



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

SHAPING EUROPE FOR 20 YEARS



CZECHIA'S PATH TO EUROPE

In the past, for many the urge to return to democracy was then also understood as the return to a European community based on Western values. The slogan "Back to Europe" was the election motto of the Civic Forum in the first free elections following the Velvet Revolution.

January 17, 1996

The Czech government applied for EU membership.

December 13, 1997

The European Council decided to officially invite 11 candidate countries, including Czechia, to join the EU.

March 31, 1998

Commencement of accession negotiations with the EU
In April 1998, further negotiations on accession began in Brussels – the so-called "screening," aimed at aligning the legislation of candidate countries with European law.

December 12–13, 2002

Conclusion of accession negotiations with the EU
The pre-accession process with ten candidate countries, including Czechia, was concluded at the European Council meeting between December 12–13, 2002, in Copenhagen.

April 16, 2003

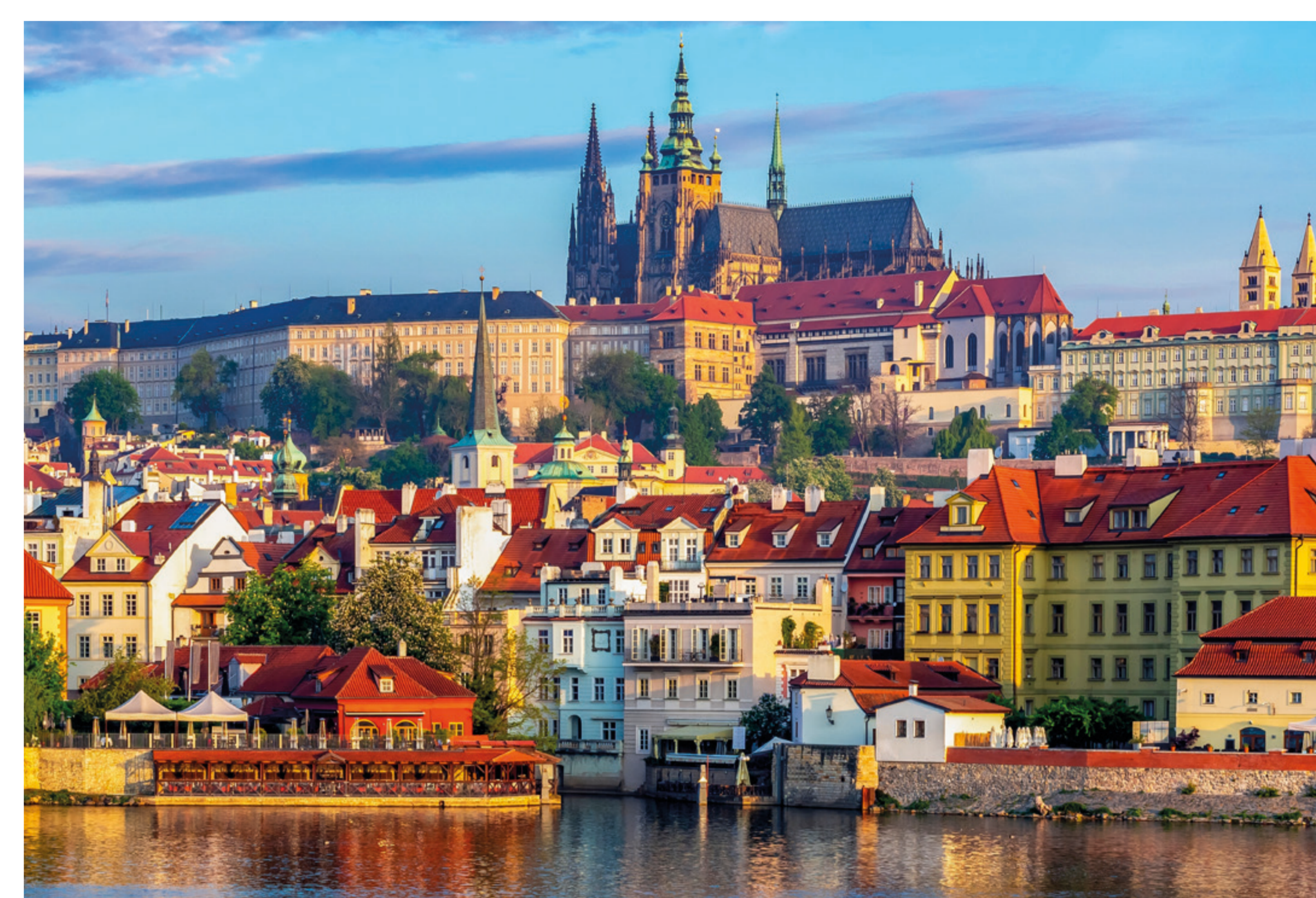
Signing of the Accession Treaty of Czechia to the EU in Athens

