



Learning from Ukraine: Strengthening Civil-Military Cooperation and Societal Resilience in Czechia

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Summary

- Czechia has a broad resilience framework, but gaps remain in civil-military coordination, strategic communication, critical infrastructure preparedness and cooperation with non-state actors.
- Prepared citizens are less dependent on state assistance during crises and better able to contribute to national resilience and defence.
- Wartime resilience depends on capable state institutions and armed forces, as well as prepared citizens, civil society and businesses.
- Empowered and adequately resourced local authorities are essential for maintaining services and coordinating crisis response.
- Timely preparation is vital for the essential services, critical infrastructure, digital and financial systems, and society itself to continue functioning under sustained pressure.
- Over the long term a culture of resilience building contributes to deterrence of adversaries and decreases the economic cost of crises.



Introduction

The current security situation in which the Czech Republic and the whole West find themselves pushes us to look for new and more comprehensive approaches to building the security of our societies. Czechia, similarly to other EU and NATO countries, is gradually adapting to the new security environment. For the first time since 1993, The Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023 foresees direct military aggression against the country's territory.¹ With the likelihood of a direct attack increasing it is necessary to prepare as well as possible and to invest in building a comprehensive response. "Maintaining and developing (...) capacity to resist armed attack," in line with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty,² does not concern only armed forces but, crucially, depends on the ability of the whole society and the country's institutions. Czechia in particular, as a country close to the Eastern Flank of the Alliance, is faced with a different set of challenges than other European counterparts connected to the potential Russian escalation. In this context, civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) is becoming increasingly important as a means of connecting military capabilities with the resources and capacities of civilian society. Effective CIMIC can therefore contribute to a more comprehensive approach to preparedness and resilience.

This publication reflects on the current state of play in building resilience, a whole of society approach to the complex security challenges and locates these efforts firmly within the EU and NATO contexts. It further strives to learn from the experience of the currently most resilient European society, which can be found in Ukraine. Even if, based on past exchanges, including the NATO Advanced Research Workshop "Resilience and a Whole-of-Society Approach: Ukrainian Lessons for NATO Countries" organised in September 2025, the Ukraine model also has some limits and operates the best in the horizontal way, it is still possible to derive many useful lessons that can, considering the Czech national context, serve well when investing in the preparedness of the state and society for future crises.

To conclude, the analysis provides a set of concrete policy actions and highlights the need for further work at legislative, competence and coordination levels.

1 The EU's approach

The European Union's approach to resilience has **shifted from a reactive model of crisis management towards a proactive preparedness framework**. This transition was driven by the geopolitical shocks of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing cyber and hybrid threats, climate-related disasters, and disruptions to critical supply chains. These developments exposed the limitations of an EU crisis management system that remained largely reactive, sector-specific, and fragmented across institutions, agencies and policy areas. As a result, the EU has developed **a more integrated approach** that seeks not only to respond to crises but also to **anticipate, prevent, and prepare** for them.

¹ Government of the Czech Republic, *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023*, June 2023, https://mzv.gov.cz/file/5161068/Security_Strategy_of_the_Czech_Republic_2023.pdf.

² "Resilience, Civil Preparedness and Article 3," *NATO*, updated November 13, 2024, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/resilience-civil-preparedness-and-article-3>.



The central document of this framework is the **European preparedness union strategy** (2025),³ which builds on the recommendations of the Niinistö report⁴ by identifying **fragmentation as the EU's core vulnerability** and establishes the EU's long-term vision for strengthening resilience across all sectors. The Strategy reorganises previously fragmented resilience policies around three guiding principles: **all-hazards, whole-of-government** and **whole-of-society** approaches, covering such areas as **foresight and anticipation, resilience of vital societal functions, population preparedness, civil-military and public-private cooperation, crisis response, and resilience through external partnerships**. A priority on infrastructure protection is underpinned by binding EU legislation, notably the **Critical Entities Resilience Directive** (CER)⁵ on physical critical infrastructure and the **NIS2 Directive**⁶ on cybersecurity.

The Strategy is implemented by an **Action Plan** comprising 30 key actions designed to translate its strategic objectives into practical measures. These actions include the development of EU-wide **risk assessments, stockpiling strategies, public awareness programmes**, such as the 72-hour citizen self-sufficiency guideline, **early warning systems, the establishment of an EU Crisis Coordination Hub, the strengthening of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), the expansion of rescEU and stronger cooperation with the private sector and international partners**. Altogether, the 30 key actions provide a roadmap for implementing preparedness across the Union.⁷

The EU's growing emphasis on preparedness is also reflected in the European Commission's proposal for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The proposed framework seeks to strengthen the financial basis for EU preparedness and crisis management, including by financing the Preparedness Union across the crisis-management cycle, from prevention to response and recovery.⁸

Implementation is supported by the **European Disaster Resilience Goals**,⁹ first introduced in 2023 and subsequently incorporated into the 2025 Strategy, which outline five functional areas of resilience: **anticipate, prepare, alert, respond and secure**. These goals provide a common operational structure for capability development, implementation, and progress monitoring, helping Member States

³ European Commission. *European Preparedness Union Strategy*, 2025. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/preparedness_en?utm_

⁴ Sauli Niinistö. *Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*, 2024. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5bb2881f-9e29-42f2-8b77-8739b19d047c_en?filename=2024_Niinisto-report_Book_VF.pdf

⁵ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of 14 December 2022 on the Resilience of Critical Entities and Repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC. Official Journal of the European Union L333, December 27, 2022. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2557/oj/eng>.

⁶ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. Directive (EU) 2022/2555 of 14 December 2022 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (NIS 2 Directive). Official Journal of the European Union L333, December 27, 2022. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2555/oj/eng>.

