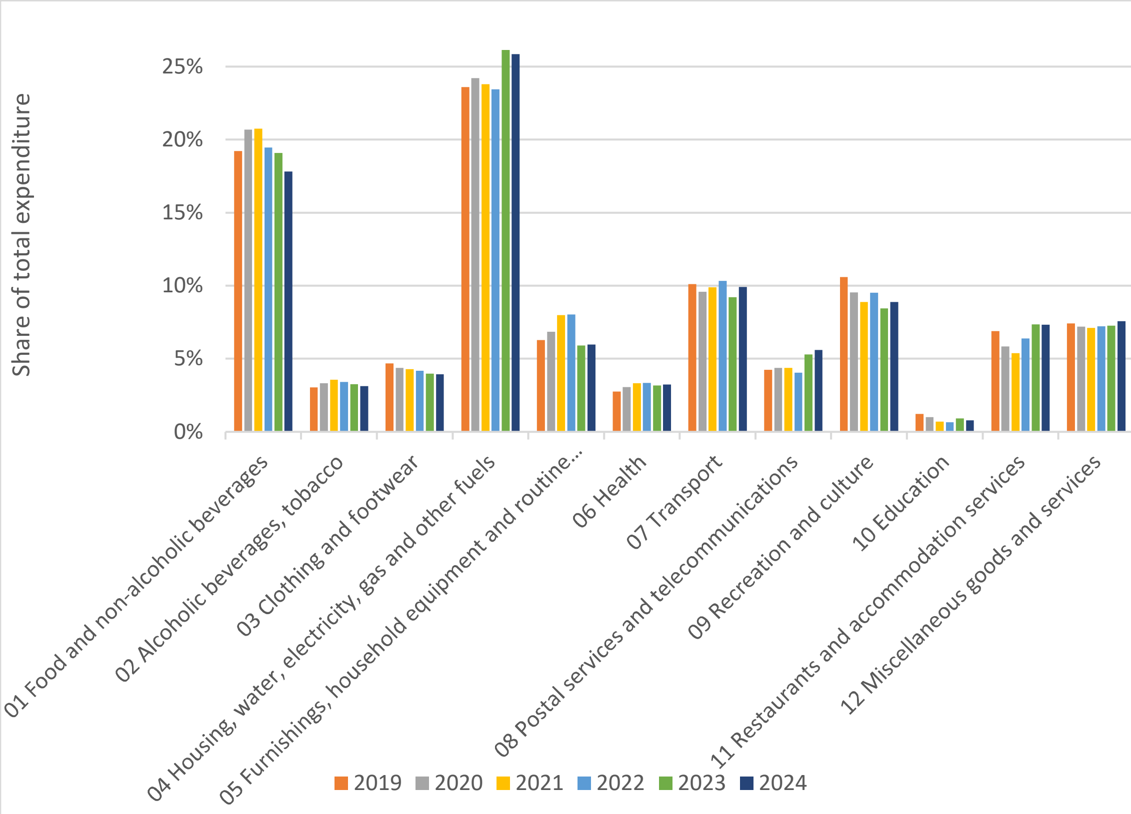
Source: CZSO, CPI, authors´ own calculations.

Table 1 shows the share of the main categories of household consumption expenditure in total annual expenditure for the period 2019–2024. The expenditure structure is relatively stable; however, there are visible shifts in the period of elevated inflation in 2022-2023, which correspond to theoretical expectations regarding increased pressure on essential goods and a reduction in non-essential consumption.