June 13–14, 2003

Referendum on the accession of Czechia to the EU
77.33% of voting citizens supported EU membership in the referendum on the accession of Czechia to the EU.

May 1, 2004

Accession of Czechia to the EU
Czechia, alongside with other countries across Central And Eastern Europe, became a member of the EU. The Union expanded to a community of 25 member states, and the number of official languages of the Union increased to twenty.





WHY THE EU?

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Following decades of historic conflict, Europe has now experienced the longest period of peace and stability in its history thanks to European integration. In recognition of its role in transforming most of Europe "from a continent of war to a continent of peace," the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

SHARING COMMON VALUES

Despite speaking different languages and having different traditions, Europeans share a common set of values. These include respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights.

CONNECTED TO THE WORLD

EU member states represent a third of all free countries in the world. We can travel, study, work, and live in any EU country. The Schengen area allows EU nationals and many non-EU nationals travel freely without border checks. We can travel for work, leisure, or shopping in EU countries using just our ID cards.

FREEDOM FOR ALL

The EU's enlargement has created the largest economic area in the world. Czechia is an export-oriented economy so access to the EU's internal market is crucial. At the same time, Czechia benefits from EU trade agreements with other countries.

GROWING ECONOMY

The EU and its member states together are the world's largest donor of development aid. Together, we help where needed!

PART OF THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD

SOLIDARITY AND AID TO THOSE IN NEED



THE EU IN OUR DAILY LIVES



The EU has removed barriers to free trade among its members. This means you can manufacture, sell, and buy goods anywhere in the EU. It also means consumers have a greater choice of products and lower prices.

You can travel, study, work, and live in any EU country.



As an EU citizen, you own your data. Organizations or companies cannot process your personal data without your consent, and you have the right to know what information they hold about you.



When purchasing goods or services anywhere in the Union, EU regulations protect you from unfair trading practices. Sellers must provide you with enough accurate information so that you can make an informed decision about your purchase.