⁷ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy, JOIN(2025) 130 final, 2025, Annex: Action Plan, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0130&utm_

⁸ European Commission, Protecting People and Building Preparedness and Resilience: EU Budget 2028-2034, 2025. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en

⁹ European Commission. *European Disaster Resilience Goals*. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-disaster-risk-management/european-disaster-resilience-goals_en



assess and strengthen their disaster preparedness capacities using shared objectives and indicators.

Overall, these instruments reflect the EU's efforts to develop a more coherent and integrated preparedness framework. While the Strategy sets the broad policy direction, the 30 key actions translate it into practical measures and the Disaster Resilience Goals provide a common structure for capability development and monitoring. Together, they seek to strengthen the EU's preparedness by promoting a more integrated approach to resilience based on anticipation, preparedness, coordination, and continuous capability development, although their **long-term effectiveness will ultimately depend on how consistently these measures are implemented across the member states and EU institutions.**

2 The NATO Approach

In NATO's approach, societal resilience has **evolved from a supporting element of civil preparedness into a core pillar of collective defence.** As the security environment has become increasingly complex and unpredictable, the Alliance has recognised that **military capabilities alone are insufficient** to ensure security. Effective deterrence and defence also depend on resilient societies capable of maintaining **continuity of government, protecting critical infrastructure, sustaining essential services and supporting military operations** during crises, making societal resilience integral to collective defence. As a result, resilience has become both a national responsibility under **Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty**¹⁰ and a collective responsibility, as the resilience of individual Allies directly contributes to the security, readiness and credibility of the Alliance as a whole. Against this background, NATO has progressively developed a **resilience framework** through a series of complementary policy documents that collectively define the Alliance's commitment, resilience objectives and strategic priorities.

The development of NATO's resilience framework began with the **Commitment to Enhance Resilience**, adopted at the 2016 Warsaw Summit.¹¹ Building on Article 3, it represents a common political understanding of resilience by recognising that effective collective defence depends not only on military capabilities but also on the ability of **governments, essential services and critical civilian infrastructure** to function effectively during crises. Rather than setting detailed national-level measures, the document establishes seven baseline requirements, covering **continuity of government, energy supply, movement of people, food and water resources, health-crisis management, civil communication and transport**, that provide the first shared benchmark for assessing national preparedness across the Alliance.¹² **This reframed resilience as a core element of collective defence.**

NATO's resilience framework further expanded under the **2021 Strengthened Resilience Commitment.** It broadened its focus to emerging security challenges, including **supply chain security, technological dependencies and climate-related risks.**¹³ The 2022 Strategic Concept elevated resilience to a strategic priority, identifying it as a prerequisite for all three of the Alliance's core tasks: **deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.** It also recognised that strategic competitors increasingly seek to exploit

¹⁰ North Atlantic Treaty, signed April 4, 1949, Washington, DC, Art. 3, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm.

¹¹ NATO, Commitment to Enhance Resilience, July 8, 2016, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2016/07/08/commitment-to-enhance-resilience>.

¹² NATO, Resilience and Article 3, NATO, last updated June 7, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132722.htm.

¹³ NATO, Strengthened Resilience Commitment, June 14, 2021, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2021/06/14/strengthened-resilience-commitment>.



Allied vulnerability.¹⁴ This strategic prioritisation continued through the Vilnius (2023) and Washington (2024) Summits, where Allies endorsed the resilience objectives and agreed to integrate civilian planning into collective defence.¹⁵ Most recently, the **2025 Hague Summit** attached resilience to a **binding financial commitment** for the first time, agreeing that up to 1.5% of GDP will be allocated, *inter alia*, to critical infrastructure protection, network defence and civil preparedness alongside core defence spending of at least 3.5% of GDP.¹⁶

Overall, NATO's resilience framework establishes a common approach to preparedness that strengthens **both national resilience and the Alliance's collective defence**. Integrating political commitment, operational requirements and strategic objectives into a coherent system enables Allies to develop **comparable resilience capability** while **maintaining national flexibility in implementation**. As a result, resilience has become an **operational pillar of NATO's security architecture**.

3 Czechia's Approach

Czechia conceptualises societal resilience as a core component of its national security, an approach reflected in the **Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023**.¹⁷ Reflecting on the increasingly complex security environment, it recognises that security depends on the continued functioning of public institutions, critical infrastructure, essential services and society during crises. Besides the Security Strategy, **societal resilience is embedded across complementary strategic and implementation documents that collectively ensure the continuity of essential state functions**.

At the strategic level, Czechia adopts a preventive approach aimed at **reducing vulnerabilities** that increasingly shape the security environment. This approach builds on the **2016 National Security Audit**, which marked an early turning point in **recognising hybrid threats and societal resilience as priorities within Czechia's national security agenda**.¹⁸ The Security Strategy 2023 mentioned above links external and internal security through a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach**, recognising that national security depends on the functioning of institutions, critical infrastructure, essential services, cyber and economic security as much as on military defence.¹⁹ Building on this foundation, the **National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference** shifts the focus from responding to individual threats to **reducing the vulnerabilities** they exploit, structured around three goals: **a resilient society, state and critical infrastructure; a systemic, whole-of-government approach; and the capacity for an adequate and timely response**.²⁰

This strategic approach is translated into operational capability through complementary implementation and preparedness instruments. The **Action Plan to**

¹⁴ NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, June 29, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/strategic-concepts/nato-2022-strategic-concept>.

¹⁵ NATO, Vilnius Summit Communiqué, July 11, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm; NATO, Washington Summit Declaration, July 10, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm.

¹⁶ NATO, The Hague Summit Declaration, June 25, 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2025/06/25/the-hague-summit-declaration>.

