

NOW OR NEVER THE ONLY MANIFESTO YOU NEED

ANO Manifesto for the 2017 Election to the
Chamber of Deputies

I find it hard to believe that, come October, it will be four years since ANO did so unexpectedly well in the elections. Can you still remember what that acronym means? I can. Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (Akce nespokojených občanů – ANO).

Our movement emerged as a protest against the corruption of the traditional political parties play-acting at being on the left or the right. Against the fact that godfathers and lobbyists were controlling the country through the prime minister's mistress. Against the fact that politicians were tightening people's belts while granting the church assets overvalued by 54 billion in restitution proceedings.

Isn't that barking mad? You see, that was the world we were living in... For how long? 29 years. In 1989, we were hoping – and for a long time afterwards thought – that we would finally get rid of the insufferable corruption system. That's not the way it panned out. We are battling that system to this day. Unfortunately.

When I set up the movement, literally on my knees, with just a handful of my nearest and dearest, few had any faith in us. Most people laughed at us or thought we were loons. We ignored them and rolled up our sleeves, improvised, toured the Czech Republic with a team that attracted enthusiastic new people every day, and ended up second in the elections. We have won all elections – whether regional, municipal or European – ever since. That's not a bad result at all.

I'm not going to pretend that we didn't make a hash of things in certain areas of policy. I kind of took it for granted that a handshake meant keeping to one's word and that what people were saying in front of the cameras they also said in private. Was I naive? A little. As I have found out to my cost on many occasions, politics is not a business where you can bluff your partners twice: you do it once and that's your lot. In this respect, we were frequently mistaken about people and allowed ourselves to be hoodwinked by traditional politicians.

I would never hold negotiations on a coalition behind the back of the prevailing party's leader, even if there would be much more in it for me. I could have done this with Michal Hašek (anyone remember him?), but I respected the election winners and Bohuslav Sobotka as the leader of the Social Democrats (ČSSD), who had a legitimate right to form a government. In the end, he paid us back by starting to vilify our movement at every turn and transforming me into a personal enemy who had to be annihilated. This was exemplified by the first law in this country to take aim against a specific politician. I'm sure you remember the Lex Babiš. And then they threw me out of the government.

I never dreamt that the prime minister would sacrifice the reputation and work of a successful and generally popular cabinet solely in order to besmirch me and thereby shore up his own party's dwindling performance in the polls.

And yet all we ever wanted was for the economy to grow, for the state not to fork out unnecessarily on overpriced contracts just to get the motorways built quickly, for the health sector to function efficiently and transparently, and for the judiciary to start working properly. Instead of working together for the good of the people, our coalition partners – if anything – double-crossed us. For example, they went behind our backs to strike agreements with their old acquaintances in the opposition simply to water down the taxation of gambling or to hobble the fight against corruption – waged by reforming the police.

Four years have passed. After everything we've experienced in the government and parliament, we are no longer wet behind the ears. We know that, in reality, the government is not run by the prime minister, but by a full range of behind-the-scenes groups, lobbyists and interlocutors. Try googling names like Radek Pokorný and Miloš Růžička. You may well discover who is really pulling the strings here. In this respect, there is little difference between the left-wing ČSSD and right-wing ODS. We have witnessed how the various ministries compete with each other and deliberately employ a range of bureaucratic tricks to hold up important bills.

All told, however, I am quite grateful for all of this experience, good and bad alike, because – rest assured – we have shed our naivete.

That is not to say that we are straying from our core programme, which remains the same and is entirely alien to traditional politicians. We won't lie, we won't steal, we will combat corruption and mismanagement and we will work for the people and our country. This held true four years ago, it holds

true today, and it will hold true in four years' time. In the upcoming elections, I would like to spell out the following four points: security; an efficient and economic state; investing in our country; and investing in our people.

1. Security

In the light of the endless migration crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe, the safety of citizens is paramount. Protection of national identity is a priority for us. Over time, we want to increase resources for the intelligence services and defence to as much as 2% of GDP as we pursue the aim of having between 30,000 and 35,000 soldiers equipped with state-of-the-art technology. We will also be very vocal in promoting our security within the European Union and NATO. We must close external European borders, steadfastly guard ourselves against illegal migration, grapple with traffickers, and – most importantly – tackle the situation outside the European continent. This is not just in our national interest, but in all of Europe's interest and we must fight for it in Brussels.

Security is also linked to food self-sufficiency, particularly in the looming era of drought, and the ability to retain water within the landscape as a strategic resource. This is extremely important for our agriculture and the opportunity to safeguard our food self-sufficiency. If we are to enjoy energy security, we must build more nuclear units and maintain state control over lithium stocks. Fiscal security is just as crucial for us, so we must keep the crown and not try to adopt the euro.

2. An efficient and economic state

Our actions have reduced the state debt by 70 billion. Last year, we reported a record surplus of 61.8 billion, the finest result since we became an independent country in 1993. We are also keen to be diligent stewards of taxpayers' money, scale down the debt, and manage the surplus according to investment opportunities. Our goal is to have low taxes and higher pay.

In addition, we want to combat cronyism, corruption, mismanagement, and overpriced contracts that rob all of us. We must protect whistleblowers by law because corruption is a crime for which specific people must be held accountable.

Other aspects of an efficient state are the digitisation of state administration, the centralisation of procurement, the stewardship of state property, and a reduction in the number of contracts outsourcing services that the state has the wherewithal to provide itself.

Ministries must be transparent and the public must have control over the contracts concluded by the state. The Civil Service Act must be improved if we want industry-leading experts to work for the benefit of everyone.

The government itself could be streamlined, so we can definitely make room for a debate on lowering the number of ministries. The ministers themselves should focus in particular on the use of European funds and the promotion of Czech interests in Brussels. Instead of taking trips abroad, they should spend their time addressing domestic issues. As the process in place for adopting laws could also be more efficient, we would like to modernise parliamentary rules of procedure along the lines of other West European countries. We cannot allow a repeat of the situation where individual ministries are often recalcitrant to the extent that important bills for the government are incomprehensibly held up, or reach the government half-baked and need to be endlessly revised, stifled all the more by horrendous bureaucracy.

3. Investing in our country

Investment, investment, investment! The Czech Republic is a beautiful country and every penny we invest will be returned to us many times over, regardless of whether we are channelling resources into express trains, new stretches of road, the construction of schools, nurseries, creatures, rest homes and sports grounds, the renovation of railway stations or the restoration of monuments. Economic growth largely lies in our own hands.

We will push for a law on key structures so that it doesn't take a quarter of a century to build a few miles of motorway.

By 2021, we will build bypasses and 170 km of new motorways, such as the D3, D4, D11 and D35.

Nor can we lose sight of our cultural heritage, the repair and maintenance of historical buildings, and investment in cultural facilities. I am personally keen to champion the construction of a gallery to house Mucha's The Slav Epic in Prague that would be on a par with galleries in Bilbao and Paris. Tourism is a powerhouse of economic growth, yet we have harnessed less than half of the potential available.

4. Investing in our people

This is the very best investment we can make. It is an investment in the future, and the future is shaped by our children. This is why I want to increase teachers' pay to 150% of current levels within four years and return the prestige and respect that this profession deserves. After all, it is teachers who raise our future doctors, judges, traders, craftsmen, artists, actors, scientists, athletes, teachers and, for that matter, politicians. We will not introduce tuition fees at colleges because we all benefit from the education of our young people.

We will increase pensions. Our seniors, having worked their whole lives, deserve a dignified retirement. Public health and the right of citizens to enjoy top-class health care are priorities for us. There is no way we want to privatise health or furtively push up the contributions required of patients.

Finally, justice is vital if citizens are to trust the state. We must not let the courts work for judges and lawyers, but for the people. We will strive to speed up never-ending court proceedings and the enforceability of the law. We cannot allow slippery figures to walk away from the courts laughing while decent folk are unable to obtain justice. And we cannot let trials go on for a whopping 10 or even 15 years. Our country needs speedy law enforcement. We will complete the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by signing its Optional Protocol.

Back in 2013, many of you placed your faith in us even though we were political rookies. Today we have experience under our belts and, if you trust in us again, we will show you that the government can be managed completely differently to what we have been used to from traditional politicians. We want to show that we can be active, thrifty and loyal employees of this great family business that is called the Czech Republic and belongs to you. And after four years as shareholders, you will be deciding at the general meeting whether we have managed the business efficiently and economically. That is what democracy is. It is up to you alone whether and how much of a say you have in this.

In 2013, we posted billboards proclaiming that we were doing what we were doing so that our children would want to live here, too. That is who we are doing it for. One day they will hold us to account. Other parties unashamedly included any promises in their manifestos even if they know full well that they cannot keep them. I, on the other hand, want to deliver on my plans. If you place your faith in me and our ANO movement, we will not disappoint. I give you my word. And my word is always my bond.

It will take you about 20 minutes to read our manifesto. If you have a moment, do it right now. This minute. As always, I would appreciate it if you then let me know what you think. It is very important for me to know the opinions and feelings of all of you, every single one of you. And if the manifesto resonates with you, everyone who worked on it will be grateful if you could send it to anybody it might interest.

Thank you very much.

Andrej Babiš

1. AN EFFICIENT STATE

We will manage our state with due professional care. Efficiently. We will introduce methods that have been tried and tested in the business world. Central procurement, the concentration of state assets in a single place, the centralisation of IT, and digitalisation. We will pinpoint savings in all areas in which the state operates.

We'll start with the most important. The adoption of laws on the functioning of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

- We will introduce a “sliding” mandate. This means that members of parliament who are appointed to the government must pass on their parliamentary mandate to a substitute and focus on managing their ministry.
- We will propose a revision of the Senate’s electoral system. We will reduce the current two-round system to a single round. Quite simply, the candidate who wins the highest number of votes in the first round is elected. On the one hand, the state will be spared the cost of a second round, and on the other the voter turnout will be higher.
- We will push for a change in the lower house’s rules of procedure by drawing on the German model in order to simplify and speed up the lawmaking process.
- We will scrap the parliamentary custom of ditching all meaningful bills after every election. Bills that end up in the Chamber of Deputies ahead of the elections, e.g. those that reach their second reading, should be taken over by the new members of parliament, where this is agreed, so that work can continue on them in order to finalise them for approval.
- If we get to contribute to the government, we will engage in running negotiations with the opposition parties. We will not dismiss the opposition’s bills out of hand, but will always assess and discuss them. We expect the same of the governing parties if we end up in the opposition’s ranks.
- We will propose cuts to the budget of the Chamber of Deputies, as this is no travel agency, but an efficient vehicle for the adoption of laws.
- We will suggest the abolition of the flat-rate expenses enjoyed by the Czech Parliament’s deputies and senators. They will only be reimbursed for proven and efficiently incurred expenditure, which will be published on the parliamentary website.
- We will revise the law to separate the pay of deputies and senators from the pay of other constitutional bodies, in particular judges. We will then follow up on this by freezing deputies’ pay at current levels for the entire parliamentary term.
- We will depoliticise the Government Legislative Council, which should be the exclusive domain of experts.
- We will look to simplify the Civil Service Act. Civil service must also be open to all external experts. We need to be successful in winning over experienced specialists, and to do that we must foster conditions, including pay, enabling the state to compete with the private sector.

Plans for the management and functioning of the Czech Government

- We will propose a change in the Competence Act with a view to sweeping away departmentalism and reinforcing the competence and responsibility of the individual ministers.
- We will bring the number of ministers down from 16 to 13.
- We will get rid of the post of the minister for science and research and split this agenda between education and industry.
- We will scrap the post of the minister for human rights, equal opportunities and legislation and the Government Legislative Council, and transfer the entire agenda to the Ministry of Justice.
- We will merge the Ministry of the Environment with the Ministry of Agriculture as their agendas often overlap and interact. This will allow for more flexible operation and decision-making.
- We will halve the number of staff at the Office of the Government and its budget.
- Ministers will work efficiently. Their main focus will be the Czech Republic and, along with senators and deputies, they will not turn their posts into a travel agent’s dream. It is far more important for them to be in the closest possible contact with mayors, regional governors, traders, businesses and, of course, citizens.
- Ministers will aim to cut costs, minimise external services and, in particular, leverage internal capacities. Ministers’ main task is to manage their ministry efficiently and economically while

making maximum use of European funds. When it comes to soft programmes co-financed by the Czech budget, we will carefully consider how necessary and efficient these programmes are and replace them with others.