THE EU IN OUR DAILY LIVES

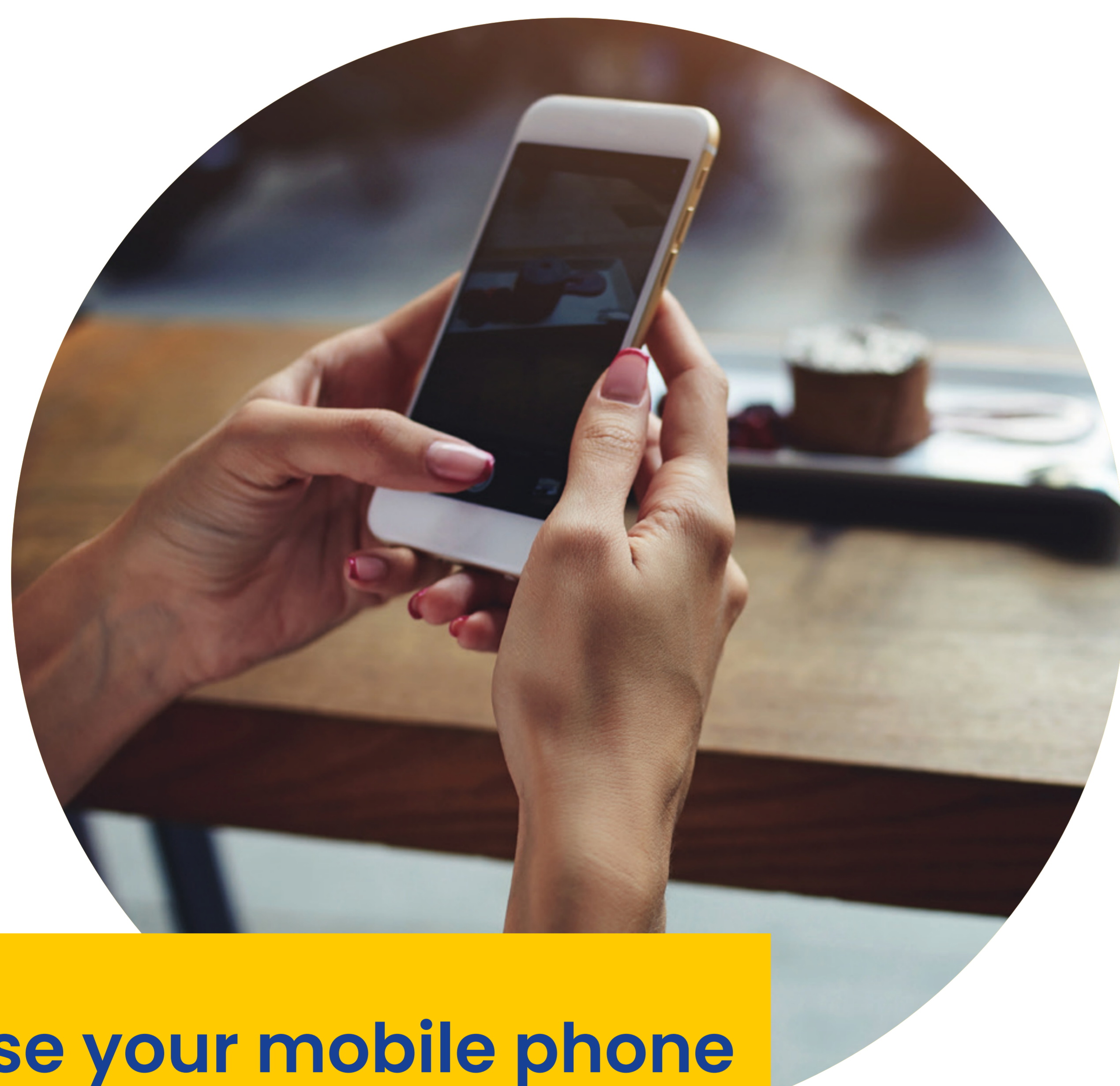
The Schengen Agreement abolished border controls between most EU countries. Now you can cross most borders within the EU without having to show a passport.



When travelling to another EU country, you may fall ill or have an accident. With the European Health Insurance Card, you are entitled to necessary and urgent healthcare, which will be paid for by your national health insurance.

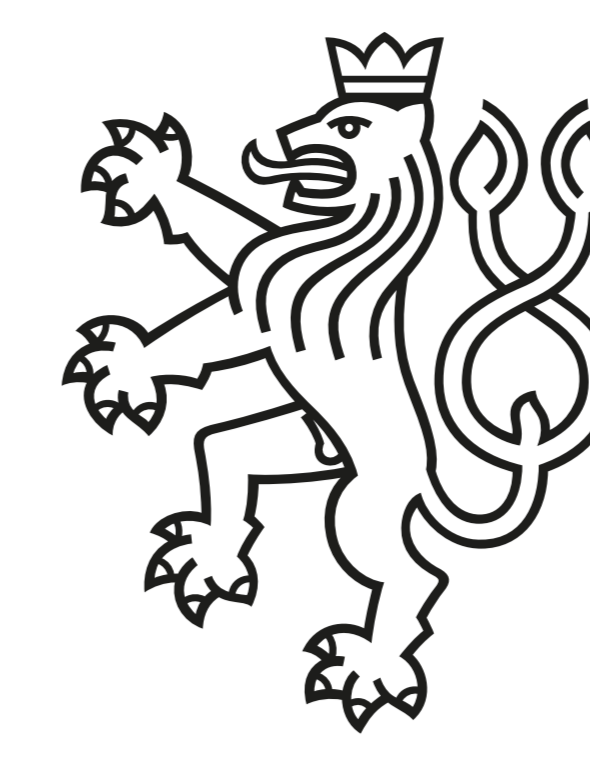


If you use your mobile phone while travelling to another EU country, you do not pay any extra charges beyond the rates charged by your domestic operator.