¹⁷ Government of the Czech Republic, *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023*, June 2023, https://mzv.gov.cz/file/5161068/Security_Strategy_of_the_Czech_Republic_2023.pdf.

¹⁸ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *National Security Audit*, 2016, <https://mv.gov.cz/chh/audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-2>.

¹⁹ Government of the Czech Republic, *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023*, June 2023, https://mzv.gov.cz/file/5161068/Security_Strategy_of_the_Czech_Republic_2023.pdf.

²⁰ Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, *National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference*, 2021, <https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/assets/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/narodni-strategie-pro-celeni-hybridnimu-pusobeni.pdf>.



the National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference 2026-2027 (building on the previous Action Plan for 2022-2023) operationalises strategic priorities by assigning responsibilities and addressing **emerging vulnerabilities**, including economic security, supply chains and research security.²¹ This implementation framework is further supported by the Ministry of the Interior's **Analysis of the Czech Republic's Preparedness to Face a Serious Disinformation Wave (2022)**, which assessed institutional preparedness and identified gaps in coordination, strategic communication and response capacity.²² The **Disaster Risk Management Summary Report 2020**, based on the assessment of 72 national hazards, and the Czech Republic **National Disaster Management System Overview**, which includes 16 standardised emergency checklists for major emergencies, translate risk assessment into coordinated preparedness, response and recovery arrangements across all levels of government through early-warning systems, emergency planning and regular crisis exercises.²³ The **Concept of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic 2035** complements this approach by strengthening military readiness, reserve capacity and civil-military cooperation, ensuring that defence capabilities support the continuity of essential state functions during crises.²⁴

This approach also recognises that resilience depends **on long-term adaptation rather than crisis preparedness alone**. The **National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2024** supports this through reforms and investment in digital transformation, energy, health, education and public administration, while the **National Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation 2021-2027 (RIS3)** strengthens long-term adaptive capacity through innovation, technological development and economic diversification. Together, they **reinforce the long-term dimension of resilience** by strengthening the institutional, technological and economic capacities that support long-term adaptation.²⁵ This broader approach is also reflected in the national "**72 Hours**" preparedness initiative, which extends resilience beyond institutions by encouraging households to maintain basic emergency supplies and take greater responsibility for their own preparedness during the initial phase of a crisis.²⁶

²¹ Government of the Czech Republic, Action Plan to the National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference 2026-2027, 2025, https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/Akc_ni_pla_n_k_Na_rodni_s_trategii_pro_c_eleni_hybridni_mu_pu_sobeni_2026-2027.pdf; Government of the Czech Republic, Action Plan for 2022-2023, 2022, https://mocr.army.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/app_2022.pdf.

²² Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Analysis of the Czech Republic's Preparedness to Face a Serious Disinformation Wave, 2022, <https://mv.gov.cz/chh/clanek/analyza-pripravenosti-ceske-republiky-celit-zavazne-dezinformacni-vlne.aspx>.

²³ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Disaster Risk Management Summary Report – Czech Republic 2020, 2020; European Commission, Czech Republic National Disaster Management System Overview, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/national-disaster-management-system/czech-republic_en.

²⁴ Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, Concept of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic 2035, 2023, https://www.mo.gov.cz/assets/en/ministry-of-defence/basic-documents/cafdc_2035.pdf.

²⁵ Government of the Czech Republic, National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2024, 2024, https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/evropske-zalezitosti/aktualne/NPR-2024_EN-version_2.pdf; Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, National Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation 2021-2027 (RIS3), 2021, https://ris3.gov.cz/sites/default/files/National-RIS3-Strategy_2.pdf.

²⁶ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 72 Hours, <https://www.72h.gov.cz/en/72-hours>.



Table 1. Comparative Overview of the EU, NATO and Czech Approaches to Societal Resilience

Dimension	European Union	NATO	Czech Republic
Strategic Objective	Strengthen societal preparedness.	Strengthen deterrence and defence.	Strengthen national resilience.
Domains of Action	Civil protection and crisis response; critical infrastructure; cybersecurity; essential societal functions; population preparedness; public-private cooperation.	Collective defence; civil preparedness in support of military operations; continuity of government; critical civilian infrastructure and essential services; energy; communications and transport.	Crisis management and continuity of state functions; critical infrastructure; cybersecurity and hybrid interference; economic security; essential services; civil-military cooperation.
Core Principles	All-hazards; whole-of-government; whole-of-society.	National & collective responsibility; civil preparedness; collective defence.	Whole-of-government; whole-of-society; vulnerability reduction.
Societal Engagement	Population preparedness; public awareness; public-private partnerships.	Civil preparedness; resilient societies.	Whole-of-society approach; population preparedness; shared responsibility.
Policy Framework	Preparedness Union Strategy; Action Plan; CER & NIS2, reflection in MFF 2028-2034	Article 3; Resilience Commitments; Strategic Concept.	Security Strategy; National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference; Action Plans; Disaster Risk Management.

3.1 Czechia's preparedness and CIMIC in practice – strengths and challenges

Historically, Czech experience with CIMIC focused predominantly on foreign deployments within **NATO, EU, and UN missions outside the national territory**. The origins of CIMIC within the Czech Armed Forces trace back to 1998, when under the NATO Partnership for Peace framework, a specialized team was formed for the SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁷ Building on these operational lessons and aligned with NATO standards, a dedicated military CIMIC unit was **formally established in 2001**. In the domestic context, this capabilities framework has primarily allowed the military to assist primary emergency actors, such as the Police

²⁷ Martina Hušková, "Jednotky AČR: 103. centrum CIMIC/PSYOPS," Armádní noviny, August 25, 2014, <https://www.armadninoviny.cz/jednotky-acr-103-centrum-cimicpsyops.html>.



of the Czech Republic and the Integrated Rescue System, particularly during natural disasters and civil emergencies, such as the major floods in 2002. Considering the deteriorating international security environment, awareness has been growing about the need to **emphasize the place of CIMIC within the defence architecture** aiming to protect Czechia in the case of an **external military attack**.