The largest expenditure item throughout the period is housing, water, energy and fuels (group 04). In 2019-2022, its share remained at approximately 23-24%, increasing to around 26% in 2023-2024. Combined with elevated inflation in 2022-2023, this indicates that housing and energy costs are not only increased in nominal terms, but also accounted for a growing share of household budgets. This is fully in line with the literature, which highlights the strong energy price shock and its effects on household budgets. The share of expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages (01) fluctuated between 18% and 21 %. It increased to around 21% in 2020-2021, reflecting a combination of the pandemic-related effects and rising price levels. In 2022-2024, it declined to approximately 18-19%. In terms of structure, food does not constitute a significantly larger share of total expenditure, even though its prices are rising. This may indicate that households respond through substitution toward cheaper goods or through adjustmens in consumed quantities rather than by increasing the share of this group in total consumption. Non-essential expenditure categories generally decline during periods of elevated inflation. The share of expenditure on recreation and culture (09) decreases from 11% in 2019 to 8-9% in 2022-2024. Following a temporary decline to 6% in 2020-2022, expenditure on restaurants and accommodation (11) increases slightly to 7%, although it remains below pre-pandemic levels. These patterns support the interpretation that households reduce spending on leisure and hospitality services under conditions of elevated inflation and uncertainty, in line with findings from the international literature on consumer behavior. For the remaining categories, changes are relatively modest but consistent. Expenditure on postal services and telecommunications (08) increases from 4% to 6%, which may be attributed to the long-term growth in the importance of digital communication technologies and services. Other goods and services (12) increases from 7% to 8%. Transport (07) remains broadly stable at around 9-10% throughout the period, health expenditure (06) at around 3%, and education (10) at around 1%. The structure of these groups thus confirms that the main shifts occur between essential expenditure on housing and energy and non-essential leisure-related categories.

Overall, Czech households faced significant price increases in the period 2019–2024, with a marked rise in the relative importance of housing and energy expenditure. Non-essential spending, especially on recreation and culture, remained under pressure even after inflation peaks.

Graph 1 Share of household consumption expenditure



Source: Custom processing based on CZSO data.

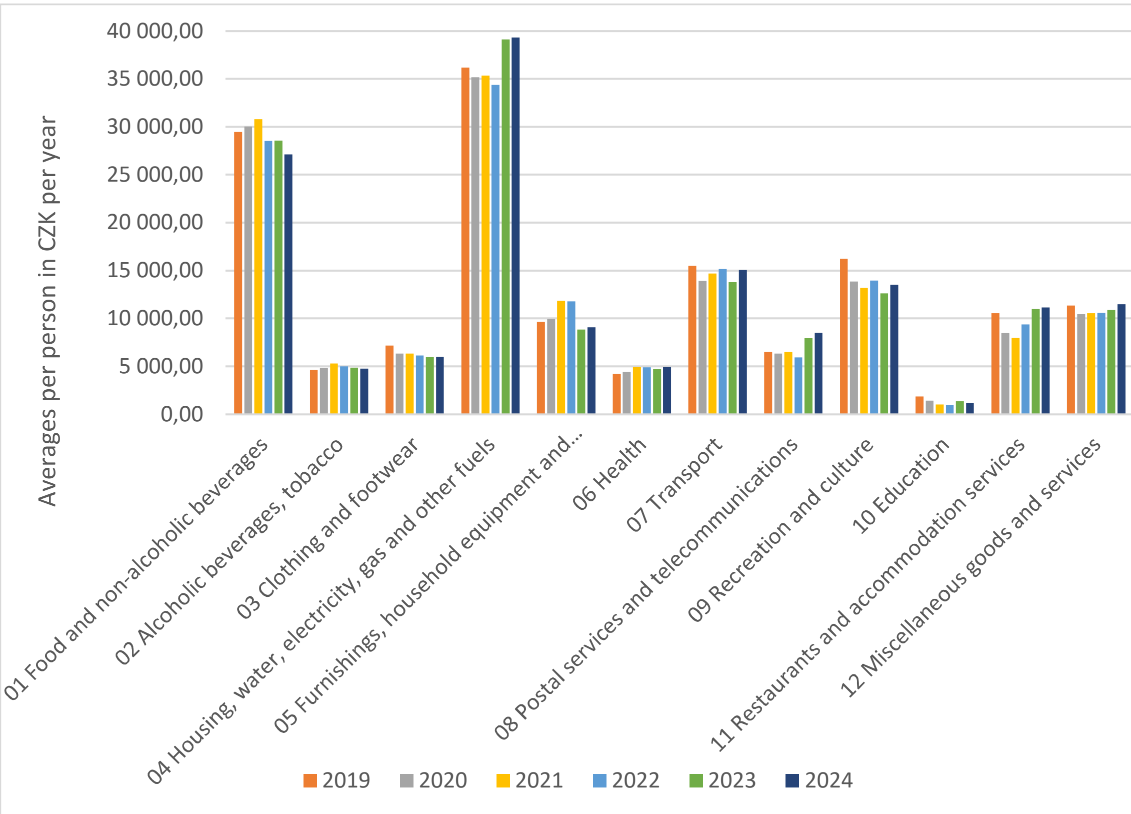
Graph 1 shows real household consumption expenditure per capita at 2019 constant prices. For each COICOP group, the values for 2019–2024 are adjusted for inflation. Real expenditure after 2022 is not significantly above the 2019 level and approaches it only in 2024. This means that the period of elevated inflation in 2022-2023 effectively eroded real household consumption, with partial recovery occurring only in the final year of the period.