- The prime minister will manage ministers efficiently, especially in those areas where agendas overlap, so that the laws and measures making their way to the government have been sufficiently consulted and rubber-stamped by the individual ministries. We will propose that the Czech Export Bank, the Export Guarantee and Insurance Corporation and the Bohemian-Moravian Guarantee and Development Bank be taken over and efficiently managed by the Ministry of Finance.

Centrally managed agendas

- IT authority and digitalisation – we will concentrate the IT agenda in one place under a single central authority. This is the only way we can define basic standards for all ministries.
- We will centralise the management of state assets, including operating costs.
- We will introduce central procurement where this makes sense and delivers a financial effect.
- Sport will be in the hands of an autonomous agency. We will depoliticise the way resources are distributed for sport.

2. THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

- It has always been our main priority to fight against corruption and mismanagement. We will push for a whistleblowing law, which has yet to be debated by the current Chamber of Deputies.
- People have the right to know how the state is handling its finances and how it distributes the taxes it has collected. What is more, these resources must be distributed apolitically.
- Upon joining the government, ministers will publish all valid contracts at their ministry, evaluate how beneficial they are, and constantly post online all newly concluded non-trade contracts. The same applies to state organisations such as Czech Post (Česká pošta) and everyone else.
- We will minimise unpublished procurement procedures and replace them, as far as possible, with open tendering.
- We will support economical public contracts, fair and transparent subsidies, and the development of open data. We will improve citizens' access to information on state management. We will extend the auditing carried out by the Supreme Audit Office to territorially self-governing units and publicly owned companies. We will assess the efficiency of public procurement in the health sector.
- When it comes to financing sport, the state must distribute money apolitically and pay off the debts that have been plaguing this area for years. In particular, investments in sports infrastructure must be allocated transparently and according to clearly defined criteria.
- In the realm of justice, we will introduce a new law guaranteeing prosecutors independence of politicians, and we will introduce a specialist elite unit to prosecute corruption and serious economic crime.
- We will revise the rules of enforcement so that they are easy to understand and so that enforcement proceedings result in the efficient enforcement of obligations rather than the begging of the poor.
- We will not give up our fight against corruption within the police force, and we will write to the wrongs brought about by the police reorganisation process.
- We will push for the adoption of a law on private security services so that such services can be provided only on the basis of authorisation and under the control of a state institution.
- We will come down hard on any abuse of these services for the illegal procurement of information, including information from police databases and files.

3. eGOVERNMENT

The digitalisation of services for citizens is currently of a very poor standard. The user interfaces employed by public service websites are complex and lack uniformity. eGovernment deals with numerous ancillary projects in the background, such as basic registers and certification authorities, but

lacks friendliness and serviceability for users – citizens, businesses and other organisations. For people on the street, it is still simpler to go to an authority in person than to learn how to work with complicated forms online. We will deliver services to all citizens and businesses. To every computer.

Building up services for citizens is one of our priorities. Everything that we devise must be justified by its benefit for citizens.

- We will simplify administration for the authorities themselves (making savings in the process) and for citizens so that they don't have to do make repeat visits to an authority or – worse – multiple authorities in order to process the same services.
- Looking forward, no citizens will have to make their way to authorities in person. The basic pillar will be an electronic ID card – already available today – serving as a secure gateway to electronic eGovernment services. We will also harness the new opportunities afforded by modern technology: biometric elements, fingerprinting, retina scans, etc.
- We will come up with a portal where all services provided by all ministries are available to everyone. We will create a government action plan with clear deadlines dictating when which agendas of which ministries and state authorities are to be connected to the Citizen's Portal.
- All forms will be pre-filled and will only require the citizen, as the client, to add the necessary data.
- Setting up these services will require the overhaul of the outdated and obsolete principles and methods we know today.

While we wait for all citizens to have an identity card with a chip, there will be a transitional period where we draw on the services of Czech Post, which, instead of offering lottery tickets and insurance, will mediate access to selected state agendas, including:

- (a) The receipt and processing of applications for travel documents and the issuance thereof in municipalities with extended powers (type-III municipalities).
- (b) The receipt and processing of applications for identity cards and the issuance thereof in municipalities with extended powers (type-III municipalities).
- (c) Electronic changes to citizens' permanent residence.
- (d) Deliveries to individuals and legal entities who do not have a data box.
- (e) Statutory obligations incumbent on individuals, individuals engaging in business (the self-employed) and legal entities (the payment of taxes, charges and contributions).
- (f) The obligation for the newly self-employed to register with a health insurance company, a district social security administration and a tax office.
- (g) The receipt and processing of applications for driving licences and the issuance thereof in municipalities with extended powers (type-III municipalities).

Centralised and shared public administration ICT services – synergy, efficiency and savings.

Decentralised services are one of the problems faced by digitalisation today. Each ministry builds everything autonomously and often at a slow pace. We will leverage the concept of shared services and operate them on shared infrastructure, an economically beneficial concept employed in all countries where digitalisation is highly advanced.

- We will clarify what each system does, what qualitative parameters it has, who is responsible for it and how much it costs. We will devise uniform standards and break down the large monolithic systems into cooperating layers and components.
- Instead of convoluted, large-scale public contracts, we will hold tendering procedure for individual smaller interacting parts and platforms that fit in with the overall architecture. We will make maximum possible use of shared services – not only data centres and servers, but entire agendas encompassing multiple authorities.
- One of the accompanying spillover effects of setting up uniform services for various ministries will be the identification of absurd differences in legislation, which can then be simplified. Consolidating applications at individual ministries that are similar or, indeed, identical will result in huge savings for the state. This will make services simpler, and we will develop them more quickly.
- We will also harness the free capacity of the communication networks owned by the state (directly or via state enterprises) that are being built at individual ministries in order to interconnect various bodies of state administration – we will create a virtual operator for state

administration. Just to give you an idea, the largest network (owned by the Ministry of the Interior) is 85% idle at the moment, so this move will usher in major financial savings.

We will focus on:

- The use of shared common procurement, and the sharing of data centres, server platforms and cloud services as part of the implementation of public administration ICT systems.
- The creation of the role of a virtual operator for state administration, capitalising on all free available telecommunication assets to meet the requirements of various state entities.
- The central procurement of commodities, such as laptops, mobiles, tablets and printers, as well as software and telecommunications services.
- eGovernment Cloud – we are developing the sharing of data centre operating services, hardware and operating staff, as this will enhance the efficiency, quality, security and speed of deployment of new IT systems.

Management of public administration ICT architecture and security

We cannot hope to build up public administration ICT unless we make it a priority and place it in the hands of a responsible person. We want to establish a Central Authority that will have hands-on – not just formal – responsibility for the implementation of IT projects. We will provide it with the levers it needs to demand defined standards and we will responsibly manage ICT costs, architecture and project deliveries.

- We will attract more experts to state administration who will engage in dialogue with suppliers as equals. We must have specialist consultants and experts on the payroll and commission more expert studies.
- We need expert consultants from the business and internet arenas. We need to scale up the know-how of state administration when it comes to modern trends – this will entail more communication with suppliers, exchanges of information, suggestions and plans, and perhaps even the holding of hackathons, which will command the attention of the younger online generation.
- Unless we pick up speed and place an emphasis on efficient IT management, the use of modern technology and simplicity for citizens, Czech eGovernment could be left behind. Or do we really want Czech citizens to become Estonian e-residents, setting up companies and paying taxes in Estonia?

We will deliver:

- Uniform architecture, efficient and coordinated development with secure systems.
- The reinforcement and transparent functioning of existing government organisations – the Government Information Society Council (for the implementation of systems) and the National Cyber and Information Security Agency.
- We will provide an IT environment impervious to cyber attacks for those citizens who draw on the state's electronic services.
- We will also focus on the rigorous implementation of Regulation (EU) 2016/679, which addresses the comprehensive protection of citizens' personal data to prevent it from being abused. In our opinion, misusing a citizen's personal data for marketing purposes is a bridge too far. We will also ensure that data provided by a citizen (e.g. to healthcare facilities) is not abused.

Building high-speed internet access

A good-quality, accessible high-speed internet connection is absolutely essential for the use of eGovernment and other services. We need to cover the Czech Republic, even in rural areas where commercial providers' connections are limited for economic reasons, and also – for example – in the Prague metro. It is absurd that the people of Prague cannot make calls or use the internet while they're in the metro. We aim not only to give citizens access to modern digital services, information and knowledge, but also to foster the competitiveness of our businesses and investment in new technology.

- In the 2014-2020 programming period, the EU Structural Funds assigned CZK 14 billion to the Czech Republic for the development of high-speed interconnections in those areas currently without coverage. However, these resources have been held up for several years by disputes on competence, poor communication between state authorities and the professional community, and the sketchy preparation of underlying documentation.
- We have an approved National Plan for the Development of New-generation Networks and a new law on measures to cut the cost of building electronic communications networks. Now we just need to put them into action.
- In addition to promoting the development of telecommunications services, we will also engage in effective regulation to ensure that the pricing of internet connection services and mobile data services on the relatively small Czech telecommunications market is in line with other EU Member States.

4. STATE MANAGEMENT, TAXES, FINANCES AND BUDGET POLICY

Over the period that we have been involved in the current government, the state debt has fallen by CZK 70 billion, mainly thanks to us. In 2016, we reported a record surplus of CZK 61.8 billion, the best result since the Czech Republic became an independent state. According to Eurostat figures, these indicators placed us second in the EU, behind Luxembourg.

Measures introduced to combat tax evasion have yielded hundreds of billions of crowns extra for the state coffers. Between 2014 and July 2017, we collected CZK 604.9 billion more than the taxes and contributions collected in 2013. This uptick in tax revenues is continuing, as demonstrated most pertinently by VAT. At the end of July 2017, we had collected 11.2% (approximately CZK 22 billion) more VAT than in 2016. Economic growth stands at 4.6%. This, too, played a role in the CZK 25 billion surplus reported by the central government budget in July 2017.

- In the next parliamentary term, we will persevere with this strategy and work towards a balanced budget (depending on investment opportunities), while stabilising debt at one of the lowest levels in the EU.
- We believe that a predictable and stable fiscal landscape is essential. We will not be pushing up taxes. On the contrary, they will be reduced. We will cut taxes for low- and middle-income groups and stabilise them for high-income groups. We will not be putting them up any further. We see leeway to lower the VAT rate. However, it is important for any such reduction to be reflected in prices for consumers – we do not want retailers to pocket the difference.
- In current circumstances, and as things stand in the euro area, we will not be adopting the euro.

State management must be rooted in the same principles as those pursued by individuals, traders and businesses. The state must be able to maintain the equilibrium of its receipts and outgoings over the longer term. It must be able to invest in its future while managing operations efficiently and with due diligence.

- We will promote a long-term balanced budget with a stress on investment. The state debt relative to GDP will be stable in the long run.
- Major economic growth will result in operating surpluses. As a matter of priority, the state will invest those surpluses, primarily in infrastructure, schools, retirement homes, etc.
- The central government budget may sporadically end up with a deficit, but only at an amount equal to the level of investment – we need to build and we will never slash investments.
- As far as the national economic management of the state is concerned, our guiding principles will be: increase investment, guarantee a minimum level of investment every year, facilitate the growth of wages and pensions, and scale down other operating expenses, with an emphasis on the greatest possible centralisation of expenditure and cost management.

Taxes

- We espouse a stable and predictable fiscal landscape. In necessary cases, changes to the system of tax laws must be made only by a handful of summary amendments for the parliamentary term, and with ample deferral of effect in order to maintain legal certainty. Before going live, we will test new information technologies in pilot operations in order to minimise private sector costs. Our watchwords here are fair conditions for work and business and no rate increases.