The Czech Republic possesses **an administrative and regional structure** that facilitates localized crisis management, targeted information sharing, and horizontal coordination.²⁸ Specifically, the network of Regional Military Headquarters (*Krajská vojenská velitelství*), regional crisis staffs and the integrated rescue system should be mentioned. On the other hand, **the fragmentation of local government could become a weakness**. The country has 6,272 territorial self-governing units, including 6,258 municipalities and 14 regions. Around 35.1% of municipalities have 300 inhabitants or fewer, preventing an efficient use of funds and personnel. The level of attention and capacities devoted to strengthening preparedness differs, with small municipalities often having fewer staff, resources, and institutional capacities to manage serious crises, especially when they could become prolonged and affect the whole country.

Security services and the armed forces enjoy and benefit from a **high baseline of public confidence**; the Czech population consistently demonstrates strong trust in first responders and security institutions, including the Armed Forces, the Police, and the Fire Rescue Service.²⁹ On a related note, since 2022, the number of applicants enlisting in the **Active Reserve** in Czechia has grown significantly,³⁰ signalling growing awareness of the evolving security environment, with potential implications for Czechia.³¹ **Voluntary military training for secondary school students** has also attracted considerable interest.³² On the other hand, the potential reintroduction of **conscription remains a polarizing issue** among the Czech population.³³

Despite these assets, significant operational and structural weaknesses persist. Chief among them is that **systematic civil-military integration is not yet fully embedded within defence planning and executive decision-making processes**, despite increasing efforts to bridge this gap. Critical infrastructure (energy, transport, digital networks) and related logistics show shortcomings when it comes to **coherent coordination and clear attribution of responsibility**. A **unified framework for the development of defence and civil infrastructure** is missing.³⁴ Furthermore, there is a pronounced **deficit in strategic communication, public outreach and structural engagement capabilities**. Effective strategic communication is essential for cultivating civil trust and fostering realistic public

²⁸ "Civilně-vojenská spolupráce jako operační prvek obrany státu," *CZDEFENCE*, May 19, 2026, <https://www.czdefence.cz/clanek/civilne-vojenska-spoluprace-jako-operacni-prvek-obrany-statu>.

²⁹ "K institucím s nejvyšší mírou důvěry veřejnosti setrvale patří bezpečnostní složky a ČNB," *STEM*, July 2, 2026, <https://www.stem.cz/k-institucim-s-nejvyssi-mirou-duvery-verejnosti-setrvale-patri-bezpecnostni-slozky-a-cnb/>.

³⁰ "Vstoupit do aktivních záloh chce denně stovka Čechů. Jejich počet vzrostl po invazi Ruska na Ukrajinu," *ČT24*, March 12, 2022, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/regiony/vstoupit-do-aktivnich-zaloh-chce-denne-stovka-cechu-jejich-pocet-vzrostl-po-invazi-ruska-na-ukrajinu-22431>.

³¹ Armáda České republiky v roce 2025 (Prague: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky – VHÚ Praha, 2026), https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/assets/multimedia-a-knihovna/publikace/20-let-acr/army25_cz_final.pdf.

³² Kateřina Gruntová, "Přes prázdniny vojákem? Na čtyřtýdenní armádní výcvik se už přihlásilo více než tisíc středoškoláků," *iROZHLAS*, 15 February 2026, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/pres-prazdniny-vojakem-na-ctyrtydenni-armadni-vycvik-se-uz-prihlasilovice-nez-2602150837_kvr.

³³ Petr Švihel and Jan Novák, "Exkluzivní průzkum: Názor Čechů na povinnou vojnu se začal lámat," *Seznam Zprávy*, March 17, 2025, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-zivot-v-cesku-exkluzivne-nazor-cechu-na-vojnu-se-otaci-bojovat-by-slo-200-tisic-lidi-271776>.

³⁴ David Slánský, Petr Brychta, Radek Chaloupka, and Kristina Boudová, Přípravení – Vize obrany Česka 2030 (KPMG Czech Republic, 2026), <https://kpmg.com/cz/cs/clanky-analyzy/2026/02/defense-study.html>.



understanding regarding the true capabilities, core tasks, and operational limitations of the military. The low priority attributed to the issue was tellingly illustrated by the abolition of the strategic communication bodies operating under the Office of the Government and the MFA by the sitting government, as well as the recent dissolution of a specialized “Crisis Information Team” (*Krizový informační tým*, KRIT) at the Ministry of Interior, responsible for communication with the public in crisis situations like natural disasters but also domestic terrorism threats,³⁵ and whose emergency preparedness guide 72h³⁶ represents not only a useful tool in providing necessary information for the first days of a potential crisis but also a general effort to bring attention to the issue.

Similarly, the agenda of educating children and young people on issues of national defence - while crucial and **embedded in the national legislation**³⁷ - has faced systemic limitations. Chief among them are **a low political priority** (reflected in the recent move of the department responsible for National Defence Preparation of Citizens from the Ministry of Defence to the General Staff of the Armed Forces, thus possibly limiting the involvement of the civilian dimension of the apparatus)³⁸, **an absence of political direction** and the general problem of **departmentalism and limited coordination among responsible actors** - the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior. All of this results in a situation in which a comprehensive and systematic approach to the issue is lacking. There are not enough comprehensive materials and guidance on teaching methods to be used by current teachers, while pedagogical faculties are not producing enough new teachers qualified to educate in the fields of civil preparedness and the role of citizens in the national defence. The agenda is largely **dependent on the commitment of individuals** working on the agenda in the state institutions, largely without adequate support, and selected **civil society organisations**.³⁹

This vulnerability is further compounded by broader challenges in societal resilience. While public trust in uniformed security forces remains high, **confidence in political institutions, such as the Government and Parliament, is markedly lower**, creating a systemic vulnerability during prolonged state-level crises.⁴⁰ At the same time, **civil society organisations**, whose capabilities and local experience and networks are essential in managing crisis situations, are being painted **in a negative light by the sitting government**. So are the **public media, despite being indispensable as a reliable, universally accessible source of information**.