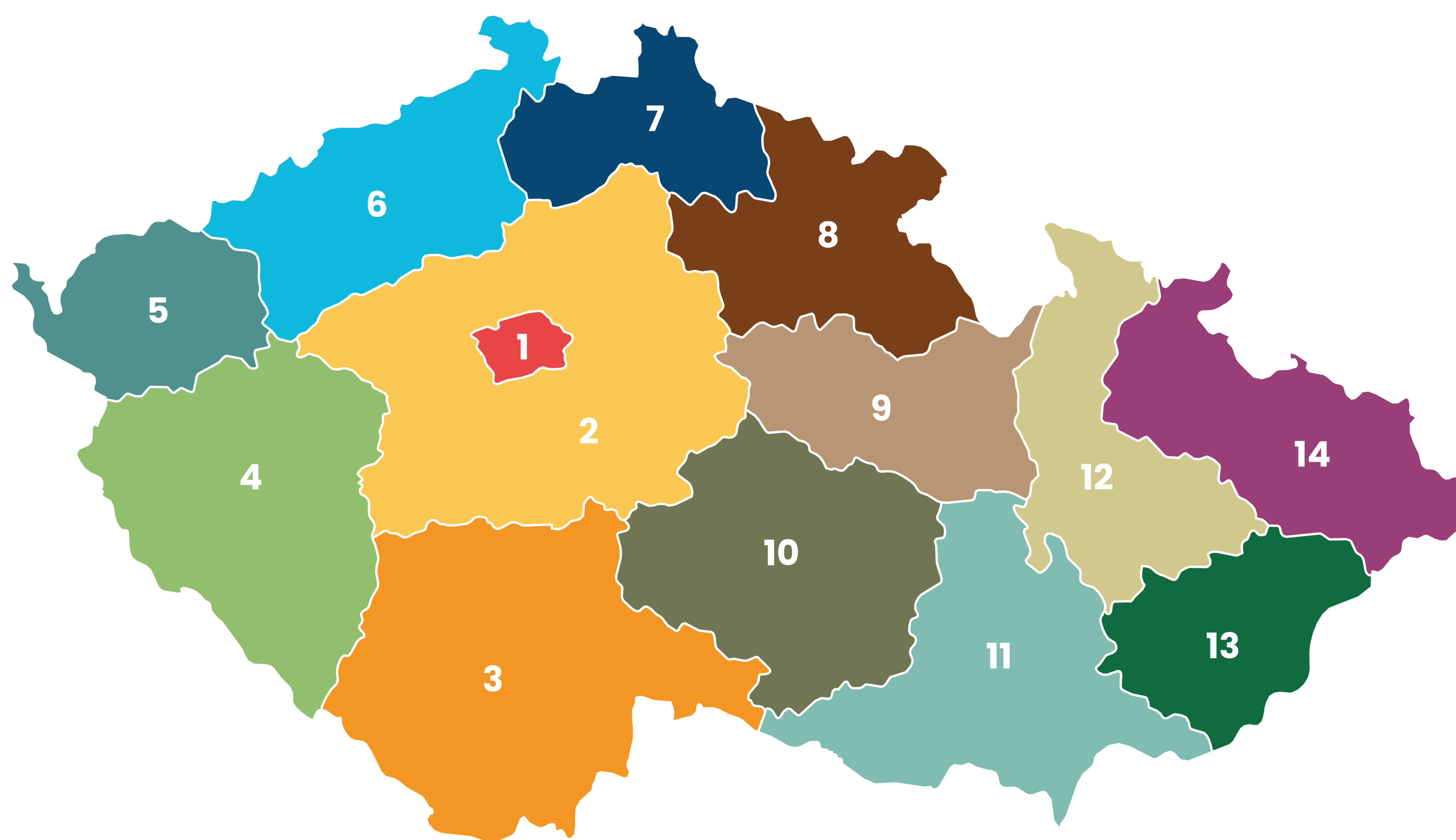
The EU ensures the quality and safety of food in all EU member states. EU regulations and standards in agriculture, animal husbandry, and food production serve to protect the health of people and animals.