In the case of food and non-alcoholic beverages, real expenditure reaches its highest level in 2021, then declines. In 2024, it falls below the 2019 level. This suggests that households reduced real food consumption despite a relatively stable budget share. This is consistent with substitution toward cheaper products and limiting purchased quantities. Real expenditure on housing, water, energy and fuels remains rather stagnant or slightly decreasing, despite a substantial increase in nominal terms. After adjusting for price changes, the results indicate that households did not significantly increase real consumption in this category but rather faced higher prices for a similar level of consumption.. This supports the interpretation of a strong price shock in energy and housing.

The graph also clearly captures the "COVID footprint" in recreation, culture, and restaurants and accommodation. Real expenditure declined sharply between 2020 and 2021. After 2022, a partial recovery could be observed, but the values for recreation and culture remain below the 2019 level in 2024. By contrast, in 2024, real expenditure on restaurants and accommodation is slightly higher than before the pandemic. This is consistent with international evidence suggesting that while leisure consumption partially recovers, its structure changes and some activities remain limited even after the shock.

For post and telecommunications services and health, the graph indicates a long-term increase in real expenditure. Households allocate higher real spending to these categories than in 2019, even after adjusting for inflation. This may reflect the growing importance of communication technologies and healthcare services in household budgets. Overall, the graph confirms that elevated inflation in 2022-2023 was associated with a decline in real consumption and a reallocation of household spending. Households reduced non-essential expenditure, especially on recreation and selected services, and prevented a decline in essential categories rather than increased the real level of consumption.

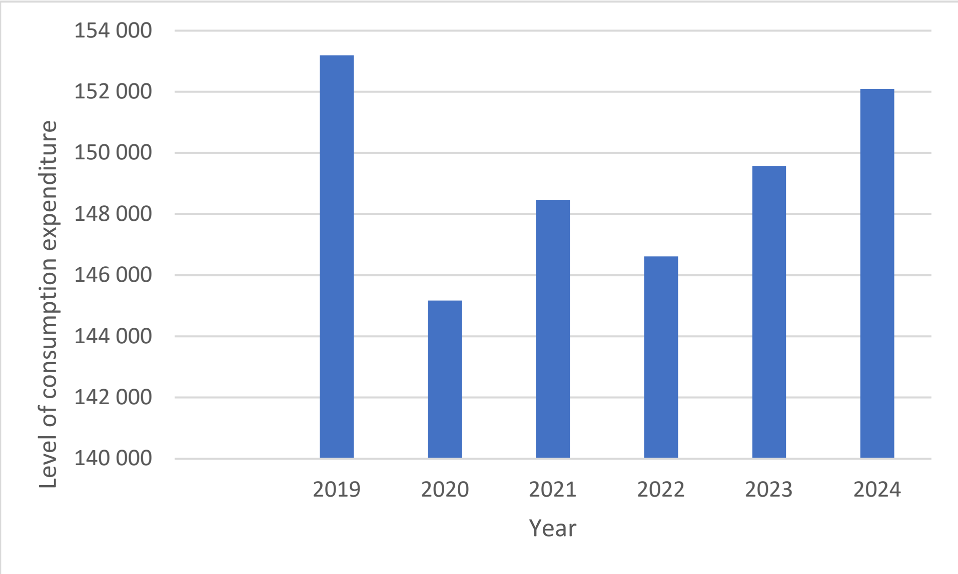
Graph 2 Total real consumption expenditure of households after adjusting for inflation (base index 2019 = 100) for 1 person



Source: Custom processing based on CZSO data.