In light of the deteriorating international security environment, there is a growing imperative to recognize that high-intensity crisis response and military defence cannot be conducted by the armed forces in isolation. **Developing joint operational plans, institutionalizing coordination mechanisms, and ensuring**

³⁵ ČTK, “Ministerstvo vnitra ruší svůj Krizový informační tým, oznámil jeho šéf,” *Seznam Zprávy*, March 18, 2026, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-ministerstvo-vnitra-rusi-svuj-krizovy-informacni-tym-oznamil-jeho-sef-301889>.

³⁶ “Basics of Emergency Preparedness,” 72 Hours, Ministry of the Interior, 2025, <https://www.72h.gov.cz/en>.

³⁷ Zákon č. 222/1999 Sb., o zajišťování obrany České republiky, Part Two, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1999-222#cast2>.

³⁸ Jan Horák, “Chvění na obraně. Zůna se zbavil oddělení pro přípravu občanů na krizi, rozpadá se i tiskový odbor,” *iROZHLAS*, July 23, 2026, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/chveni-na-obrane-zuna-se-zbavil-oddeleni-pro-pripravu-obcanu-na-krizi-rozpada-se_2607230620_hrk.

³⁹ “Výchova k bezpečí,” *Odpovědné občanství*, February 11, 2026, <https://odpovedneobcanstvi.cz/2026/02/11/vychova-k-bezpecici/>.

⁴⁰ “K institucím s nejvyšší mírou důvěry veřejnosti setrvalé patří bezpečnostní složky, ČNB a místní úřady,” *STEM*, February 4, 2026, <https://www.stem.cz/k-institucim-s-nejvyssi-mirou-duvery-verejnosti-setrvalé-patri-bezpecnostni-slozky-cnb-a-mistni-urady>.



that civilian stakeholders (regional and local governments, businesses, critical infrastructure operators, CSOs, including vulnerable groups advocates, public and commercial and local media but also on-line influencers) **maintain adequate situational awareness** are vital prerequisites for national resilience. Equally essential is a **clear legal framework** that attributes specific responsibilities for protecting critical infrastructure. While no framework can anticipate every dynamic feature of an unfolding emergency, proactive peacetime integration remains crucial.

4 Experience from Ukraine

4.1 Relevance for the Czech Republic

Since 2014, and especially since the full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine has accumulated extensive practical experience with a whole-of-society approach to national defence. This experience provides an exceptional basis for assessing whether existing Czech and allied resilience policies, preparedness plans and institutional assumptions are adequate for the demands of a high-intensity, protracted military conflict.

The following sections present a **selection of Ukrainian lessons learned**, adaptations and good practices at the individual, local, regional and national levels. They are, however, **not intended to be transferred mechanically or treated as a complete model**. Ukraine's solutions in most of the cases emerged under wartime pressure and reflect its specific geography, institutions, threat environment and available resources. Nevertheless, they offer a **valuable reality check** for measures that European countries have often developed primarily for short-term emergencies, natural disasters or limited security crises.

4.2 Individual Resilience

One of the central lessons from Ukraine that today's western societies should recognise and internalise is that war is possible, while also understanding that there are many practical ways to prepare for and cope with such an extreme situation. Even relatively limited training and basic preparedness can **reduce dependence on state assistance** and enable individuals to support vulnerable people, their local communities, the armed forces and the wider national defence effort.

The state will always have limited resources, particularly during the early stages of a war, when institutions are under the greatest pressure. A society whose citizens are willing and able to prepare in advance and contribute actively during a crisis can **significantly improve the effectiveness of national defence**. Such preparedness also **strengthens deterrence** by demonstrating that any aggressor would face not only the armed forces, but also a resilient and organised society capable of sustaining resistance.

Ukrainian society has first-hand experience of the long-term effects of full-scale armed conflict and has accumulated extensive knowledge about how individuals function **before a war, during its initial shock and throughout a protracted conflict**. This experience also illustrates how war differs from other emergencies, such as natural or industrial disasters. Citizens may choose to leave threatened areas or the country, join the armed forces, or remain as civilians and support the economy, essential services and national defence. In each case, **timely preparation and training are valuable**, although individual roles and needs may change as the conflict develops. Ukraine's experience can therefore help Czech and allied citizens better understand the personal implications of war and make informed decisions about their own preparedness.⁴¹

⁴¹ Elena Davlikanova, Lesia Ogryzko, Stanislav Boiko, Andriana Hamar, and Volodymyr Lytvyn, *Coping Under Fire: Insights from Ukrainian Society's Experience of War and Resilience* (Sahaidachnyi



4.3 Hromadas – key role in resilience building on a local level

Between 2014 and 2020, Ukraine implemented a set of reforms now called the **Decentralisation reform** that amalgamated more than 11,000 villages and municipalities into 1,470 new local governments known as hromadas. These authorities receive and manage 60% of personal income-tax revenue and have wide-ranging responsibilities, including healthcare, fire and civil protection services, local infrastructure, water, heating, waste collection, sanitation and utilities. The reforms **enabled more effective use of budgets and personnel** while preserving **links to local communities**. They also strengthened public trust in local government and improved accountability. This could be an inspiration to be reflected in the Czech case with its relative fragmentation of local governance.