LOOK AROUND YOU!

European funds help implement both small and large projects throughout the Czech Republic, amounting to tens of billions of Czech crowns. Where exactly EU funds have helped in your region?



1/ PRAGUE

Extension of the metro line A from Dejvická station to Motol station.

2/ CENTRAL BOHEMIAN REGION

Construction of a primary school in the village of Psáry.

3/ SOUTH BOHEMIAN REGION

Construction of the D3 motorway (e.g., sections Tábor – Veselí nad Lužnicí or Úsilné – Hodějovice).

4/ PLZEŇ REGION

Establishment of the Biomedical Center at the Faculty of Medicine in Plzeň.

5/ KARLOVY VARY REGION

Construction of the Plešivec ski resort.

6/ ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM REGION

Acquisition of medical equipment for Litoměřice Hospital.

7/ LIBEREC REGION

Construction of the Center for the Development of Engineering Research in Liberec.

8/ HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ REGION

Kuks project – Restoration of the complex and establishment of an educational centre.

9/ PARDUBICE REGION

Purchase of an electric car for home care service in Přelouč.

10/ VYSOČINA REGION

Construction of a new facility for a kindergarten in Humpolec.

11/ SOUTH MORAVIAN REGION

Construction of residential units for people in housing need in Bílovice nad Svitavou.

12/ OLOMOUC REGION

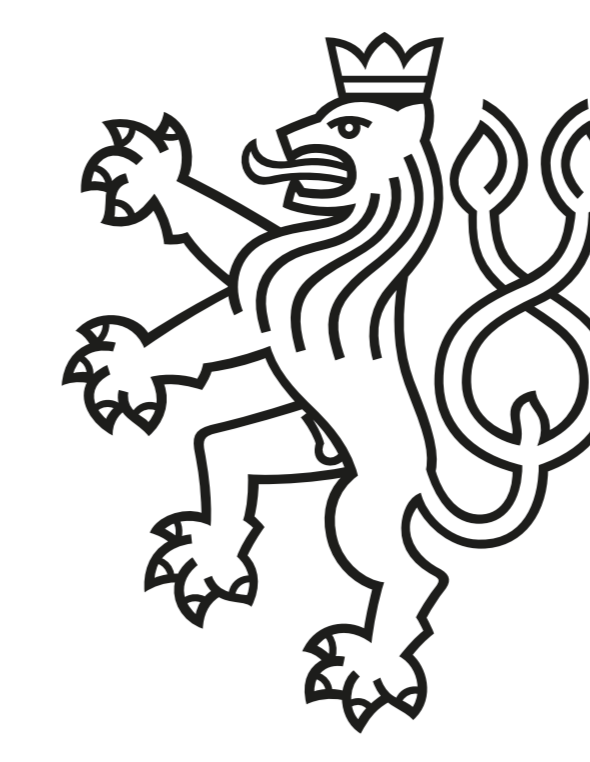
Modernisation and renovation of laboratory equipment at University Hospital Olomouc.

13/ ZLÍN REGION

Acquisition of equipment for Zlín Region Emergency Medical Services.

14/ MORAVIAN-SILESIA REGION

Reconstruction and expansion of the existing building of Children's Rehabilitation and procurement of equipment in Hlučín.



CZECHS & THE EU

Czech representatives advocate for the interests of Czechia in the EU, such as through the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU. Similarly, hundreds of Czechs work across the various EU institutions and bodies.

PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO THE EU

The Permanent Representation is located in Brussels and serves as the main connecting link between the Czech government and EU bodies. Its primary tasks include defending and representing the interests of Czechia in the EU and ensuring communication between the bodies of the Czech state administration and EU institutions. Diplomats at the Permanent Representation participate in the work of various EU working groups and provide support to Czech delegations attending meetings at EU institutions. Additionally, among other activities, the Permanent Representation also hosts or co-organizes a wide range of social and cultural events.