Graph 2 shows that a decline in real household consumption expenditure per capita from CZK 153,192 to CZK 145,165 in 2019, which reflects a combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased economic uncertainty. Real consumption partially recovered in 2021 before declining slightly again in 2022 due to price spikes. In 2023 and 2024, real expenditure increased again, reaching CZK 150,090 in 2024, which is close to the 2019 level. The graph therefore confirms that the episode of elevated inflation resulted in a temporary reduction in real consumption rather than a permanent decline.

Graph 3 Total real consumption expenditure of households per person



Source: Custom processing based on CZSO data.

Graph 3 illustrates the development of year-on-year growth rates of the M1 (narrow money – currency in circulation and overnight deposits) and M3 (broad money) monetary aggregates over the period 2019–2026. The dynamics of these indicators reflect fundamental shifts in monetary policy and the response of economic agents to inflationary shocks and subsequent stabilization.

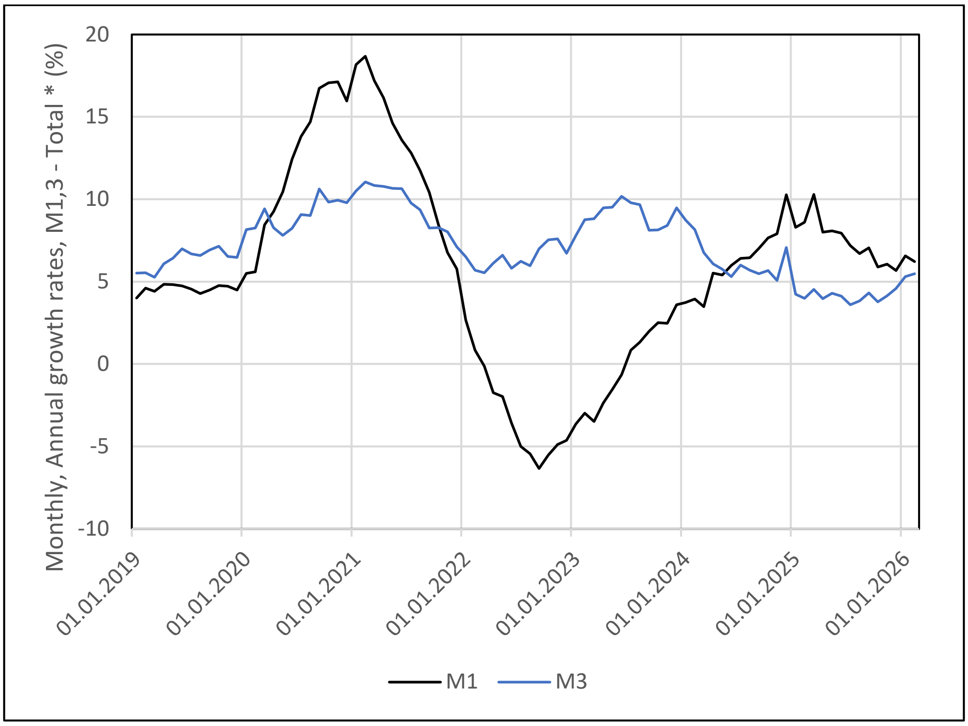
Between 2019 and 2021, a pronounced monetary expansion is evident, with the growth rate of the M1 aggregate rising sharply from approximately 5% to nearly 18% in early 2021. This increase corresponds to the period of pandemic uncertainty and associated fiscal transfers, which led to a substantial accumulation of liquidity in current accounts of both households and firms. The M3 aggregate also grew during this period, albeit with lower volatility, peaking at approximately 11% in 2021.

