

## Czechia: New English-language country name for the Czech Republic

In April 2016, the Czech Republic's government approved the use of **Czechia** as the English-language country name and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 this new short name was included in the United Nations terminology database<sup>1</sup>. The state title of the country, adopted as the official name following the split of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in 1993, remains *Česká republika* (Czech Republic). However, no English-language short form name, as a simpler counterpart to the official country name, was ever officially standardised. It is the Czech government's intention that promoting the name Czechia will reduce confusion for English speakers and also enhance the country's identity and economy.

### **Background**

Following the end of World War I and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the sovereign state of *Československo* (Czechoslovakia) was established in 1918. During World War II and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, two states were created: Bohemia and Moravia (a protectorate of Nazi Germany), in the ethnically Czech regions, and the Slovak Republic (a client state of Nazi Germany). At the end of World War II, Czechoslovakia was re-established and in 1948, became a People's Republic under communist rule as a Soviet satellite state, known as the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. After the 1989 anti-communist revolution, and the first free elections since 1946, the name changed to *Česká a Slovenská Federativní Republika* (Czech and Slovak Federative/Federal Republic).

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1992, the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia passed the Constitutional Law on the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, which ceased to exist on 31 December 1992. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1993, the two independent successor states of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were created.

Although several English-language names were suggested for the Czech Republic during the break-up, many of them came with baggage. The shortened name in the Czech language is *Česko*, of which Czechia is felt to be the most faithful translation<sup>2</sup> (some historians argue the name Czechia dates back to the 1600s). However, it was felt at that time that Czechia seemed too close to *Cheka*, the name of an early version of the KGB. The related name of *Čechy* (Bohemia), often used as a name for the entire Czech territory, especially in historical contexts, in fact only relates to the western half of the republic, and does not include the other historical regions of *Morava* (Moravia) and *České Slezsko* (Czech Silesia). Another suggestion, Czechlands, whilst linguistically correct, was the name used historically when referring to territory ruled by the Kings of Bohemia.

### **PCGN guidance**

PCGN would henceforth recommend that **Czechia** be used as the country name, although initially it may be deemed helpful to include reference to the state title Czech Republic e.g. **Czechia (Czech Republic)**. The name Czechia has been added as the sole form of the country name to PCGN's list of country names<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://unterm.un.org/UNTERM/portal/welcome>

<sup>2</sup> The name Czechia has been promoted as the English-language one-word geographical name of the Czech Republic by the Civic Initiative Czechia, since October 1997 <http://www.czechia-initiative.com/aboutus.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/497617/Country\\_Names\\_PDF.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497617/Country_Names_PDF.pdf)