Hromadas became crucial frontline responders during the first days of the full-scale invasion. Pre-war decentralisation gave them enough financial autonomy and decision-making authority to **act without waiting for instructions and financial allowance from Kyiv**. They maintained essential services, registered large numbers of internally displaced people, organised food, medicines and emergency healthcare, supported defence forces and redirected local budgets towards urgent wartime needs.

Village administrative centres and local leaders also became vital communication links, particularly in dispersed rural communities. During the initial phase, they had to use alternative methods because standard communications networks were under attack. These included fixed and portable loudspeakers, printed materials and information shared through trusted local figures, such as village elders.

Municipalities **coordinated volunteers, NGOs and businesses through local volunteer councils**, reducing duplication, matching resources with local needs and directing assistance to where it was most urgently required. **This combination of trusted local authority, community knowledge and civil-society mobilisation was a major factor in Ukraine's ability to withstand the initial humanitarian shock.**

Although hromadas generally performed well, the system itself had not been prepared for war. Existing plans were mostly designed for industrial accidents and natural disasters. Whether **superficial and duplicative or detailed but outdated**, they had rarely been tested against available legislation and resources or rehearsed with the relevant actors.

To address these shortcomings, **Ukraine revised its Civil Protection Code**. Civil-protection training shifted **from periodic briefings towards continuous readiness**, with differentiated programmes for officials, specialists and communities. Ukraine also began **developing modern shelters with appropriate protection and dual-use functions, while relocating some public services, including hospitals and schools, underground.**

4.4 National-level measures

4.4.1 DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation - or its absence - at national, regional and local levels had a major impact on societal resilience. During the initial phase of the war, many archives, registers and important physical documents became unavailable, were physically destroyed or remained in occupied territories, where they could become valuable sources of information for the occupying forces. Many citizens fled without documents or with incomplete identification.

Security Center, 2025), <https://sahasec.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Insights-from-Ukrainian-Societys-Experience-of-War-and-Resilience.pdf>.



With the full-scale invasion, digitalisation ceased to be merely a tool of administrative convenience but became **a critical element of state capacity, institutional continuity and security resilience**. The government **migrated data to international cloud services** to protect it from infrastructure attacks. Platforms such as “Diia” now provide access to more than 150 public services and securely store digital versions of official documents.⁴²

Alongside specialised command-and-control systems such as Delta and GIS Arta, Army+ helps military personnel reduce paperwork. It allows soldiers to submit electronic reports, access digital service records and process leave requests through their phones.

4.4.2 BANKING

Ukraine gradually developed **a strong banking and fintech ecosystem** that continued to operate during the invasion. Following the 2014 banking crisis, reforms transformed an oligarchic financial market into a more **transparent, closely supervised and highly digitalised system**.⁴³ **By removing weak and undercapitalised banks, enforcing stress tests and reforming corporate governance**, the National Bank of Ukraine established the institutional resilience and contingency procedures that helped **prevent bank runs and kept payments functioning in 2022**.

One important measure is the **Power Banking network**, which links branches of systemically important banks across Ukraine. More than 2,400 branches operate as a single network during blackouts, using backup electricity, connectivity and cash supplies.⁴⁴

4.4.3 ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Energy infrastructure became a primary strategic target of the Russian Federation. Ukraine's energy system relied on the old Soviet-era infrastructure characterised by **highly centralised generation and numerous single points of failure**. Its main advantage was a strong transmission network designed to carry roughly twice the country's generation capacity.

To respond to the increasing number of strikes, Ukraine introduced **layered protection for critical energy infrastructure**. Over 2,000 facilities had to be hardened with nets, concrete structures and, where available, air defence. Emergency repairs were conducted under severe time and equipment constraints, while repair crews faced deliberate second-wave attacks and restored installations were repeatedly targeted.

Wartime repairs and management of the damaged grid created further difficulties. **Temporary supply arrangements** were needed to keep critical services running. **The system was necessarily reactive**: solutions addressed immediate disruption rather than long-term optimisation, while operators relied on constant dispatch adaptation and emergency switching. **Rapid restoration mattered more than efficiency or comprehensive redesign**.

⁴² Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, “Diia - Digital State,” <https://expo.diia.gov.ua/>.
Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, “Diia-Government Services Online,” <https://thedigital.gov.ua/projects/technologies/diia-derzhavni-poslugi-onlajn>.

⁴³ The Comprehensive Program for the Development of the Financial Sector Until 2020, <https://bank.gov.ua/en/about/develop-strategy/refactoring>.
National Bank of Ukraine, “NBU 2022 Annual Report: Safeguarding Macrofinancial Stability and Public Confidence despite Unprecedented Wartime Challenges,” May 15, 2023. <https://bank.gov.ua/en/news/all/richniy-zvit-nbu-za-2022-rik-zberejennya-makrofinansovoyi-stabilnosti-ta-doviri-gromadyan-popri-bezpretsedentni-viprobuвання-viynoyu>.

⁴⁴ National Bank of Ukraine, “Map of POWER BANKING Branches: Now in Diia App,” <https://bank.gov.ua/en/news/all/mapa-viddilen-mereji-power-banking-teper-u-diyi>.



Where possible, longer-term and more resilient solutions were developed. Some municipalities invested in **local generation and distribution**. Distributed renewable-energy systems are generally faster to deploy, can support critical local services and are much harder (and more expensive) for an adversary to disable completely than a small number of centralised facilities.

