The head of state is the President of the Czech Republic, who, together with the Government, represents the executive branch of power. Legislative power is exercised by a bicameral Parliament, composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Czech Republic is a member of both the European Union and of NATO.

The Parliament of the Czech Republic

The Constitutional order of the Czech Republic is based on a parliamentary form of government in form of “federalized parliamentarism”. The Parliament itself may be defined as a body composed of representatives of the people, elected by universal suffrage in elections and empowered with the legislative power to enact laws as well as to amend the Constitution. As mentioned above, the Czech Parliament is composed of two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies (also called the first chamber or lower chamber), exercises certain powers which the Senate does not have. For example, the Government is accountable solely to the Chamber of Deputies, i.e. only the Chamber of Deputies votes on confidence or non-confidence in the Government. Only members of the Chamber of Deputies (called Deputies) have the power to ask members of the Government questions. Only the Chamber of Deputies approves the state budget for each year. Moreover, the Chamber of Deputies may even override a Senate veto of a bill or a proposed Senate amendment to a bill by an absolute majority of Deputies. In contrast, the Senate exercises important powers when the Chamber of Deputies has been dissolved. In such a case, the Senate may adopt so-called “legal measures” regarding matters which may not be postponed and which would otherwise necessitate the adoption of a law. The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have almost equal powers when it comes to the approval of amendments to the Constitution and when it comes to expressing consent with the ratification of international treaties. The President takes the oath at the joint meeting of both chambers.

The Mandate of a Deputy

The rights and obligations of a member of the Chamber of Deputies are referred to as the Mandate of a Deputy. The Mandate of a Deputy may be characterized as a free mandate, by which it is meant that a Deputy is bound only by his own conscience when voting on matters in the Chamber of Deputies. The Mandate of a Deputy exists from the moment a Deputy is elected to the Chamber of Deputies and ends at the end of the electoral term or upon the resignation or death of the Deputy. Each Deputy is required by the Constitution to take this oath of office: “I swear to observe the laws of the Czech Republic. I swear to uphold its Constitution and to the best of my belief. I swear to uphold its Constitution and when it comes to expressing consent with the ratification of international treaties. The President takes the oath at the joint meeting of both chambers.

The development of the Czech Constitutional Order

1848 – Declaration of the first constitution on the territory of what is today the Czech Republic
1861 – First elections are held to the Provincial diets according to a system of curias
1867 – Adoption of universal and equal suffrage for elections to the Parliament
1870 – Independence of the first Czechoslovak Republic
1920 – Approval of the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic
1939 – Establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (occupation by the German military)
1948 – The Communist Party comes to power in Czechoslovakia
1968 – The Prague spring (and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw-pact troops)
1969 – The Velvet revolutions (the end of the Communist regime)
1993 – Establishment of the Czech Republic
1999 – Establishment of the Constitutional Court

The President of the Czech Republic

Term of office
4 years
Number of terms
2

Electoral system
Proportional representation (d'Hondt method)

Number of electoral districts
14

Who may stand for election:
A citizen aged 21 years of age or older

The Chamber of Deputies

Number of Members
200

Term of office
4 years

Electoral system
Proportional representation (d'Hondt method)

Number of electoral districts
14

Who may stand for election:
A citizen aged 21 years of age or older

The Senate

Number of Members
81

Term of office
6 years

Electoral system
Majoritarian with two rounds of elections

Number of electoral districts
81

Who may stand for election:
A citizen aged 40 years of age or older

The Parliament of the Czech Republic

The President of the Czech Republic

The Chamber of Deputies

The Senate

The Constitutional Court

The Government

The Supreme Audit Office

The Parliament of the Czech Republic

The President

Regional Assemblies

Czech citizens

The Czech National Bank

The Chamber of Deputies

The Senate

Meeting hall of the Senate – the place of inauguration of the President of the Czech Republic
The The Rudolphinum – the seat of the Chamber of Deputies during the first Czechoslovak Republic (pre-WWII)

The National Assembly was reconvened at the end of the second world War. In October 1945, a unicameral national Assembly was convened which approved the Declaration of the President of the Republic, which had been issued prior to its constitution. In the first post-war elections in 1946, citizens were given only limited choice. Only non-right-wing political parties which had not, according to the views of the time, deceived themselves during the period of the war, were allowed to propose candidates to stand for election.

The revolution of modern parliament in the Czech lands:
The revolutionary year of 1848 brought political freedoms for some members of the public in the Czech lands. For the first time, some citizens were able to vote in elections and to determine who would represent them in the Provincial Diet and in the Empire Diet of the Austrian monarchy. These representative bodies became permanent institutions of the political system of the Habsburg monarchy at the beginning of the 1860s. Although the right to vote was not equal and was determined by the level of education, the number of members of society, this period is considered to be a time when modern political culture was born, when the public first witnessed electoral campaigns and the rivalry of political parties and a state when the press began to play an important role in the formation of democratic institutions.

The establishment of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Czechoslovakia:
The traditional provincial diet ceased to exist after the national revolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The newly formed Czechoslovak Republic (also called the First Republic) was a classical parliamentary democracy. In accordance with the Constitution of 1920, the Parliament was elected by the National Assembly, which was composed of two chambers – the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Elections were held on the basis of a proportional electoral system. The political situation in the Czech Republic was rather complicated, due to the many political parties which existed at the time and thus, many Governments were successively formed.

The Function of the Parliament:
Each parliament in a democratic state, including the Parliament of the Czech Republic, performs four main important functions in the constitutional system – the representative, legislative, control and creative functions.

The Manor Hall at Kroměříž – the meeting hall of the Empire Diet in 1848-1849

“Political decisions shall proceed from the will of the majority, expressed by free vote. Majority decisions shall respect protection of minorities.” (Article 6, Constitution)

The former Federal Assembly

The Rudolfinum – the seat of the Chamber of Deputies during the first Czechoslovak Republic (pre-WWII)