- We will arrange for the system of tax exemptions to be revised, and we will prevent the introduction of any further such exemptions. When exemptions are granted, this means that a particular group enjoys tax concessions, but also that everyone else has to make up for it. In practice, any exemption ultimately triggers a higher tax rate. In this way, taxes effectively influence taxpayers' decisions on whether and how to work, how to invest, or what business to choose. We will promote an equal footing for everyone – a neutral tax system.
- We will introduce a flat employee expense rate by means of an insurance contribution discount. This will provide at least some compensation for employee spending on commuting and, for example, improving their qualifications. What we are setting out to do here is reduce labour costs and increase the mobility of employees. In this respect, we will legislate an insurance contribution discount of CZK 500 per month, i.e. CZK 6,000 per year, for all employees, which will be provided without further taxation. Employees surely deserve to stand alongside entrepreneurs in enjoying their own flat expense rate.
- We will scrap the “super-gross wage” and cut personal income tax rates. Compared to today's actual rates of 20.1% and 24%, the result of increasing the tax base by employer-paid contributions, we will push for new rates of 19% and 24% of the gross wage, which will also replace the solidarity-based surcharge.
 - We will also lower the tax base for individuals engaging in business. Unlike employees, individuals engaging in business have no employer to pay insurance contributions for them, and this is a factor increasing their tax base. By doing away with the super-gross wage, employees will effectively see their tax base fall by approximately three quarters of the total insurance contributions paid for them by the employer. Entrepreneurs who pay all of their insurance contributions out of their own pocket will be able to deduct three quarters of these contributions from their tax base.
 - Depending on developments in the central government budget, we will aim for a 2-5% reduction in the social insurance paid by employers.
- Courtesy of the improved, more efficient collection of VAT, we will reclassify some products and services under the lowest rate.
 - We will continue cutting rates for the serving of food and soft drinks in catering establishments from the current 15% to 10%.
 - We will compound this with a reduction for draught beer from 21% to 10%. This is our way of continuing to support restaurants and the hospitality industry.
 - Meat, milk, butter, bread, fish, and fresh fruit and vegetables will also switch to the 10% rate. In this respect, we will expand the category of goods in the lowest VAT rate to include food staples.
 - In the regulation of water prices, we will cut VAT for water supply and sewage rates from 15% to 10%.
 - We will reduce the VAT on cut flowers to 10%.
- We will promote the introduction of further stages of electronic sales registration by reclassifying services with a high proportion of human labour under the lowest VAT rate. We will cut the rate from the current 21% to 10% for the following:
 - repairs of footwear and leather goods;
 - repairs of bicycles, clothing and other products intended for personal consumption and households;
 - hairdressing, cosmetics and similar services.
- We will cut the rate from the current 15% to 10% for the following:
 - home care for seniors, including outpatient or field services for seniors and disabled persons;
 - home care for children, and all social services provided to children;
 - cleaning and window-cleaning in households;
 - the renovation of private flats and residential buildings.
- We have assessed the successfully functioning electronic sales registration project in depth and we will be proposing several modifications that will not undermine the way this instrument works. We will exempt the following from the sales registration requirement:
 - individuals with flat-rate tax and turnover of up to CZK 500,000 per year;
 - public-benefit taxpayers with turnover of up to CZK 1 million per year who, in the course of events they have organised and notified in advance, register sales away from the premises of a permanent establishment where they have electronic sales registration equipment;
 - canteens and similar facilities in schools and in the establishments of children's camps or children's clubs;
 - online payments;

- sales of Christmas carp, provided that they are duly notified in advance.
- We advocate a sharing economy and we must ensure that there is a level playing field for everyone to do business.

We will reverse the obligation to display information in establishments where sales are registered and we will support and promote opportunities to use electronic receipts instead of paper ones. Based on ideas emerging from areas close to state borders, we will actually introduce the obligation to register sales for foreign taxpayers who tax their income abroad but come to the Czech Republic in mobile shops, for example.

- We will support the expansion of customs administration powers. Since 1995, the customs administration has had the powers of a police authority and may investigate crime linked to its activities and cases of VAT fraud. However, after identifying a perpetrator and collecting evidence, it must refer individual cases to a police investigator who, after studying the file, moves forward with criminal proceedings before a court. Following the lead of other EU Member States, we will push for the customs administration to be able to see advanced criminal proceedings through to the end, subject to the prosecutor's approval.

5. A COHERENT AND ACTIVE FOREIGN POLICY

Czech foreign policy's main objectives are to strengthen security, enhance prosperity, and consolidate the maintenance of democracy and the rule of law in the Czech Republic. Our foreign policy must be proactive, rest on domestic political priorities, promote Czech interests consistently and effectively, and be understandable to our citizens and foreign partners alike. We will focus squarely on a free and democratic world; promoting the protection of human rights will remain an important pillar of Czech diplomacy.

European Union

- It is a matter of priority for our country to be firmly anchored in a smoothly functioning, agile European Union. Transnational institutions offer the Czech Republic more opportunity to influence what is happening on the continent than if Europe were to be controlled by just a handful of large European states. Full engagement in the emerging European market is vital to the Czech export-oriented economy.
- We will concentrate on important areas where the EU delivers or could deliver added value, including the protection of external borders, common security, the further development and liberalisation of the internal market, its protection against unfair practices, both internally and externally, safeguards to ensure the competitiveness of the European economy, the digital single market, energy union, the circular economy, and consumer protection.
- We will push for reforms to make the Union's activities more efficient and sweep away unnecessary administrative burdens. We want to make a clear distinction between where the EU can help us and where we can do a better job on our own. The aim is to reform the Union so that it does less, but much better.
- The establishment of any specific date for joining the euro must echo the economic interests of the Czech Republic, citizens and companies. We will actively support euro area reform in order to strengthen Europe's economic and financial stability so that it is aligned with the Czech Republic's interests. We must ensure that, notwithstanding further developments in the euro area, the position of those countries that have yet to adopt the euro is not disadvantaged. Unless the euro area is significantly reformed in the next parliamentary term, we will not accede to the euro.

Security

- In security, we will rally behind effective legislative and non-legislative tools within the EU to prevent and eliminate security threats that states cannot deal with alone (the protection of external borders, stabilisation of the EU's southern and eastern neighbourhood, and the integration of defence capabilities as a European pillar of NATO).
- The EU must tackle terrorism and extreme Islamists. The security forces of all Member States need to work together closely. This includes immediate exchanges of information on potential

threats and the movement of high-risk individuals. We share fully the concerns of our people. While we do not want to foster an atmosphere of fear, we do believe that the state is categorically responsible for its citizens' safety. In this respect, the Czech Republic will actively support the absolute defeat of the "Islamic State".

Relations with neighbours and other countries

- We believe that neighbourhood relations are an opportunity to promote the cohesion of the Central European space and to win over allies in promoting the Czech Republic's domestic and foreign policy priorities within the EU and NATO. This is another pillar of our foreign policy.
- Within the EU, we will strive to forge new alliances beyond the format of the Visegrad Group, and will focus our active cooperation – also within NATO – on key countries in matters of security and the further direction of the EU, especially France and Germany. We will set up new bilateral relations with the UK that are consistent with the Czech Republic's interests. The UK will remain an important partner for the Czech Republic, particularly in security and trade.
- It is crucial for the Czech Republic to bolster transatlantic ties. We will back stronger trade and security cooperation with the United States, hold dialogue with the US administration on common interests, and champion those interests.
- Our top priority is to maintain peace in Europe and, therefore, to guarantee full respect for international law, including the principle of territorial integrity. Within the EU, we will work towards preparing a new strategy for relations with Russia in order to strengthen the security architecture in Europe and facilitate the development of those relations.
- We advocate stabilising the Western Balkan countries and gradually integrating them into the EU, subject to the completion of all reforms to consolidate the rule of law and the full adoption of EU common legislation.
- In the further development of trade and economic relations with China, respect for the rules of international trade will be of the essence. This will also protect Czech industry from unfair competition.

We will continue to support Ukraine and other countries in the EU's Eastern Partnership.

Migration

- Decisions on the reception of refugees must remain in the hands of individual states. At EU level, we will do everything we can to stem illegal migration into Europe.
- Both Czech and European foreign policy must strive to address the migration crisis by stifling migration flows at source – in the countries of origin. To this end, we want to be involved in the approach taken by international operations (the EU, NATO) to tackle the causes of migration, especially in conflict-plagued areas, and thus to put a stop to further waves of migration.
- We will push for a change in the focus of development programmes, which must concentrate on conflict-riven countries (Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan) or on countries with a very poor standard of living (Eritrea, Sub-Saharan Africa).

External trade

- In our external trade policy, we will focus on developing active economic diplomacy. This will prove instrumental in promoting Czech economic interests.
- Through our foreign policy, we will give more help to Czech companies in foreign markets, open up new opportunities and promote trade. Our priorities include the development of and adherence to international trade rules, which are rooted in the liberalisation of trade relations.
- We also believe it is necessary to avoid duplicating the activities of the various ministries, so we plan to transfer external trade policy – along with the merged CzechTrade and CzechInvest agencies – to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

6. ECONOMY AND ENERGY

In the past, the Czech Republic became known as an industrially advanced country with a reputation that spread beyond Europe. Names such as Škoda, Baťa and Kolben are celebrated the world over. However, fair and simple business conditions are essential if we are to keep step with the competition.

These conditions must benefit not only foreign investors, but also – and more importantly – our traditional industrial enterprises and new start-ups. We realise that, once fair conditions are in place, the state should intervene in business as little as possible.

Domestic industry

- We will put an end to investment and tax incentives for storage facilities, assembly halls and other areas of production where added value is low. Such incentives may be granted only in exceptional and justified cases.
- We will only use incentives to support investment in industry that offers the Czech Republic greater added value, i.e. the most advanced technologies. As a matter of priority, we are keen to back new projects among Czech businesses. Foreign businesses are welcome to our support provided that they relocate the related research and development to the Czech Republic. This will benefit not only industry, but also the related training and education.
- We will arrange for changes in the status and functioning of employment agencies that recruit workers for Czech companies in other countries. We need to set clear rules and to simplify, demystify and speed up the entire system of work permits in accordance with the requirements of companies and traders.
- It is not possible for the state to deprive itself of its mineral resources in the way we witnessed with coal, oil and gas in the past. We will revise the conditions of the Raw Material Strategy of the Czech Republic and, among other things, increase the charges for the extraction of certain types of mineral resources. The financial resources received will then be ploughed back into those regions encumbered by mining operations.
- We strongly disagree with the granting of further lithium prospecting licences to private companies in the future and we will amend the corresponding legislation accordingly. This activity, including preparations for future extraction, will be carried out by the state via the state-controlled company Diamo.

Energy

It is essential for the Czech Republic to have energy that is strategically sound, but at the same time is safe and reliable and will not succumb to market whims. Related conditions include the environmental friendliness of energy generation, acceptability and, in particular, price stability for final customers. We must clearly ensure continuity with the European energy networks, where the market is complex and where there is an ever increasing danger of large-scale blackouts.

- The absolute priorities will always be to ensure energy self-sufficiency, security of supply, and competitive energy prices.
- We will produce energy by drawing on a mix of resources relying on a growing proportion of nuclear power and renewable sources, with a gradual reduction in the role played by brown-coal-fired power stations.
- We will pave the way for the further construction of nuclear units at Dukovany and Temelín in good time to meet requirements.
- We will not allow the mining boundaries to be overstepped at the ČSA Mine after 2020.
- We will allow energy-related and other structures to be permitted at a faster rate in order to avoid energy supply shortages in the long run.
- All energy consumers, including citizens, will be given maximum incentives to cut down on their energy consumption in all areas (improved energy performance in production processes, building insulation, the support of decentralised renewable sources, etc.). After all, the best energy is energy that doesn't need to be generated.
- We will fundamentally simplify conditions for small-scale producers (households) generating electricity from renewable sources for their own consumption.

7. BUSINESS SUPPORT

Small and medium-sized enterprises are a fixture of the Czech Republic's domestic economy. The proximity to Germany and Austria, where SMEs play an important role in the economy, simply

consolidates the significance of these companies in the Czech Republic. Many of them are family businesses, which have their own specific features, such as the long-term management prospects, the creation of value and the sharing of that value in local communities. We will not favour one group of economic entities to the detriment of others. We will seek a balance in our approach and, in this way, consolidate stability based on the diversification of the economy.

The main problem faced by SMEs is not any direct financial burden, but the convoluted nature of their relationship with the state, in particular in view of the time they spend on necessary administration, the repeated sending of all information, uncoordinated support, the chaotic and time-consuming system of contributions, and incompetent audits. With this in mind, we will be promoting the following rules:

One-stop shop

- We will concentrate electronic communications between the state and businesses into a single place. This will not only make business support more transparent, but will also enable the state to measure and evaluate more effectively the impacts that its activities are having on the business community. Nevertheless, the switch to computerisation must also respect the fact that those who have objective difficulties using computer technology will be temporarily left out.
- Businesses will download all laws, implementing decrees, and standards electronically and free of charge – all on the basis of a simple guide.
- Business will see all of the statutory procedures they have carried out and contributions they have made. They will receive timely reminders. Everything will be downloadable. Forms will contain all data that has already been shared and, once completed, will be sent to a single point by the business.
- Businesses will also see all support instruments that have been prepared by ministries and state agencies. Using a simple guide, they will be able to find targeted support and interconnect directly – via a single interface – with the relevant provider.