EDITA HRDÁ

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the EU

Edita Hrdá graduated from the Faculty of Trade and Faculty of Management and Informatics at the University of Economics in Prague. She is also a graduate of the Diplomatic Academy in Madrid and Vienna respectively. She has been serving as a career diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic since 1992. Since October 2020, she has held the position of Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the EU. She has

also served as the Managing Director for the Americas at the European External Action Service, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations in New York, Head of Minister's Section, Director of the Minister's Cabinet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and as Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Argentina and Paraguay.



PAVLA PAPIRNÍKOVÁ

Diplomat responsible for Czech nationals in the EU institutions

At the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU in Brussels, she has been dedicated to the strategy for supporting Czechs in EU institutions. She has previously worked in several areas at the Permanent Representation - focusing on relations with the European Parliament. During the second Czech Presidency of the Council of the

EU in 2022, she worked on the agenda of protocol, high-level visits, and public diplomacy. She holds degrees in International Relations, Political Science, and European Studies from Masaryk University in Brno and is a graduate of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

CZECHS IN EU INSTITUTIONS

In Czechia, there is a widespread myth that "Brussels" decides things "about us, without us." However, Czechia does have its representatives in all EU institutions, where they often hold very significant positions. As a result, a considerable number of Czechs contribute to shaping both the long-term direction and day-to-day policies of the EU.



TOMÁŠ SZUNYOG

Head of the EU Office in Kosovo/EU Special Representative

Ambassador Szunyog is a Czech diplomat, with a long experience with EU affairs and service in South East Europe. He took up the post of Head of the EU Office in Kosovo/EU Special Representative on 1 September 2020. Ambassador Szunyog served as Permanent Representative of the

Czech Republic to the EU Political and Security Committee, Director of the Security Policy Department and South East European Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to Slovenia.



JAN M. PASSER

Judge, the Court of Justice of the European Union

Czechia is also represented in another significant EU institution - the Court of Justice of the European Union. The mandate of Jan M. Passer, a globally recognized expert in European and international law, was extended

last year. He will continue his tenure in the supreme body overseeing the enforcement of law within the Union in the coming years.



WHAT MYTHS ABOUT THE EU HAVE WE COME ACROSS DURING THE 20 YEARS OF OUR MEMBERSHIP?

MYTH: Brussels banned curved bananas and cucumbers

FACT: The EU has never banned curved bananas or cucumbers. Member states of the EU only approved a classification into quality classes and set specific standards for each class at the request of fruit traders and in accordance with international standards.



MYTH: The EU banned margarine and rum

FACT: The EU has never banned the production of margarine, but did require a change in the product name. The term "butter" can only be used in the common European market for products containing at least 80% of milk fat. Czech margarine subsequently did not meet this requirement. Unified labelling of basic foodstuffs ensures that the same rules apply to all producers and traders in the European market.

MYTH: Unelected Brussels officials banned light bulbs

FACT: The EU did indeed mandate the gradual withdrawal of traditional incandescent light bulbs from the market. However, this decision was not made by "unelected Brussels officials" and instead was based on an agreement between representatives of the governments of member states and Members of the European Parliament, including those from the Czechia.

MYTH: We can't do anything, it's just Brussels dictating

FACT: Czechia participates and contributes to all parts of the legislative process of the EU. Every legislative proposal also goes to the Czech Parliament. If parliaments of at least one-third of the EU countries agree that a certain matter is better addressed at the national level, the European Commission must amend or withdraw the proposal. Czech ministers also participate in the decision-making process in the EU Council. During joint meetings in the EU Council, ministers vote on proposals passing through this body. Every EU citizen can come up with their own proposal. Although proposals are officially submitted only by the European Commission (where Czechia has a representative), citizens of the EU can also request the submission of a proposal through a petition. There are 21 Czech Members of the European Parliament who vote within the European Parliament.

MYTH: The EU destroys national identity

FACT: The EU recognizes and respects the diversity of cultures and languages of all member states and does not seek to either unify or eliminate them. On the contrary, it creates cultural and educational programmes and promotes cooperation.