A clear turning point occurred in 2021 and especially in 2022, when a sharp decline in the growth rates of both aggregates was observed. By the end of 2022, the M1 aggregate had even fallen into negative territory (reaching -6%). This development is fully consistent with theoretical expectations under conditions of restrictive monetary policy and high interest rates.

During this phase, households and firms reallocated funds en masse from non-interest-bearing current accounts (a component of M1) to time deposits and savings products included in the broader M3 aggregate. As a result, M3 growth slowed but, unlike M1, remained in positive territory (around 5–7%). The widening divergence between the M1 and M3 series in 2022 clearly illustrates the process of reallocating liquid funds in favor of higher-yielding assets.

Gradual recovery and stabilization are evident from 2023 to 2024, when M1 returned to positive values, reaching approximately 10% in 2024. This can be interpreted as a stabilization of the interest rate environment and a recovery in transactional money demand. In 2025 and early 2026, growth rates of both aggregates converged within the 5–7% range. The overall development confirms that after a period of extraordinary liquidity (2020–2021) and subsequent sharp monetary tightening (2022–2023), monetary conditions stabilized at levels consistent with lower inflation and more balanced monetary conditions. The contrasting trajectories of M1 and M3 during the critical years of 2022–2023 thus serve as an indicator of the sensitivity of money holdings to changes in interest rates.

Graph 4: Year-on-year growth rates of M1 and M3 monetary aggregates, 2019–2026 (%)



Source: Custom processing based on CNB data.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the paper was to describe how the episode of elevated inflation in 2019–2024 was related to changes in Czech household consumption expenditure. The analysis was based on data from the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), including Household Budget Statistics and average annual inflation rates. Nominal expenditures were converted into constant 2019 prices and the structure of expenditure by the main COICOP groups was examined. The results show that elevated inflation in 2022-2023 led to a temporary decline in real household consumption. Real total expenditure per capita fell below the 2019 level in 2020 and 2022, approaching it again in 2024, but not exceeding it substantially. This indicates that the price level increase had a significant impact on real household budgets. In terms of expenditure structure, the most pronounced change is observed in housing, water, energy and fuels, whose share of total consumption increased from about 24% to 26%, confirming that housing and energy costs take up a larger part of the budget. The share of food expenditure remained around 18-21%, suggesting that households adjusted through changes in consumption composition and quantities rather than through an increased budget share. Non-essential expenditure, especially recreation and culture, declined over the period, with its share decreasing from 11% to 8-9% and real expenditure in 2024 remaining below the 2019 level. Expenditure on restaurants and accommodation partially recovered after the pandemic downturn but increased only moderately in real terms. In contrast, expenditure on postal and telecommunications services and health increased in real terms, reflecting the growing importance of communication technologies and healthcare services.

The analysis of the M1 and M3 monetary aggregates based on CNB data complements these findings by introducing the dimension of household financial decision-making. The sharp decline of M1 growth into negative territory in 2022 suggests that households, in response to inflation and rising interest rates, reduced holdings of liquid transaction balances. households actively restricted their immediate liquidity. The divergence between the trajectories of M1 and the broader M3 aggregate during this period reflects a reallocation of funds from current accounts to interest-bearing deposits.

This process of "demonetizing" transaction money is closely linked to the observed decline in real discretionary consumption. The effort to preserve the real value of savings, combined with the response to higher financing costs, acted as factors complementary to the price shock itself. This led to further downward pressure on consumption within the categories of recreation and culture. The subsequent stabilization of both monetary aggregates in 2024 corresponds to a slight recovery in real consumption and a partial return to pre-crisis consumption patterns.

The findings are consistent with theoretical expectations regarding income and substitution effect of inflation, as well as with international literature documenting a shift of expenditure towards essential consumption and reduced discretionary spending during periods of elevated inflation. However, the analysis is limited by the use of aggregated household-level data, without differentiation by income, age or regional characteristics.

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RECENZNÍ ŘÍZENÍ PRO Č. 1/2026

Jednotliví oponenti (9) recenzovali 1–2 články. Redakce od nich obdržela na každý příspěvek 1–2 posudky, celkem 11 posudků.