Uniform effective dates

- All legislative changes requiring businesses to adapt will be timed, as far as possible, to enter into force only on one day of the year, i.e. as of 1 January. This will make administration far easier.

Compliance with statutory time limits

- Businesses who fail to respond to the demands of state institutions are at risk of immediate penalisation. Yet when the state remains idle, despite being obligated to respond within 30 days in many cases, it risks nothing.
- In situations where a state authority is unable to resolve requests within statutory time limits, it is required to notify the requesting party of this and to set a replacement deadline for the handling of the request.

A single piece of paper

- We will immediately spearhead a review of all the different forms used for the various contributions, to be achieved by an integrated tax collection system that interconnects the levying of all key taxes, social security contributions and health insurance contributions, so that businesses can pay for everything with a single transfer.

Starting up and shutting down a business with ease

- As a matter of priority, all forms of setting up a trade, following the submission of all requirements, including verification of qualifications required to engage in a trade-related business, will be online.
- Needless to say, it will also be possible to shut down a business online. Businesses will be directed to an electronic guide and send all confirmations to a single point. The winding up of a company will be notified electronically within 60 days.

Reliable companies

- Businesses who report everything properly, pay the state on time, and are not listed among unreliable payers or unreliable persons will be denoted by the new term “reliable person”. These businesses will have the possibility of special treatment in relation to audits and other benefits.

Family businesses

- We will be strident advocates of family businesses as these are the mainstay of the economy in all developed countries. Whether these are family companies, family trades or family farms, they are regional service pillars, stewards of tradition and highly regarded employers.
- We view family businesses as an example of sound management and the bedrock of a successful economy, so the state should look for ways of supporting family businesses, including legislatively. Family businesses are currently having to deal with a wave of changes as the reins are handed over to younger generations.
- The costs demonstrably occasioned by a change of ownership, such as business valuations, accounting advice, and legal advice, should definitely be tax deductible. We will make it easier for subsequent generations to take over the family tradition.

Rural business

- We will devise a long-term interministerial means of supporting business in the countryside that will facilitate the development of infrastructure in smaller municipalities, keep business going in the regions, and ensure that these places are duly serviced. This support will include tax incentives or subsidy schemes, and the motivation to employ workers in small or underdeveloped municipalities.
- Considering the conditions specific to the countryside, in particular the small shops here, we will discuss modifications to the electronic sales registration system with the Association of Czech Traditional Commerce, with a focus on suitably handling an amendment to the law or introducing the possibility of compensating for the additional costs incurred by these small establishments.

Development of crafts and technical disciplines

- We will introduce a dual education system with the incentive-based involvement of the state, companies and schools. We will definitively enshrine practical training, in conjunction with advanced technologies, in the curricula of primary schools.
- We will introduce master craftsman exams and amend the Trading Act so that it respects professional qualifications.

Support of external trade

- We will devise a comprehensive system to support the international activities of our exporters, scientists and educational organisations. We will expand foreign trade missions and agencies so that it is easier to obtain information and contacts, and we will carry out targeted sectoral and branch acquisitions.
- The main pillar of support for small and medium-sized enterprises will be CzechTrade, both from the perspective of direct marketing assistance and in the targeted training of SMEs in external trade.

8. TRANSPORT

The state, through the Ministry of Transport, must ensure that transport is well serviced throughout the Czech Republic. Sadly, our politicians lost sight of this basic requirement soon after 1989. Today, despite all possible EU subsidies, it is very difficult to make up for this loss. The problems are mainly rooted in existing legislation.

The fundamental priority is to interlink regional cities with an efficient motorway network. Towns lying on class 1 roads must have bypasses so that transit traffic does not pass through their centre. The state must also guarantee and support reliable “public” rail and road transport. We will also incorporate

modern and environmental modes of transport – high-speed rail, alternative-fuel cars and driverless vehicles – into the transport infrastructure. •

- We will push for a law (on line construction) that will make it possible for a permit for the construction of key infrastructure to take place at a single authority in single proceedings in a way that prevents the process from being endlessly challenged.
- We will secure long-term stable and predictable financing for the whole of transport infrastructure, providing the State Transport Infrastructure Fund with a budget amounting to 2% of GDP.
- We will continue building motorways to link up regional cities and connect with neighbouring countries. By 2021, we will build approximately 280 km of new motorway (of which 170 km will be brand new and 110 km will comprise the completely upgraded D1). We will also start work on the construction of a further 220 km of motorway.
- We will begin building bypasses around towns that lie on class 1 roads. In the upcoming period, we have prepared 430 km of new bypasses worth approximately CZK 108 billion. These include the bypasses around Klatovy, Slaný, České Budějovice (D3 and I/20), Mělník, Chrudim, Nová Paka, Jaroměř, Havlíčkův Brod, Brno – large city ring road, Znojmo, Svitavy, Bludov, Přerov (D1), Frýdek-Místek (D48), Karviná, and Břeclav.
- We will take targeted action to enhance the competitiveness of environmental rail transport as a whole in relation to other modes of transport.
- We will make sure that there is fair competition on the railways (the possibility of liberalisation), yet we will not undermine the status of the national carrier, which provides a public service on loss-making routes.
- We will depoliticise Czech Railways (České dráhy) and define its status as the national carrier, and we will find a solution to the future of ČD Cargo.
- We will speed up the building of high-speed lines (VRT). We will take all necessary action to launch the construction of these lines so that they can draw on European financing. The priority axis is Berlín – Prague – Brno – Ostrava.
- We will finally repair railway stations. We will invest up to CZK 8 billion in the repair of approximately 60 stations.
- We will start building the first PPP (public-private partnership) project on the D4 motorway (Prague to Písek).
- For us, PPPs will be an important avenue for the financing of transport infrastructure and other construction projects. This financing method also lends itself to the construction of other public structures (prisons, hospitals, sports grounds, etc.).
- We will also consider using PPPs to complete the construction of the D35 motorway (the section from Svitavy to Mohelnice), the D6 motorway from Prague to Karlovy Vary, and the Central Bohemian stretch of the D3 to České Budějovice and Linz.
- We will ensure that the Elbe is navigable by completing the Děčín and Přelouč hydraulic structures.
- We will improve road safety and clamp down on dangerous drivers via BESIP (the entity responsible for coordinating road safety) and an amendment to the Driving Schools Act (introducing the concept of “beginner drivers”).
- We will arrange for the implementation of relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the ministry, with the removal of transport obstructions during the repair or planning of transport structures and arrangements for the transportation of disabled persons.
- We will promote the construction of large-scale parking facilities alongside motorways. It is out of question for lorries to park in motorway lay-bys, turning lanes or municipalities alongside the motorway network. This is one way of contributing to better traffic safety.

9. PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of our key aims is to encourage regional development and investment in the regions. We do not want to waste or squander any money. We want to make efficient investments and to assist with investment in those areas that have long been neglected. How is it possible in this day and age that some municipalities still lack a sewage system, drinking water on tap, and the internet? There is a shortage of sports grounds, concert halls, and transport terminals.

- We will draw up a detailed list of the necessary investments mentioned above, based on the ideas put forward by municipalities, towns, regions and ministries, and then we will rank them by priority, financing options and budgetary impact.
- We will set up a State Investment Fund by transforming the State Environmental Fund and, where appropriate, merging with certain other state funds. An alternative to such an investment fund could be the conversion of the Ministry of Regional Development into the Ministry of Public Investment and Regional Development. The aim is to centralise state investments (apart from transport infrastructure) into a single point, as far as this is possible.
- We will use subsidy schemes to support basic municipal infrastructure, including local roads, amenities, sports grounds, and housing for seniors.

Top regional development priorities:

- We will simplify the rules for investment and implementation preparations (the Building Act, the Public Procurement Act, and the Concessions Act). We will abide by the principle of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- It is important for public contracts to genuinely relieve the administrative burden and enhance efficiency. By computerising public procurement, we will save money, simplify mutual communications and, consequently, make users happier.
- We will prepare a new Building Act and Expropriation Act. We will float the idea of a new structure for building authorities. Our goal is “one door, one proceeding, one stamp, and one building permit for small and large investors alike”. We will focus in particular on the rational granting of permits for utility structures and the application of the “public interest” concept. Under the above legislation, we will simplify the land-use planning process, as it is undignified when a land-use plan takes 5-10 years to draw up and when changes to a land-use plan require two or three years. This is crucial if we are going to speed up construction preparations, especially in metropolitan areas.
- I trust our mayors – we want to push for them to have greater powers and responsibilities. They are the ones who should know best what the priorities are in their towns and municipalities, and they must wield the power to act on this knowledge.
- We will also increase the financing of municipal budgets. In fact, this is already happening. We have raised the budgetary allocation of tax, and municipalities’ share in the VAT levied is going up. We are keen to continue along this path. As a result, next year alone as much as CZK 26 billion more than in 2017 will flow into municipalities. Overall, the rise in funding for municipalities between 2013 and 2018 will be more than CZK 65 billion.
- That is not to say that we want to keep announcing more and more subsidy schemes and projects in which money can be “frittered away”. Rather, we want to allocate this cash purposefully to municipalities via the State Investment Fund, channelling it into their key projects so that new and useful infrastructure, sports grounds and nurseries are built, pavements are repaired, etc.
- We will promote rural and suburban development, which is contingent on the development of appropriate forms of business and the availability of public services. On average, assistance for one entrepreneur will support five other people in the region.
- We advocate the efficient and sustainable development of smart technologies that will serve people, not the other way round. The Smart Cities concept is not limited to smart benches, but also includes smoothly running transport networks, efficient residential areas and transparent municipal administration.
- We will continue to pay special attention to rental housing, social housing, and housing for seniors. We need to spiral on housing construction in order to close the gap between planned and actual capital construction. Property prices can only be brought back down to acceptable and accessible levels if the rate of construction picks up. Municipalities must have their own housing stock so that they can guide their development. All housing policy issues, including insulation investments, will be concentrated in one place.

10. EXTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY

Safeguarding the country and protecting the lives and property of citizens is a fundamental objective of

any responsible policy. There has been a radical change in the security situation. We are exposed to potential threats requiring us to be prepared as best we can. As we prioritise protection of the national identity, we need a modern, well-trained and well-equipped army.

- The mainstay of our defence lies in our membership of the North Atlantic Alliance. We must be a dependable partner for our allies. We can only be viewed as reliable by credibly creating our own defence capacities.
- We will meet the NATO commitment of spending 2% of GDP on defence. We won't manage it immediately, but this is something we can gradually master by 2024. This is money invested in our army, enabling us to modernise it and recruit new soldiers.
- We will champion an initiative for NATO to actively defend European borders as this area of defence is currently completely subpar. If non-European NATO members oppose this idea, we will push for a special agreement among European members on the active protection of EU borders. It is unacceptable for Europe to be the only continent where illegal migration has open borders.
- NATO, EU and UN missions will continue to be important for us. Migration can be reduced or even halted entirely by active help in crisis areas (Mali, Iraq, Sinai). Missions also contribute to the army's professional growth. This is vivid proof that we have high-calibre soldiers.
- Since we need to build up robust armed forces capable of delivering territorial defence, we must quickly supplement our existing land brigades' soldiers and equipment and start working on the establishment of a third Brigade. We need to increase the combat capacity of our ground forces, maintain the current high pace of recruitment, and implement the necessary armament projects.
- The emphasis on ground forces does not diminish the importance of air forces. The acquisition of the Gripens was clearly a step in the right direction. This is why we renewed the contract in 2014. This gives us the wherewithal to guard our own airspace and offer the same capacity to Iceland and the Baltics within the Alliance framework.
- We will run with the concept of modernising and developing a multipurpose helicopter squadron for the transportation of people and materials, the provision of an emergency medical service, and crisis management, including combat deployment.
- Cyber attacks as a form of destabilisation or aggression are a reality. This is a new security domain that it would be irresponsible to turn a blind eye to. Within our armed forces, then, we are paving the way for efficient cyber defence. We are collaborating with the most advanced foreign partners.
- Measured per capita, we have one of the smallest armies in Europe. As such, the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic should be aiming for peacetime numbers of 30,000 to 35,000 men and women. We need to push up the number of active reservists to 5,000. In 2016, we easily beat our recruitment target. In the coming years, we are keen to maintain this upward trend.
- There are whisperings in society that it would be a good idea to reintroduce military conscription, as we have witnessed, for example, in Sweden. We don't think we need to go down that road at the moment. Having said that, we do want to mobilise citizens and give them the opportunity to contribute to the defence of their country. This is why, in addition to the active reserve, we have created a platform in the Defence Act for the establishment of voluntary reservists. All citizens who pass medical and physical tests can go on training for several weeks and learn basic defence skills.
- In response to the contentious Brussels directive restricting the possession of firearms by private individuals, the Ministry of Defence is preparing a law to cope with this limitation. This bill, on defence societies, is already at the stage of interministerial consultation. In formulating this piece of legislation, we would like to draw on the Czech national tradition of societies and have another means of engaging citizens in the defence of their country.
- Talking of an efficient army, we must invest in its modernisation. Acquisitions are a complex and costly process. We all remember the scandals and affairs accompanying procurement at the Ministry of Defence in the period prior to 2014. We want to stick to a path where the Czech arms industry can make supplies wherever this is possible and beneficial to the state. We are fostering a partnership with the Czech arms industry that is based on mutual trust and mutual benefit.
- When it comes to economic management, we will introduce resource management controlling methods. We will rigorously apply the rule of effectiveness, efficiency and economy in decision-making processes.
- In previous parliamentary terms, there was no budgetary or staffing certainty at the Ministry of Defence, and the army had no new projects prepared. We had to address the biggest