Resilient generation requires **stronger peak coverage, reserves and system balancing**. Grids must be restored with greater redundancy, rerouting options and rapid-recovery capacity. Because the entire network cannot be defended, physical hardening with gabions and concrete barriers must be combined with pre-positioned replacement equipment so that outages last hours rather than weeks. **Physical, air-defence and cyber protection should be integrated by design.**⁴⁵

Another way to increase morale and strengthen the resilience of Ukrainians deprived of electricity, heating and related essential services in the winter and spring of 2026 was to demonstrate that Ukraine is not merely the passive recipient of Russian air strikes. Resilience also depended on confidence that the Ukrainian state will **respond strategically to attacks on critical energy infrastructure, including through the domestic production and deployment of long-range missiles and drones against the enemy**.

4.4.4 CENTRES FOR NATIONAL RESISTANCE TRAINING

Ukraine is developing a nationwide network of **Centres for the Training of Citizens for National Resistance**. The centres are intended to give civilians the **practical skills needed to survive wartime emergencies and contribute to the national defence**. They familiarise participants with aspects of military life and can support recruitment, with some centres estimating that 10–15% of graduates subsequently volunteer for the armed forces.⁴⁶

Training combines **civil resilience, emergency preparedness and basic military skills**. Depending on the course length and format, subjects may include first aid; basic tactics, movement and survival in the field; weapons safety and supervised shooting; drone operation, repair and construction; counter-drone and mobile air-defence procedures; information security; and resistance to hostile influence operations. Veterans and former service members often work as instructors, which can also support their reintegration into civilian life.

4.4.5 CIVIL-SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Ukraine's survival during the first year of the full-scale invasion, and its continued defence throughout the conflict, depended heavily **on a strong civil-society network built after the 2013-14 Revolution of Dignity, the occupation of Crimea and the beginning of Russian aggression in Donbas**. By February 2022, established NGOs, volunteer groups and grassroots networks delivered leadership and were thus **able to respond rapidly to wartime problems that the state could not immediately address**. They continue to provide flexible solutions and support the war effort.

Many initiatives operated as **volunteer or humanitarian hubs**, providing accommodation and assistance for displaced people, food, education, employment support, information, reconstruction, fundraising and resistance activities in occupied areas. Their effectiveness came largely from **informal, action-oriented networks** and close cooperation among **civil society, local businesses and municipal authorities**.

⁴⁵ Holding the Grid: Ukraine's Energy Resilience Playbook (DiXi Group, 2026), [Holding the Grid: Ukraine's Energy Resilience Playbook](#).

⁴⁶ Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, "The National Resistance: How Citizens Are Being Trained to Counter Russian Aggression," <https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/the-national-resistance-how-citizens-are-being-trained-to-counter-russian-aggression>.



A particularly important element of Ukraine's resilience has been **civil-society organisations focused on defence**. “Come Back Alive”,⁴⁷ the “Prytula Foundation”,⁴⁸ the initiative of “Serhiy Sternenko”⁴⁹ or “Aerorozvidka”⁵⁰ have raised hundreds of millions of euros for the armed forces, supplied critical equipment and training, contributed to the development and operational use of drones, supported innovative command-and-control systems and, in one case, helped provide access to a military satellite.

4.5 Hard learned lessons and unresolved challenges

This overview is neither exhaustive nor intended to present Ukraine's resilience measures as flawless. Most emerged from difficult choices made under extreme wartime pressure. **European countries are nevertheless in a unique position to benefit from this experience.**

Alongside the positive examples, Ukraine has struggled with essential wartime processes that also carry important lessons for the Czech Republic and its allies. These include **sustaining long-term mobilisation, training and replacing personnel** in a highly attritional and rapidly evolving battlespace, **managing forces effectively**, facilitating a **productive relationship between the armed forces and the civilians** or providing **sufficient care for veterans**. All this in a context, in which Ukrainians have been historically cautious, if not distrustful, towards the authority of the state and its key representatives and elected officials, a state which has only most recently been changing. Although many partial solutions exist, **a coherent long-term approach will be essential** not only for military success, but also for political stability and the continuing resilience of the population.

Ukraine's experience demonstrates that resilience in a prolonged conflict **depends on much more than maintaining formal crisis-management structures**. It requires the ability to **sustain essential services under repeated attack, decentralise decision-making, mobilise civil society and business, protect and rapidly restore critical infrastructure, preserve trusted communications, support military mobilisation and maintain public confidence over months and years**. Examining these practices can help Czechia and its allies identify unrealistic assumptions, institutional gaps and insufficiently tested procedures, while adapting their resilience systems to the possible scale, duration and intensity of a future conflict.

5 Recommendations and points for further discussion

Given Czechia's distance from Russia's borders, a likely conflict scenario would most probably not involve direct military intervention but **a sustained hybrid campaign combining information warfare, major cyberattacks and targeted sabotage**.⁵¹ This could very quickly also escalate into long-range missile and drone strikes intended to **damage infrastructure, disrupt logistics and communications, intimidate the population and government, and obstruct decision-making, mobilisation and the movement of forces towards frontline states**. It would potentially severely complicate evacuation and the movement of internally displaced

⁴⁷ Come Back Alive Foundation, “Come Back Alive Foundation,” https://savelife.in.ua/en/?utm_

⁴⁸ Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation, “Prytula Foundation,” https://prytulafoundation.org/en?utm_

⁴⁹ Serhiy Sternenko Charity Foundation, “Serhiy Sternenko Foundation,” https://www.sternenkofund.org/en_

⁵⁰ AEROROZVIDKA, “AEROROZVIDKA,” https://aerorozvidka.ngo/en?utm_

⁵¹ Government of the Czech Republic, Security Strategy of the Czech Republic 2023, June 2023. https://mzv.gov.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/security_policy/security_strategy_of_the_czech_republic/index.html



people and refugees. Although territorial defence cannot be fully excluded, a large-scale ground invasion of Czech territory appears much less likely.