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O ČASOPISU

Základní charakteristika

Časopis Auspicia je nezávislým recenzovaným vědeckým časopisem pro otázky společenských a humanitních věd. Obsah časopisu prezentuje původní vědecké příspěvky, které jsou orientované na stěžejní obory zaměření periodika a rovněž v současnosti významné a řešené problémy. Mnohé z nich podávají formou přehledových studií návrh na reálné řešení konkrétních problémů, polemik ve smyslu akademické plurality názorů.
Historicky je založen na 5 základních a respektovaných principech:

- řádné a přísné recenzní řízení;
- mezinárodnost;
- otevřenost;
- výběrovost;
- kontinuální zvyšování kvality.

Historie

Časopis Auspicia je vydáván od r. 2004 Vysokou školou evropských a regionálních studií (VŠERS) a Vysokou školou technickou a ekonomickou (VŠTE) dvakrát ročně, pouze elektronicky. V dosavadních 41 číslech bylo otištěno zhruba 860 příspěvků a recenzí.

Rada pro výzkum, vývoj a inovace jako odborný a poradní orgán vlády ČR zařadila časopis Auspicia (ISSN 1214-4967) pro léta 2008–2013 a znovu pro rok 2015 (http://www.vyzkum.cz/FrontClanek.aspx?idsekce=733439) mezi recenzované neimpaktované časopisy, které uvedla v oborech Národního referenčního rámce excelence (NRRE).

V roce 2016 byl recenzovaný vědecký časopis Auspicia zařazen do mezinárodní databáze ERIH PLUS a od roku 2024 do online knihovny pro střední a východní Evropu – CEEOL.

Tematické sekce

Na základě úspěšného recenzního řízení jsou jednotlivé vědecké příspěvky řazeny do sekcí:

1. Společenské vědy
2. Bezpečnost
3. Veřejná správa, řízení
4. Recenze

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Recenzní řízení: oboustranně anonymní, nezávislé, objektivní.

Data vydání: 1. číslo – 1. 6. • 2. číslo – 1. 12.

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

General description

Auspicia is an independent, peer-reviewed scientific journal on the social sciences and humanities. The journal presents original scientific contributions on core areas of its field of focus, as well as currently significant and solved problems. In the form of overview studies, many of them constitute proposals for a real solution to specific problems, polemics in the sense of academic plurality of opinions.

The journal is based on five respected principles:
- proper and rigorous review procedures;
- internationality;
- openness;
- selectivity;
- continuous improvement in quality.

History

Auspicia has been published since 2004 by the College of European and Regional Studies (VŠERS) and the Institute of Technology and Business (VŠTE) twice a year, in electronic form only. So far, 860 scientific contributions and reviews have been published in 42 issues.
The Innovation Council, being a professional and advisory board of the government of the Czech Republic, included *Auspicia* (ISSN 1214-4967) among reviewed, non-impact scholarly journals involved in the topics of the National Reference Framework of Excellence (NRRE) in 2008–2013, and it was included there again in 2015 (http://www.vyzkum.cz/FrontClanek.aspx?idsekce=733439).

In 2016 *Auspicia* was listed in the international database ERIH PLUS and since 2024, it has been listed in the Central and Eastern Europe Online Library – CEEOL.

Thematic sections

After individual scientific papers successfully pass review, they are allocated towards one of the following sections:

1. Social Sciences
2. Safety
3. Public Administration, Management
4. Reviews

Basic instructions for authors

Language of the scientific paper: English, Czech; **reviews**: English, Czech. Articles can be submitted in either English or Czech, but English articles are preferred due to the international dimension of the journal.

Required range in sections 1–3: maximum 8 standard pages (1 standard page – 1800 characters including spaces).

Deadlines: 1st issue – 1 February, 2nd issue – 1 August.

Bibliography: 25% of resources indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus databases.

Review process: double-blind, independent, objective.

Publishing dates: 1st issue – 1 June, 2nd issue – 1 December.

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