deficiencies in soldiers' basic equipment and armaments, servicing, etc. Now we need to focus on the major projects that we are preparing in earnest. In the years to come, this will result in a host of significant investments: the acquisition of industry-leading mobile radars, multipurpose helicopters, NATO cannons, more Pandurs, Titus armoured vehicles, the infantry combat vehicle project (BVP II), air defence components, etc.

- The army's reputation among the population continues to grow. It now has a record high 73% approval rating. We will continue to build bridges between army and civilian activities, actively report on army operations, and double down on the army's impact at schools. We will restore civil defence drills at primary and secondary schools.
- We will continue to provide more intensive care for our veterans. We will improve the quality of medical services provided to our citizens in three military hospitals.
- We will provide all-round support for our athletes at Dukla Prague.

11. THE INTERIOR AND THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY

The Czech Republic is the sixth safest country in the world. One of the state's top priorities is to ensure that this remains the case, despite the unsettled security situation around us. In our response to new risks, we will be resolute, but not hysterical; effective, but not sensational. The secret services must be at the forefront in averting terrorist risks.

- We will require the secret services to focus squarely on terrorism – entailing the recruitment of extra staff who are linguistically proficient and specialists in other areas, technical equipment, and the effective sharing of information between these services and the police.
- We will cut down on red tape and the administrative burden shouldered by police officers. Police officers should be acting on their motto, “to help and protect”, i.e. we want them to be keeping order and catching criminals on the ground, not filling in bumf at a desk. The paperwork required in response to pickpocketing or a stolen car must not last the two hours we are used to today, but should be reduced to five minutes. Victims must be able to report such crimes by phone or email.
- We will inexorably combat all forms of left-wing, right-wing, religious or anti-religious extremism. Our country must remain a bastion of freedom and mutual respect among all individuals.
- We will push for the formation of ad hoc police units who are specifically trained for the common defence of the Schengen area against illegal migration and who will work, where necessary, with the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic to engage fully in the defence of our state borders.
- We will require independent auditing of all intelligence services and their mutual coordination.
- We will reform the General Inspectorate of Security Forces so that it protects citizens against police excesses and is not a platform to cover police officers and bully those who are troublesome or inconvenient.
- We will reinforce the role of the former districts, now area units. We will back the establishment of new municipal police departments.
- We will incorporate municipal police officers into the integrated rescue system so that they can channel their efforts more into protecting and ensuring the safety of citizens than into collecting parking fines.
- We will financially support a crime prevention scheme, in particular by upscaling the use of CCTV systems in crime hotspots and by tackling drug addiction.
- We will advocate an increase in the Fire and Rescue Service's operating and capital budget by as much as 100%, raising it from the current CZK 1.3 billion to approximately CZK 2.5 billion, in order to improve working conditions and facilities. We will introduce a risk allowance, which will be uniform throughout the country regardless of workload (the same as that enjoyed by the Police of the Czech Republic), and a meal allowance for those on 24-hour shifts.
- We will increase the number of firefighters in the field, while scaling down the administrative management and security units.
- We will promote voluntary fire brigades. The current financing system here is woefully inadequate, with just CZK 310 million allocated for 2018. According to government documentation, subsidies will be used to acquire 31 new fire engines. However, that means just 2% of obsolete technology (which in many cases is more than 30 years old) will be replaced, equal to 20% every 10 years. At this rate, the situation will not improve, as we are being told, but will actually get worse.

- Voluntary firefighters are often unappreciated. In small towns and municipalities, they are not just a guarantee of fire safety, but also play a cultural and educational role, actively contributing to the organisation of cultural events in the municipality and, thanks to their hands-on youth work, helping to shape opinions and skills among children and young people.
- We will table an amendment to subsidy rules so that subsidies which can be used for voluntary fire brigades are also available to smaller municipalities included in the integrated rescue system. One possible solution could be a fire equipment replacement fund, enabling municipalities to draw, for example, on fixed-term interest loans in addition to their specific subsidies.
- We will set up a budget heading for rescue workers from hydraulic structures identical to that in place for the Mountain Rescue Service. We view both of these services as part and parcel of the integrated rescue system and they both need clear funding rules.
- We are in favour of quickly shutting down asylum processes where it is clear that they are being abused. The state must have an effective means of terminating permanent residence or revoking visas and even, where appropriate, of terminating the international protection of anyone abusing these privileges to commit crime.
- We will revise the Civil Service Act, mainly to cut red tape when recruiting young educated and motivated workers, and reassess the civil service system, in particular in view of its administrative demands and the rigidity of the entire architecture.
- We will make sure that Czech Post does not cut its number of branches, and that it continues to make its services available even in smaller municipalities, for example via the Post Office Partner system. The opening times of Czech Post branches are also important and should reflect people's daily routines.

12. JUSTICE

The law and courts are not here lawyers, but for citizens. That is not to say that laypersons must understand all laws. In fact, the opposite, i.e. they do not need to understand them. Those who lead upstanding, decent lives necessarily have the law on their side without having to study it. And if they suffer any wrongdoing, they must be sure of finding support before a court.

- Everyone must repay their debts. But it is not fair to condemn anyone to lifelong poverty and hiding from bailiffs simply because their debts have spiralled out of control. There must be a way out of the debt trap. This is why we will extend debt-relief opportunities to all those who honestly intend to face up to their situation.
- We will introduce clear rules on the selection of judges and administration of the courts by amending the law on courts and judges.
- We will adopt new legislation to bring order among experts so that, once again, we will be able to rely on the stamp of an expert.
- We will stop people from relapsing into crime by promoting alternative punishments and continuing prison reform, including the construction of modern new prisons.
- We will arrange for the implementation of relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Justice and provide related assistance to other ministries.
- As this is the ministry that will be taking over the human rights and equal opportunities agenda, we will arrange for the establishment of an antidiscrimination law – an effective means of preventing and combating discriminatory practices and reinforcing the powers of those suffering directly or indirectly from discrimination.
- We will computerise judicial proceedings. This will make them faster, cheaper and less distressing for users.
- We will be judicious when it comes to making legislative changes, as the stability of legislation is crucial for the functioning of the law.

13. CONSUMER PROTECTION

Although quite a lot has been done for consumers in recent years, including the Consumer Credit Act and greater protection from “junk”, consumer protection is a priority theme for us. We are not targeting vacuous regulation, more red tape for retailers (which they only pass on to the consumer anyway), or a

state protectionist policy. On the contrary, we want to establish conditions balancing consumers' position in relation to retailers and placing Czech consumers on a par with those in Western Europe.

Consumer awareness and information

Consumers must know their rights. To achieve this, we need clear and comprehensible legislation that consumers do not have to read with a lawyer or financial adviser in order to understand. We will push for a consumer code that spells out stridently and transparently the rights and obligations of consumers and businesses. If we make a law for the people, we must also make sure that the people can get hold of it.

- We will publish interpretations of laws and provisions relating to the rights of consumers, who need a readily understandable and concise interpretation of laws available to them and within their reach.
- We will set up a database of anonymised judicial rulings in consumer protection disputes. This will include a working search feature to look up disputes by the amount of damage, the field concerned, the type of service provided, success for consumers or vendors, and region, always by reference to cases that have been closed.
- We will propagate financial literacy and issue aids for consumers – leaflets, tables, publications containing transparent and clear information on consumer rights, e.g. a guide to claims, a guide to withdrawing from a contract, a database and overview of experts, etc.
- We will channel a lot of support into educational events and raising consumers' awareness of their rights and how to exercise them. In this respect, we will hold public debates and use online tools.
- We will promote the activities of consumer organisations so that they are able to perform their tasks better and more intensively when it comes to educating consumers and representing their interests in court and elsewhere.
- We will improve the standing of Czech consumers – within the EU, we will try to force food manufacturers to make and supply food of the same quality in all countries if they are using uniform labelling for such foods. This campaign will also include ongoing attempts to raise consumer awareness of food ingredients, as well as greater support for independent comparisons and tests, including the readily available presentation of their results.

Alternative dispute resolution

Prompt, cheap and effective remedies need to be found to disputes. It is not always necessary to go straight to court. In fact, the opposite is true. Hence we will steadfastly espouse:

- The broader application of alternatives in the handling of consumer disputes, currently offered by several institutions – the Czech Trade Inspection Authority, the Energy Regulatory Office, the Czech Telecommunication Office and the Financial Arbitrator. This dispute resolution method is faster, cheaper and more efficient than the alternative of judicial proceedings.
- The consolidation of consumers' legal certainty and the predictability of rulings – the non-reviewability of extra-judicial decisions. If cases are to be heard out of court, the decisions taken by the competent institutions should be final. Judicial review should not be available as a means of investigating the merits of the case, which is what we have today. Rather, it should come into play only if there is a manifest breach of laws or the institution's procedural regulations.
- We will recruit more staff for regulatory authorities (in particular the Czech Telecommunication Office and the Energy Regulatory Office), employing those whose experience and tasks will consolidate the position of consumers.

Amendments to legislation

- We will enshrine the concept of collective actions. We will push for a law on collective actions. These days, malpractice by one retailer does not affect the rights of a single isolated consumer, but usually larger groups of people. Collective actions will make it possible for these groups to seek joint redress, which will save everyone money – the consumers and the state alike.
- We will curb distance and phone contracting. It is not necessarily a good idea to enter into a contract solely by phone. Unscrupulous businesses often abuse this type of consent, especially if consumers are vulnerable. An offer or expression of approval where the sum of money

involved is more than CZK 500 must subsequently be confirmed by another demonstrable means – in writing or by email.

- We will introduce the assertion of a statutory right in cases of doubt that will work in favour of the consumer. It will be entirely up to the business to prove its claims or a breach of obligations by the consumer. If the business fails to prove its case, it is accepted that the consumer is in the right.
- We will pave the way for easy changes and switches from one supplier to another. We will ensure that service providers can be changed more quickly and with less paperwork, using a single form.
- We will find a legislative solution to the issue of the consumer's express consent to an additional servers.
- We will protect consumers more effectively from cross-selling, i.e. the sale of extra – sometimes even unrelated – services.
- Clients will receive information on retailer malpractice. Besides fines, unscrupulous businesses should also be penalised more frequently by having rulings against them published. This will benefit consumers and serve as a good deterrent to other businesses.
- We will amend the Electronic Communications Act in order to give the Czech Telecommunication Office powers related to the protection of competition, much like in the United Kingdom.

14. LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

At certain stages in life, all citizens come into contact with the services provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The state spends almost half of the central government budget on these services. In 2018, they will account for almost CZK 600 billion. This is money that someone has had to work for and hand over to the state. With this in mind, not a penny can be used for a purpose other than that for which it has been earmarked.

Old age and distressing situations must not scourge citizens. The state must help, but it must not allow its helping hand to become a tentacle gripping people in a passive dependent hug. Self-assured citizens need assistance in situations that are beyond their control, not in situations that they can prepare for and, as far as possible, resolve by contributing their own funds.

