

Building the next generation of rural doctors in Czechia

SUMMARY

A Czech national programme addresses a shortage of general practitioners (GPs) in the country's rural areas and other underserved regions. It promotes generational renewal in rural primary healthcare through education, clerkships for medical students and young doctors, and curriculum reform.

The programme has established 26 educational centres for general medicine in 13 Czech regions. Other initiatives include seminars at medical faculties and for general practice nurses, an educational podcast series and training courses for educators.



Themes: Health and care; education and training; employment; access to services; rural revitalisation

Country: Czechia

Organisations:

> Czech Society of General Practice, civil society organisation

Start & end date: 01/2025 - 06/2028

Budget: EUR 1 000 000

Funding sources:

> European Social Fund Plus

> National co-financing

Website: www.ipvz.cz/o-ipvz/kontakty/pedagogicka-pracoviste/vseobecne-prakticke-lekarstvi/projekt-opz-vpl

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CONTEXT

Rural areas of Czechia face a growing shortage of GPs. The rural workforce is ageing, replacements are hard to find, and clinical training is heavily concentrated in urban hospitals, giving future doctors limited exposure to rural practice. Medical education has traditionally treated general practice as a secondary specialty, professional training pathways rarely include a rural component, and small rural practices have been less involved in medical curricula than university hospitals.

This national programme promotes generational renewal in rural primary care through multiple avenues, including regional teaching infrastructure, exposure to rural general practice, curriculum reform and continuing education.



OBJECTIVES

- > Address the shortage of GPs, including those specialising in child and adolescent health, in rural areas and other underserved regions of Czechia;
- > Establish 26 teaching centres for general medicine in 13 Czech regions (excluding Prague);
- > Provide medical students and young doctors with clerkships in rural practices;
- > Reform general practice education, including specialist examinations, and provide continuing education;
- > Strengthen primary care teams in rural areas by training general practice nurses across the country;
- > Contribute to more equitable distribution of primary care services across Czechia.



ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

- > The programme has a distributed teaching infrastructure, with 26 general medicine **educational centres** spread across 13 regions (excluding Prague), **seminars** delivered at the country's eight medical faculties, and **clerkships** provided in rural practices. This brings general practice training closer to where the shortages are and exposes future doctors to rural family medicine.
- > Clerkships involve **one-week stays in rural general practices** for medical students and young doctors, with accommodation support provided.
- > Reforms of final **specialist examinations** for GPs have been initiated, to improve the quality and consistency of certification.
- > '**Train-the-trainer**' **courses** help build the pool of qualified educators in general practice. These are based on the framework of the European Academy of Teachers in General Practice/Family Medicine.
- > A **podcast series** called Praktici (Practitioners) provides accessible continuing education for GPs.
- > Nationwide **seminars for general practice nurses** help strengthen the capacity of rural primary care teams.
- > The programme is delivered through the Czech Society of General Practice and is co-financed by the European Social Fund Plus and the Czech state.



RESULTS

- > **26 general medicine educational centres** operating across 13 Czech regions (excluding Prague);
- > **Seminars delivered** at the country's eight medical faculties;
- > **Clerkships provided** in rural general practices for medical students and young doctors;
- > '**Train-the-trainer**' courses delivered, building the pool of qualified educators in general practice;
- > **Reforms initiated** of the final specialist examinations for GPs;
- > **Educational podcast series** produced and disseminated to students, young doctors and GPs across the country;
- > Seminars held nationwide for **general practice nurses**.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

- > The programme tackles **generational renewal** in rural general practice **from multiple angles** to help address workforce shortages. This includes providing regional teaching infrastructure, clerkships in rural areas, reform of specialist training and examinations, and providing continuing education for doctors and nurses.
- > Establishing 26 general medicine educational centres across 13 Czech regions has created a distributed teaching infrastructure that **brings training closer to where the workforce shortages are**, rather than being concentrated in the major university cities. This structural investment will remain after the programme ends.
- > Clerkships in rural general practices give medical students and young doctors **first-hand experience of rural family medicine** as a career option, at a point when their choices are still open. This is a stronger recruitment tool than communication campaigns aimed at doctors already in the workforce.
- > **Extending training to general practice nurses** is central to sustainable rural primary care. Investing only in doctors would leave half of the workforce challenge unaddressed.
- > Delivery of the programme through the Czech Society of General Practice **strengthens legitimacy, buy-in** from the profession and continuity beyond the programme period.



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