Therefore, it is essential to focus on the whole-of-society approach to building resilience and create a new model of security involving **every single individual in the country and all the state's institutions**, including at the local level. In this context, Czech has substantial gaps stemming primarily from its **inability to promote comprehensive thinking about its security**, which has fostered divisions between state and non-state actors, including the civil society, business or academia, expert circles and the media. In this context, the country has a lot to learn, primarily from Ukraine, which has after years of Russian aggression learned how to cope with these challenges, or at least how to mitigate and lessen the pressure stemming from the Russian aggression.

The following part includes some of the key recommendations and policy areas on which the Czech government should focus and dedicate attention to:

REFORM OF CRISIS LEGISLATION

Ukraine's experience highlights the need for **more flexible crisis legislation** capable of reflecting the state's needs in different situations, including a full kinetic conflict. When the security environment deteriorates, public authorities require **legal tools** that allow them to **respond to varying levels of threat and adopt proportionate measures**. The legal framework should take into account an adversary's ability to undermine its sovereignty, security, and basic functions with hybrid operations under the threshold of a full kinetic conflict. This requires legislation that can be flexible to react at different levels and enable a calibrated reaction, including a timely and scalable mobilisation.

The Czech legal framework is not properly adapted to the "grey zone." In 2025, the Ministry of Defence acknowledged that existing parameters of crisis states are not designed to respond effectively to serious military crises and outdated legislation and slow procedures could paralyse the state in a major emergency. This problem predates the war in Ukraine. The 2012 Czech Mobilisation Concept already noted that many mobilisation measures can only be activated after a threat to the state has been declared, when the country is already facing an immediate danger. It identified the absence of a legal framework for taking preparatory defence measures during peacetime as a significant weakness.⁵²

Legislation, the distribution of powers, and the preparedness of elected and appointed officials must also ensure the **continuity of essential state functions**, including when communication with superior authorities or the political leadership is disrupted. In Ukraine, **hromadas** proved particularly important. These relatively large municipalities had enough **personnel, powers, and financial resources** to continue providing essential services from the beginning of the war. In the Czech Republic, the discussion about the fragmentation of local government should include the debate about **whether the current system of municipalities and ORPs** (municipalities with extended powers) **can handle all requirements in the case of a conflict**.

COMMUNICATION

Political leaders remain hesitant to **communicate openly about the need to prepare for crises** that may differ significantly from natural disasters or industrial accidents.

During an armed conflict, the state may face simultaneous attacks across several domains. Communications may be disrupted, disinformation may spread, and public institutions may be unable to respond quickly or effectively. **The false**

⁵² Koncepce mobilizace ozbrojených sil České republiky, Praha, 2012
<https://acr.mo.gov.cz/assets/dokumenty-a-legislativa/dokumenty/koncepce-mobilizace.pdf>.



political dilemma of “scaring people with war” must therefore be abandoned. Public communication conducted by professional apparatus should instead stress that **awareness and preparedness reduce uncertainty and fear** and help people respond more effectively to different scenarios.

Strategic communication capacity, mainly its current absence, is a major vulnerability for the Czech republic.

DIGITALISATION

The war in Ukraine demonstrated **the importance of digitalisation and the state’s ability to provide services remotely**, without relying on physical documents or paper archives.

In wartime, digitalisation concerns not only identity documents, social and healthcare services, humanitarian assistance, and public registers. It must also cover archives, databases, and cultural heritage that may be deliberately attacked, damaged, or destroyed.

Moving public services online and interconnecting them also creates major targets for cyberattacks against the digital infrastructure. **Every digital public service must therefore be assessed according to whether it can operate securely and continuously during armed conflict, large-scale outages, and sustained hostile attacks.**

CIVIL SOCIETY

In Ukraine, civil society proved essential both during the initial phase of the war and in adapting to prolonged wartime conditions.

Czech civil society has also repeatedly demonstrated its ability to organise quickly and respond to emergencies. The Ukrainian experience, however, shows that during war it must be prepared to perform **a much broader range of tasks**. These may include **supporting military units, responding to cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, fundraising, technological development, and preparing citizens to contribute to national defence.**

The state should therefore **involve and support civil society in crisis preparedness during peacetime**. At the same time, civil society must **assume greater responsibility for strengthening national resilience**. It can do so by organising public training, cooperating with local authorities, and building coalitions, networks, and associations focused on preparedness and resilience. In that sense, the civil society should be considered a means in developing a new security model, which is much more participatory than it has been in the past.

EDUCATION

National defence education should become a long-term strategic priority. **A comprehensive and systematic approach** to educating children and young people about crisis response, national defence and skills to enhance individual resilience (first aid, media literacy, crisis communication) should be developed. This requires clear **political leadership**, strong **coordination** among the relevant actors (the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Czech Armed Forces) and a clear **institutional responsibility**.



MILITARY SPENDING

Stable and adequate defence spending has long been a weakness of the Czech Republic. **Insufficient funding makes it difficult to deliver even its declared priorities**, such as a layered air-defence system capable of responding to the wide range and quantities of long-range strike capabilities of potential adversaries. It also restricts the long-term development of reserves, the stockpiling of equipment and ammunition, and large-scale training - **all essential requirements for deterring or defeating a potential adversary**.

One of the key lessons of the war in Ukraine is that the **absence of long-range strike capabilities significantly limits a state's ability to react and impose costs on an adversary and, ideally, to influence its strategic calculations before an attack takes place**. It can also **undermine societal resilience** during a prolonged campaign of strikes if the population perceives that the state is unable to respond effectively or retaliate against the source of the attacks.



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