We will promote the transparency and predictability of pension growth. This will also include disability pensions.

- We expect pensions to be regularly index-linked to consumer basket prices and increases in the average wage.
- We will not allow resources that have been collected in pension contributions to be used for another purpose. We will not allow the formula for index linking pensions to be altered to the detriment of pensioners, including beneficiaries of disability pensions.
- We will champion measures that prevent the pensions of people who have cared for children or other dependent family members from being unduly low. In pension calculations, time spent providing care will not only be included as time worked, but will also be financially advantageous (we will apply the notion that these insured persons had a basis of assessment at an amount prescribed by law).

We will propose an increase in the basic assessment of pensions.

- A pension is composed of a basic assessment and a percentage-based assessment. The basic assessment is the same for everyone. It is 9% of the average wage used for pension purposes and stands at CZK 2,550 in 2017. In the index-linking process, it is increased by the same amount for everyone.
- For example, if the basic assessment were to be increased to 10% of the average wage in 2017, pensioners' monthly income would grow by CZK 273, i.e. everyone would receive this same amount extra.
- According to current estimates, the level of the average wage in 2018 would result in an extra approximately CZK 295 per month for every pensioner as a result of statutory index-linking; the increase in 2020 would be approximately CZK 324.

- All further index-linking would even up the basic assessment by the same amount for everyone so that, in all cases, it is 10% of the growing average wage.
- We will push for the opportunity for people working in demanding professions to retire earlier. Their employer will pay contributions to a special pension, and employees will be able to decide whether to take that pension before ordinary retirement or at a later date, parallel to the ordinary pension.
- We will promote the guarantee of an automatic increase in pensions by CZK 1,000 when pensioners reach the age of 85. As things stand, pensions are raised by CZK 2,000 per month when pensioners reach the age of 100.
- We will try to move forward with the long-shelved reform of the pension system based on the following principles:
 - the preservation of existing entitlements;
 - the principle of looking ahead as a matter of principle;
 - guarantees of a basic state pension for everyone who has paid income tax in the country for the statutory period. The amount of a pension will not depend on the contributions made, and will be automatically altered in connection with a statutory statistical indicator;
 - The supplementation of the basic pension with a “merit-based” part that will depend on how long someone has paid contributions and how much they have paid. Any period of childcare or care for another dependent family member will be given special treatment in the calculation;
 - the administration of pension system income and expenditure will be kept separate from the central government budget via a social insurance company;
 - the possibility of drawing on other state-backed forms of security in old age, depending on the citizen’s discretion and resources. Working-age people will be motivated in this respect by reductions in the tax burden and the level of other contributions they are required to pay.
- We will advocate improved living conditions for seniors. We will promote their leisure activities and lifelong learning. We will push for greater legal protection and the restoration of reverence and respect for the elderly. Employment services will include active work with people who are approaching retirement. Retirement must not be the only way of tackling labour market problems. Everyone must have the opportunity to switch professions in good time, to leverage their lifelong knowledge and experience, and to do work that they enjoy and that is matched to their capabilities and possibilities.

Another of our top priorities is to deliver a high-quality, safe and accessible system of social services.

- The state must guarantee the provision of social services with the necessary capacity and quality so that people in need can draw on the use of such services without undue delay or bureaucratic obstructions.
- Many of the services provided are fragmented – long-term care is provided in healthcare or social facilities with unclear rules on their financing under both the health and the social budget.
- We will spell out how the actual need for social services will be determined according to clear rules and availability factors. Networking must be methodically managed by the state to ensure uniformity. However, municipalities must have greater competence so that they are able to influence the capacity of social services.
- We want people to be able to live in their home environment, enlisting the help of family members, for as long as possible. In this respect, we will promote sufficient capacity for field and outpatient services. In response to the gradually rising demand for special services, we will encourage the development of specialised centres focusing on clients with psychiatric diagnoses, such as Alzheimer centres, autism centres, sheltered housing, special-regime houses, and centres providing hospice and palliative care. Through the range of services on offer, we will try to engage disabled persons in ordinary life as much as possible.
- We will precisely define the conditions and standards applicable to the individual services provided.
- Standards will enable us to manage social service financing efficiently.
- We will set rules to cover the cost of nursing provided to clients in social service facilities.
- Long-term-care has both medical and social aspects. The social and healthcare departments must come to terms with this and agree on clear co-financing rules. Some of the resources saved by the transformation of expensive acute beds may be transferred to create capacity for after-care beds.

- We will put a stop to the yawning gaps in the amounts and system of remuneration for workers in the health sector and social services sector.
- We will strive to radically improve the conditions of social-sector workers, who have long been neglected, and we will increase their pay to at least 150% of the current level by the end of the parliamentary term in 2021.
- We will try to improve the status of carers.
- We will reorganise medical assessment services and the way that assessments are carried out.
- We will speed up the processing and introduce objective assessments of a client's situation in relation to their diagnosis.
- We will simplify the administration of benefits contingent on beneficiaries' state of health and speed up the granting of such benefits.
- We will arrange for the implementation of relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at all levels at which society functions within the framework of all ministries in order to safeguard a level playing field.

Municipalities are a natural social housing authority

- The state will provide financial assistance for investment activities. Municipalities will have freedom on how to secure housing and who to provide it to. Housing benefits must always respect typical local rental levels and will be capped. We will put an end to speculative hikes in rent for poor quality flats or hostels.

Anyone with a job will have a higher income than a healthy person who is a long-term beneficiary of social benefits

- Dependence on benefits must not become a lifestyle for healthy people who are capable of working. We must make it worth their while to work.
- Where justified, we will make benefits contingent on the fulfilment of conditions so that clients are motivated to find an active solution, e.g. by engaging in programmes offered by labour offices or in municipal programmes and projects, by ensuring that their children attend compulsory schooling, by accepting social work, etc., and if a beneficiary fails to comply with their obligations, payments will be stopped.
- We will clarify the conditions under which hardship benefits can be awarded.

Children do not belong to the state. Responsibility for bringing them up and caring for them rests with the parents

- We will work towards a situation where children grow up in a setting where it is normal to work and look for jobs. We will support such families with tax concessions and bonuses.
- Where the biological family fails, it is important to have available and good-quality foster care – the interests of the child must take centre stage. We will focus on enhancing preventive services for biological families, targeting a situation where, as a matter of priority, the children are able to remain with the family.
- We will support temporary and permanent foster care. We will promote greater incentives for those interested in adopting children and support the availability of social services for these replacement families.
- We will work towards a situation where, eventually, children will not have to be placed in “infant institutions”, as we are one of the last countries in the EU to follow this practice. We will transform those infant institutions that are necessary for children who are difficult to place in replacement families into family-type facilities for a temporary period, with a stress on individual care. Consequently, there will be no drop in the need for skilled workers.
- We will strive to preserve all forms of care for children who are at risk or abandoned, and to ensure balanced financing here.
- We will ensure that public childcare facilities are accessible. We will promote the use of preschool facilities even for low income households.
- We will review the work done by child protection agencies.

We will hand the Labour Office its original mission back

- The Office will be a labour market coordinator. It will actively communicate with employers, the tripartite, agencies, educational institutions and local government bodies with a view to finding employment for job-seekers as quickly as possible while meeting employers' requirements.
- The employment policy will give everyone who is offering or looking for work the chance of success. Financially supported instruments under the active employment policy will be used effectively, with a stress on helping vulnerable groups of job-seekers and candidates (disabled persons, school-leavers, people approaching retirement age, parents and carers).
- Undeclared work must not be a viable option for workers or employers. We will ratchet up and expand action to combat this.
- We will prepare the labour market for the future. Working with employers and educational institutions, we will introduce a system to predict developments and future changes in the employment structure and in the required preparations. We will place more of an emphasis on lifelong learning and retraining.
- We will deal with the problem of debt recovery. We will increase the minimum that cannot be seized so that it is worth getting a job, and people will be motivated to repay their debts and not to engage in undeclared work.
- We will increase the appeal of flexible working arrangements and unconventional forms of work so that people can reconcile their family and working lives in all stages of life. The state, as an employer, will lead by example.
- Remuneration for work must rise to a level that is consistent with the quality and amount of work done, even when compared with other countries. We will foster conditions for the development of sectors that will yield high-quality and well-paid jobs. We will set up a predictable system for increases in the minimum and guaranteed wage.

15. EDUCATION

We will work towards a modern, flexible education system that is able to spot the potential of pupils and students and develop it to the full. We will create conditions to enhance the prestige of the teaching profession. We will ensure that there is genuinely equal access to education, in part by rigorously implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Much like Tomáš Baťa in the 1930s, we too must take a punt on people, and on their expertise, creativity, entrepreneurial mindset and courage in conquering global markets. What we need to do is transform these Baťa principles for the modern age and adapt our education system accordingly.

Education is the key to the prosperity of the state and its citizens

- A long-term stable vision for the development of education should respect traditional values, but must also ensure compatibility with the evolution and needs of modern society.
- We will push for more money in education so that, by the end of the parliamentary term in 2021, teachers' salaries are at least 110% of their current level.
- By increasing managerial skills, we will support school management and the modification of conditions for the implementation of the education system so that these skills are in demand and duly appreciated.
- We will make the teaching profession more appealing. We will promote the prestige of teachers by improving their studies and creating new experiences, for example, in the form of specialist placements and internships at home and abroad.
- All school-leavers, no matter what type of school they attended, must genuinely be prepared to prosper in rapidly evolving sectors and on a changing labour market.

We will champion the necessary changes in preschool, primary and secondary education

- We want better managed schools in a better functioning system with better results for society.
- We will introduce programmes to identify the natural talents of all pupils and interlink them with a career guidance system. We will initiate changes in the approach and work of teachers, whose task is to develop talent and the unique potential of every pupil and student.
- We will interconnect the theoretical plane of education with practical observations. Schools must become an attractive environment for the furtherance of useful skills and competencies.

They should then be followed up by other activities and forms of extracurricular and unconventional education.

- Creeping globalisation is increasing the need for mutual understanding. We will promote the development of communication skills in English and other languages proportionate to the given stage of education.
- It all starts, though, with preschool education, which already develops the child's personality in the most natural way, i.e. learning through play. We will back the application of "learning through play" principles in follow-up education during the first level of primary school. We will not waste children's creativity and their yearning to get to know the world.

Changes in higher education

- We will work on increasing the international prestige of our higher-education institutions.
- We will consolidate the stability of financing for those higher-education institutions geared towards providing skilled specialists consistent with the state's strategic decisions.
- We will work with higher-education institutions to evaluate graduate qualities resonating with labour market requirements and their employability.
- We are keen to link higher-education studies closely with practical knowledge and experience, including greater cooperation between universities and scientists and students from abroad, and by motivating higher-education institutions and the employer community. On a regional level, we will support the third role of universities – their involvement in regional development.
- We will promote the possibility of studying via "Massive Open Online Courses", including an increase in the numbers of higher-education institutions and their faculties recognising credits from this type of study, which is provided by the world's finest universities.

Changes in lifelong learning

- The constant renewal, enhancement or change of qualifications and competences among the population is and will be essential to thrive on the rapidly changing labour market. The Czech Republic is one of the weakest advanced countries when it comes to the adult population's engagement in lifelong learning.
- We will push for syllabuses in all areas of study to be kept up-to-date so that they resonate with rapidly evolving knowledge in individual fields. We aim to give the graduates up-to-date knowledge so that they pass muster on the labour market.
- The range and content of accredited lifelong learning courses must be constantly revised to ensure that they are consistent with the latest social trends.

Specific targets for the 2017-2021 parliamentary term

1. Pupils and students who are better prepared for life and career.
2. The introduction of means to identify the natural talents of all pupils and interlink them with a career guidance system so that they make the right choice of study and profession.
3. The introduction of programmes customised to the development of extraordinarily talented individuals.
4. The establishment of expected education outputs in the form of competence models for graduates of the individual stages and types of schools, further to the modification of syllabuses to reflect labour market needs.
5. The introduction of the obligation to make active use of a foreign language during studies at all secondary schools and higher-education institutions, e.g. by studying certain subjects in English or going on study stays abroad.
6. Greater links between schools and employers while students are still studying, including the greater involvement of foreign and domestic experts in teaching at secondary schools and higher-education institutions.

Teachers with high social prestige

1. Accept demands for teachers to have a bigger pay packet. Not across the board, but in response to the conditions and requirements of the career system.
2. The introduction of domestic and foreign placements for teacher training graduates as a compulsory part of the initial stage of the career system.

3. Improvements in the quality of leadership at all levels of schools by enhancing the managerial skills of school management and by adjusting systemic conditions so that managerial skills are in demand and appreciated.
4. Minimisation of the administration of teaching. Arrangements for standard financial conditions for the provision of education, depending on the levels of the education system. The reining-in of the need to draw on subsidy schemes as a basic requirement for the existence of a school or school facility.

16. SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

In the Czech Republic, approximately CZK 90 billion is invested every year in science, research and innovation. Approximately a third of this comes from the state coffers. These are significant amounts of money, and yet Czech research lags far behind the results we expect of it. Naturally, one of our priorities is to rally behind research, science and innovation because this is in keeping with our plans for the development of industry and technology. Not only will we support excellent research teams, but we will also – and in particular – focus on research with results that will generate returns in the Czech economy.

We will concentrate on the following priorities in science, research and innovation:

- The genuine management of research, development and innovation. The state must take more care to ensure that the funds invested in research make a return. It must truly be in the driver's seat. Our financing will support the development of those disciplines where we can make an impact and that our economy and industry need. We can no longer accept academic institutions' demands for the financing of research without the option for us to define the objectives and inspect the results and the applicability thereof in a Czech environment.
- Research organisations need to be evaluated not according to league-based scoring, but on the basis of a clear evaluation of their benefits, carried out by a team of experts, preferably from abroad (peer-reviewing). As a result, evaluations of research results will reflect organisations' true contribution to society – in the current system of evaluations, applied research loses out.
- Capacity concentration. In the past 20 years, we have built up considerable research capacities. There is no need to build any more. What we need to do is interconnect and integrate what we already have. Eliminate any duplicity and promote cooperation. We will devise a state-guided and state-managed system of National Competence Centres. We must put an end to these small teams playing in their own little sandpits without any international comparison.
- New forms – veering towards a permanent innovative mindset. We need to seek out new innovative methodology to transfer results into practice, along with new forms of research financing, revolving credit, PPPs, etc. The current purely subsidy-based policy will not be enough and it is not sufficiently motivating for technology transfers. People need to be educated and guided towards permanent innovation, much as we have witnessed in Israel.

Other factors that are also very important:

- Set up an efficient start-up ecosystem accessible to everyone, promote the establishment of a system of open workshops to try out ideas.
- Smart technologies for society, regions and citizens.
- In the regions, establish a system of innovation centres for the local needs and requirements of SMEs.
- All the while, measure all of this against the world, be comparable with the world; we must not isolate ourselves.

We will make science more appealing to young people

- Foster a start-up mindset and culture throughout the nation, support the creation of open physical space where pupils, students and citizens can work on their ideas – workshops of the Make It! type in the US, or the open FabLabs that exist in Europe. These open workshops allow anyone to come along with an idea, try to glue or weld things together, and test ideas by using available instruments. We can do this in every town and in every school.
- In the education of students, we must engage them far more in practical experiments with real facilities and in research projects, and foster conditions for them to acquire professional

experience in industry.

- Introduce the latest IT technology into schools. Even unfashionable technical disciplines can become more appealing all of a sudden if tasks are handled online in cooperation with foreign students. Teams communicate via Facebook or Twitter. The results are immediately made tangible by 3D printers, etc. Young people want to work with new technologies. Then, they are so motivated that they cannot be held back. This does not require large-scale investments – for the most part, students already have their own basic equipment.

17. ENVIRONMENT

The Czech Republic can boast breathtaking nature. We are keen to take care of it responsibly so that we can pass it on to our children in a better condition than that in which we received it.

The environment is essential to the quality of our lives

- We will primarily support projects to improve the water management infrastructure (new water mains, sewer systems, wastewater treatment plants, etc.) as we seek to battle drought. We will also concentrate on improving air quality, waste management (recycling, sorting, energy recovery) and the removal of historical environmental hazards.
- We will back smaller municipalities' projects focusing on the building of hundreds of new sources of drinking water for their inhabitants, innovative ways of disposing of waste water (e.g. domestic wastewater treatment plants), and the removal of landfills and other environmental hazards that are in a state of disrepair.
- Our Earthworm project will promote measures to retain rainwater for citizens, so that drinking water can be replaced with rainwater wherever possible.
- We will financially support and significantly simplify the permit process for the renewal or construction of thousands of smaller water reservoirs in the landscape.
- We will ensure that citizens pay fair prices for their water and sewage services, and that they know who they are paying and why. We will introduce a single water regulator.
- We want to correct the monumental mistake that happened in the 1990s when the water management infrastructure was sold off and ownership was completely fragmented. We will support the gradual return of water management property into the hands of regions, municipalities and towns.
- We will speed up the project of boiler subsidies in order to replace up to 100,000 of the oldest domestic boilers fired by solid fuel by the end of 2019. If the amount allocated is exhausted, we will seek out further financial resources to continue this project both under and outside of the Operational Programme Environment.
- We will arrange for the implementation of specific programmes to improve air quality in all regions, and we will support projects for low-emission zones in towns.
- We will support at least another 60,000 projects to improve the energy performance of family houses, apartment buildings and public buildings under the New Green Savings programme.
- We will continue to reduce the overall volume of waste, especially waste that ends up in landfills. We will pass the new Waste Act, which has already been prepared, as quickly as possible. This will hand municipalities tools that will motivate their citizens better to cut down on waste and improve waste separation and recycling even further.
- We will expand the existing clean mobility programme. We will use subsidies to promote the purchase of electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and, where appropriate, CNG-propelled vehicles for regions, municipalities and the public. The target is to have 6,000 electric vehicles and 50,000 CNG vehicles running in the Czech Republic in 2020. At the same time, we will be contributing to the fastest possible expansion of charging and filling points across the Czech Republic.
- We will make national parks more open to considerate tourism, and at the same time we will protect wildlife in the most valuable sites more effectively.
- We will be steadfast in protecting the best-quality agricultural land, and will only allow it to be used for non-agricultural purposes if this is in the greatest public interest.

18. AGRICULTURE

Following the country's accession to the EU, Czech agriculture has reported profits only thanks to EU subsidies. The levels of agricultural production here are collapsing in most important commodities, while output in the EU's original countries is rising several times over. For several years now, our country has not been self-sufficient in its agricultural produce. The drop in production in agriculture and downstream sectors has long been reducing employment potential. Its share in the central government budget's revenue is fading. The countryside continues to be depopulated and, when the people leave, they take respect for traditions and national pride with them. This is something we need to renew.

If we are not self-sufficient in the production of staple foods, there is a very high security risk to the whole nation. The government must provide much greater support than it does at present to agriculture and downstream sectors. We need to return life to the countryside, bring up a young generation and resolutely foster conditions for rural life and work. We need to restore the prestige and communities of farmers.

- Food is a strategic resource. If we are not self-sufficient in the production of staple foods, there is a very high security risk, especially for the future of the coming generations.
- We aim to achieve complete self-sufficiency in the production of the broadest possible range of staple foods and to ensure that our citizens have plenty of high-quality, safe food.
- We will push for equitable access to subsidies for businesses of various sizes.
- We will increase payments for livestock production and sensitive plant commodities, such as fruit, vegetables, hops, potatoes, and sugar beet, to the detriment of area payments.
- Increased production of fruit, vegetables and other sensitive commodities will have also have a positive impact on the environment and on the health of our citizens. Imports of food from places hundreds of kilometres away via endless streams of lorries has a very adverse effect on the environment.
- We will do all we can in the EU to make sure that conditions are equal in terms of national and regional subsidies for farmers and food producers. We are in a single market without customs barriers, and it is not possible for most of our Western competitors within the EU to enjoy much larger national subsidies than our own farmers and food producers.
- We will also support immediate and direct investments to improve the quality of soil, the planting of windbreaks, and the implementation of measures to tackle water erosion, to retain water in the landscape, and to optimise the network of country lanes and special-purpose roads.
- By promoting livestock farming, we will increase the levels of organic matter in the soil, which will make it much more capable of attracting and capturing water.
- We will promote the establishment of irrigation systems and purposefully link this with support for the building of sources of irrigation water. As a matter of priority, we will promote irrigation systems for the irrigation of sensitive commodities.
- We will actively exert pressure with a view to negotiating and championing the protection of the food market in the EU in order to ensure food security.
- We will organise systemic periodic inspections of imports of food with the participation of customs officials, veterinarians and the police in order to prevent imports of poor-quality or defective food and to prevent tax evasion, which not only damages the central government budget, but also harms upstanding farmers and producers.
- We support education relating to generally beneficial activities (hunting, organised fishing, beekeeping, etc.) and the further organisation of leisure activities for young people and adults aimed at improving the environment, nature, and interpersonal relations.
- We will support hunting as a club activity that maintains and develops hunting customs and traditions.

19. HEALTH CARE

We want health care to be a transparent and efficient public service in which a major role is played by patients, who will be provided with care in the health system in such a way that they are treated correctly and effectively, in good time, without unnecessary transfers between the various providers, and without unnecessary duplication or the repetition of the same examinations.

However, these days healthcare facilities are not systematically motivated to provide efficient care or

be responsive to patients. The quality of care is not measured. In some places it is top-notch, but elsewhere is obviously inadequate. Consequently, it is something of a lottery for citizens when they need health care. In certain cases, it is not even clear what is covered by public health insurance and for what the healthcare facilities can demand extra charges. Not even the health insurance companies play a sufficient role in selecting better quality and more efficient providers, in interconnecting care, and in promoting prevention.

We aim to motivate the various parties to be more responsible for their own health, quality and efficiency. The health sector needs new impetus, which will place citizens in the role of responsible customers taking care of their health, with an emphasis on that their competence in the decision-making process, including health professionals' respect for their informed choices, while care providers will be cast as rivals competing in the quality, price, availability and efficiency of treatment, health insurance companies will be in a position where they offer new products with much greater accountability for the quality of the services on offer, in which respect efficiency will be on a virtually optimal level, and the state will play the strict supervisor, rule-maker and evaluator of the system. •

- We will not privatise the health sector. We remain opposed to the blanket privatisation of hospitals. That is not to say that we would be against private healthcare facilities. It is just that state hospitals must remain in the hands of the state. We would like to make further investments in their modernisation, and in the reconstruction of old hospital buildings and in the construction of new ones, in order to enhance the quality of health care and cut down on operating costs.
- We will deliver decent health care to everyone within the scope of public health insurance. At the same time, all citizens need to know what care this coverage entitles them to.
- We would like to see the fair remuneration of staff working in the health sector and healthcare facilities, reflecting the quality and results of the care provided.
- If we have fair remuneration, better quality and well-organised postgraduate training, an all-round motivating system, and responsive communication, we will reduce the undesirable drain of young health professionals in particular to other countries and we will keep the Czech health sector internationally competitive.
- We will ensure that citizens play an important role in this solidarity-based health system.
- We will enhance the role played by general practitioners in patient care.
- We will strive to prevent risky behaviour. We will reward those citizens who take care of their health and who attend preventive examinations with a view to reducing the occurrence of diseases of affluence.
- We will push for the obligation to disclose information on the health care provided by individual healthcare facilities, including quality indicators, so that it is easier for citizens to choose high-quality health services.
- We will support the cultivation of the current coverage mechanisms that so that the money follows the patient more. Insurance companies should pay care providers for specific care, not just for the very existence of a facility or the performance of incomplete procedures.
- We are categorically in favour of computerising the health sector. We want to give patients online access to their medical records and to introduce the safe sharing of information between providers. We will supplement the operation of electronic prescriptions with a system providing warnings against inappropriate combinations of prescribed drugs.
- We are keen to reinforce the role of outpatient treatment and to expand the use of single-day invasive procedures so that patients do not have to be hospitalised unnecessarily.
- It will be a priority for us to ensure sufficient numbers of Czech staff in healthcare facilities. The work done by healthcare professionals needs to be properly rewarded.
- We will arrange for universally accessible emergency services. We will create a network of pharmacies offering an emergency service that are accessible from the perspective of both time and place. On-call services and the emergency medical service must not be abused.
- We will focus on making dentists accessible and on dental care. Dental care will be available to children regardless of their parents' economic situation.
- We will prepare an effective draft solution for the financing of the care of those patients on the social sector/health sector borderline – it is one and the same patient, whichever of the systems they are in.
- We will provide financial support, in particular, for home care programmes, including mobile hospice care. We will find a solution that will enable even those patients who are unable to care for themselves to receive treatment at home.

- We plan to reform psychiatric care and bring it closer to the mentally ill.
- We will improve the coordination of care for chronically ill patients.
- It would make sense to have more health insurance companies only if they are capable of healthy competition. We want health insurance companies that think more about their clients than about how not to provide particular care in order to save money. The state must run effective checks on the activities of health insurance companies.
- All hospitals and health insurance companies will be required to disclose information on their management, including all contracts and invoices. Citizens must have an insight into every penny spent in the health sector.
- We will introduce central procurement in the health sector. The money we save will be invested in the development of the health sector and in improving the financial remuneration of doctors, nurses and other staff in the sector.
- We will introduce classic management procedures in the management of hospitals falling under the Ministry of Health so that it is possible to inspect and compare their management.
- We will improve the cooperation between the Ministry of Health and regions, towns and municipalities that own hospitals. We will harmonise the investments provided by the various founders.
- We will improve state institutions' cooperation with insurance companies, and with professional, trade-union and patient organisations.

20. CULTURE

We are in contact with the arts virtually at every turn. Art is indispensable to our lives and forms a basis for our emotional and aesthetic perception of the world, while carrying enormous educational potential. It is also an ever growing economic force, driven by the positive externalities of cultural activities and the expanding sphere of creative industries whose existence is built on art and who now outperform the traditional industries. This means that investments in art and culture are by no means another way of pouring public money into a bottomless pit. Rather, this is efficient investment by the state as a good steward.

The Ministry of Culture must take care of culture throughout the country. It cannot be just a manager of state organisations partly funded from the public purse and churches. With this in mind, we propose transferring the church funding agenda to the Ministry of Finance. On the other hand, we are also proposing that the Ministry of Culture encompass tourism, as this has much in common with culture. It is because of culture and monuments that most of the tourists make their way here.

- One of our priorities is the adoption of the Public Cultural Institutions Act. This legislation should be depoliticise the management of organisations in culture and make it possible for multiple public administration entities to set up public cultural institutions together. This will secure the stable and multi-source financing of culture and will adapt payroll policy to the requirements of cultural institutions. In connection with the adoption of this law, culture-related public administration reform will be completed. This will include the transformation of organisations partly funded from the public purse into public cultural institutions in 2019-2020.
- We view the amendment to the Copyright Act as another priority, in particular with a view to the development of new technologies and opportunities to present digitalised works to the general public – 2019.
- We will scrap the absolute monopoly of copyright associations and their authorisation to collect royalties even on behalf of artists who have not given them permission to do so. In addition, we will do away with the obligation to notify cultural events.
- By increasing the budgets of cultural institutions, we will make it possible to introduce discount schemes for young people, seniors, the socially excluded and disabled, and to introduce free admission to selected permanent exhibitions at state-controlled museums and galleries. At the same time, within this ministry we will strive to implement and comply with relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- By amending relevant legislation, we will promote the digitalisation of intangible cultural heritage, as well as stocks of books and films, and resolve the copyright issue. Digitalisation drawing on new technologies is another way of making art accessible to the general public.

Financing of culture

- To ensure that the development of culture is of a high quality, at least 1.5% of central government budget expenditure needs to start being channelled into the culture heading (this is not including film-making incentives and the costs of church administration) by 2021.
- We will propose a functioning model of multi-source financing for public cultural institutions at all levels of public administration as of 2019, and the multiannual financing of grant schemes run by the Ministry of Culture (by means of a change in budgetary rules) starting in 2020-2021 at the latest. In order to manage the grant policy efficiently, we will introduce a system for the periodical evaluation and updating of programmes, grants and policies of the Ministry of Culture, and we will make them more binding. We will evaluate the efficiency of programmes to support individual fields of art on an ongoing basis, and we will innovate the system of grant support at the Ministry of Culture.
- We will propose a seven-year programme of investment aid and co-financing for the modernisation of infrastructure, such as concert halls, modern libraries, exhibition halls, etc., in order to provide public cultural services throughout the Czech Republic. Sadly, with the odd exception this infrastructure was built in previous centuries and falls short of contemporary standards.
- We will strive to increase the pay of cultural-sector employees, reflecting the social significance of the work they do. As in the health sector and education, we would like to increase the pay of employees in culture to at least 150% of the current level by the end of the parliamentary term in 2021.
- In particular, we will boost programmes intended specifically to support regional culture – the promotion of theatres, orchestras, libraries, galleries, etc.
- One of our key priorities is to resolve the financing of the State Culture Fund. Starting in 2019, we will find a method for the long-term and sustainable financing of this fund in the form of grant schemes.
- We will reinforce the private support of culture by means of tax concessions.

Other priorities in culture

- We will propose a system of purpose-built support for the education of children, young people and members of vulnerable social groups via cultural institutions by 2020. At the same time, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, we will place more of a stress on teaching cultural skills and knowledge about culture and cultural heritage in schools and facilities offering extracurricular education.
- We will support the establishment of an accredited system of lifelong learning for employees in culture, and the establishment of the study programme “Educational Programme Instructor” in all areas of art.
- We will organise the training of artists and cultural workers, especially in the field of management. We will support programmes for the retraining of artists when their career comes to a close by introducing “second careers” for artists – after 2019.
- In key areas of culture, we will devise a system to support the creation of new contemporary artworks and we will increase allocations for existing programmes of creative and study scholarships – 2018.
- We will significantly increase support (not just financial) for the presentation of Czech culture abroad by means of programmes and cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by drawing on art for cultural diplomacy.
- We will improve the way international agreements are used to present high-quality art and support the mobility of young artists and the projects implemented by non-profit organisations.
- We will pay more attention to international relations on a bilateral level, within the Visegrad Four, and by engaging in international networks and projects (e.g. Creative Europe). We will collaborate with foreign cultural organisations and foundations (e.g. the Goethe Institute, the British Council, and Pro Helvetia) and with the cultural arms of embassies.
- Creative industries, as autonomous sectors, are one of the fastest developing areas of the economy. By supporting the production of art, we would like to make a positive impact on the development of these creative industries. We believe that the Ministry of Culture is competent to coordinate and manage the development of creative sectors in the Czech Republic. Working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of industry, we will devise a platform to promote

art education by the state and by the creative industries as key employers of artists from all artistic professions.

Cultural heritage and the link with tourism

- Ensure the long-term predictable – and thereby also efficient – financing of care for the preservation of cultural heritage, which is one of the fundamental elements of our identity and also plays an important role in the development of tourism.
- It is crucial fast to update the list of heritage conservation structures, making it clear what is a heritage conservation structure. The existing lists are not informative and complicate the efficient maintenance and reconstruction of such structures.
- We will draw up a list of priorities for the protection of monuments and areas in which to enhance the appeal of regions for tourism purposes. In response to these priorities, by 2020 we will devise programmes for the long-term and predictable financing and co-financing of the repairs and reconstruction of such structures.

21. TOURISM

Tourism is a vehicle for regional development with an impact on employment, the development of infrastructure and services, business opportunities, social integration, the protection of natural and cultural heritage, the stability of population numbers, etc. If we are to promote the development of tourism, we need to make massive investments in cultural heritage, transport infrastructure and transport links, which are a key part of the strategy for tourism development.

Vision:

- To make an active contribution to the growth of tourism in the Czech Republic, to support new projects in this area and to increase the value of the Czech Republic's brand throughout the world.
- To pave the way for the implementation of new tourism projects at the level of regions, towns and municipalities, and also in the private sector.
- To promote tourism not only in Prague but also – and in particular – in the regions. One of the problems today is that tourist centres such as Prague, Český Krumlov and Telč are overcrowded and strained, yet we have many other attractive tourist spots.
- To increase the brand value of the Czech Republic as an appealing place to live, go on holiday and do business. To motivate visitors to spend the night here, and hence to remain for more than one day. To achieve this, we need to have sufficiently sized infrastructure, services and well-maintained monuments.
- We want to elicit direct flight routes with other countries.
- We will simplify the system used to promote the Czech Republic abroad by merging CzechTourism, an agency currently under the Ministry of Regional Development, and the Czech Centres, organisations partly funded from the public purse that are handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the following aims:
 - to prevent duplicity and to optimise the network of agencies abroad – duplicated presence on foreign markets and similar activities – the promotion of Czech culture and sport;
 - to prevent the squandering of public budgets, to plough the savings back into marketing abroad.
- To boost the Czech brand – the Czech Republic's brand identity, which should be common to and obligatory for all product managers – export, investment, culture, tourism.
- To channel major support into traditional Czech spa resorts so that they are attractive not only for foreign tourists, but in particular for Czechs, for whom spa care should be readily available. Spa resorts are a key area directly employing around 15,000 people. It is estimated that a further 40,000 to 50,000 people work in downstream sectors. At the same time, spa resorts are a guarantee of the sustainability of heritage, a place of cultural activity with an international dimension, a source of investment in further development, and a major export commodity fostering a positive image of the Czech Republic as a whole.

22. SPORT

Sport in the Czech Republic is currently of marginal interest and the current state of affairs reflects this. This is why decent results by Czech athletes are all the more of a success. The main problem is that there is no clear financing or overall concept for sport.

Our primary aims are to incorporate sport into the central government budget as a separate item, to increase state spending on sport considerably, and to set rules so that the financing of sport is fully transparent.

We realise that basic physical education, or school sport, is in the competence of the Ministry of Sport. Nevertheless, the newly formed Agency for the Support and Management of Sport should provide a systemic solution to support for all other forms of sport, such as top-flight, high-performance or mass sport.

This is a systemic solution that should be supported by the creation and approval of a law on sport, followed by a medium-term Concept for the Support of the Development of Sport – draw up two-year action plans for the implementation, evaluation and inspection of tasks defined by the Concept for 2018-2022 and 2020-2021.

Our objectives in the support and development of sport:

- The support of school sports and activities involving the movement of young people;
- The training of trainers, their motivation and involvement at primary schools and leisure centres;
- The systematic training of talented children, the support of sports centres, youth centres, the national Olympic centres for sport that are now being considered, and regional sports centres;
- Increased support for priority sports (Olympic and team sports);
- Support of athletes representing the country;
- Support of sports for the disabled; our systemic solution for sport includes the implementation of the relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so that they have equal access;
- The creation of a proper register of athletes;
- Arrangements for the long-term financing of sport at all levels of proficiency;
- Clearly define the individual entities that are to receive subsidies, and the schemes under which financing is to be provided;
- Design and technical status surveys of sports infrastructure in the Czech Republic;
- The construction of multipurpose sports grounds in all larger municipalities, and the modernisation of existing sports grounds;
- The creation of conditions for public access to those sports grounds, especially school or university sports facilities;
- The modernisation of Olympic sports centres, such as those in Nymburk and Račice;
- The modernisation and optimisation of the use of existing major sports grounds, such as the giant ski jump in Harrachov;
- Support for the construction of projects now under preparation – a multipurpose hockey arena and football stadium in Brno (Za Lužánkami), Horácký Stadium in Jihlava, the Věra Čáslavská National Gymnastics Training Centre in Prague, the Martina Sáblíková speedskating complex in Nové Město, Moravia, the speedway stadium in Mariánské lázně, and other structures important for sports.

Although basic physical education is in the competence of the Ministry of Education, the new agency for the development and management of sport should offer a conceptual guarantee for general principles of physical education and activities involving the movement of young people.

- We will encourage a healthy lifestyle in syllabuses, especially at primary schools.
- We will devise a comprehensive motivation programme for children from a preschool age (including the handicapped) to teach them about versatile movement and the basics of a healthy lifestyle.
- From the 2018-2019 school year, we will work with sports associations to introduce a system picking up on organised sport activity for students who are making the switch from secondary schools to university. This will involve the establishment of “University Leagues”.

We will propose a system to finance the construction of sports infrastructure.

- We will map out the need to renovate old sports grounds and build new ones in keeping with the requirements of towns and municipalities, as well as sports clubs, Sokol societies, etc.
- On this basis, we will come up with an investment plan to promote construction at all levels of sports infrastructure. Not only sports grounds for the development of top-flight sport, but also pitches, sports facilities and workout centres for everyday sports activities involving all age categories.
- Smaller projects will be financed by the Ministry of Regional Development. Larger projects should be financed under the separate sports budget heading on a principle of 1-1-1 (one part municipal investment, one part regional investment, and one part state investment), which we are planning to increase considerably.

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