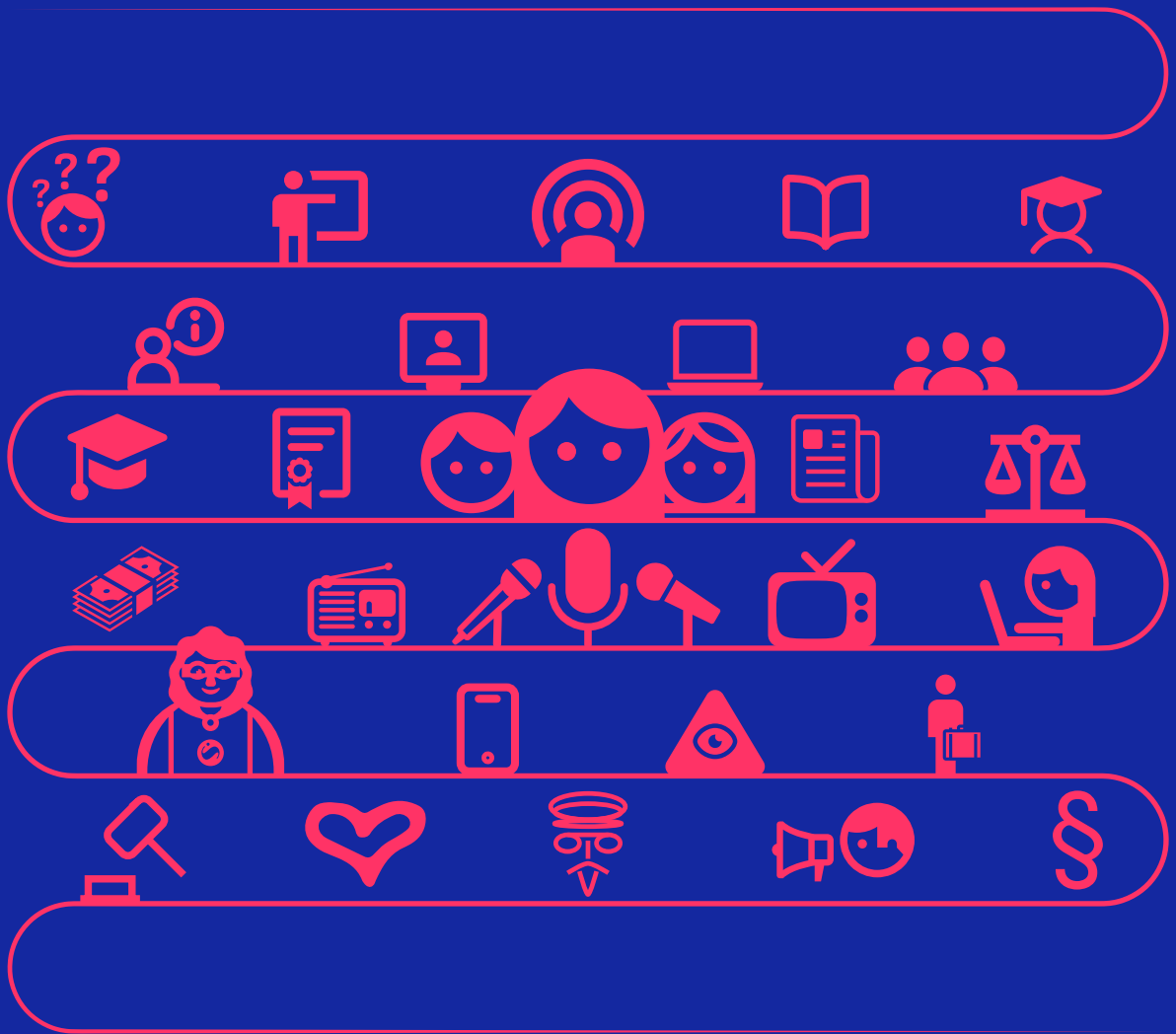# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

CENTER FOR
AN INFORMED
SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

It is my honor to present the first annual report of the Center for an Informed Society (CIS), which was established in the summer of 2023. We are facing a challenging period marked by the rise of populism and authoritarianism in our immediate vicinity. Following the parliamentary elections in Slovakia in September 2023, we are witnessing a shift away from a democratic trajectory, heading towards a dangerous path of autocracy. Will the Czech Republic be next?

We are in a situation where nearly half of Czech citizens can envision an authoritarian leader; society is increasingly frustrated, and interpersonal trust is eroding. Combined with the Russia-led war in Ukraine, we face threats to key democratic pillars. Populists, conspiracy theorists, and disinformation agents dominate the information space.

These trends led my colleagues and me, all from leading positions in the Czech civic sector, to establish an organization that will not only contribute to defense against these threats but also actively build a strong and resilient society that does not succumb to disinformation and the authoritarian tendencies of populists in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The lack of state strategic communication, irresponsible behavior on social platforms that allows the spread of disinformation, and the decline in public trust in democratic structures are the main factors causing this information vulnerability. Therefore, we provide analyses and specific recommendations on how to counter these threats. As part of our Security Academy project, we educate future foreign and security policymakers who will have a crucial impact on the country's ability to respond effectively to current and future security challenges.

Join us in our mission to ensure that the Czech Republic remains resilient against polarizing and authoritarian influences. Democracy is not a given, and it depends on each of us whether we wake up in a world where truth and love have won over lies and hatred.

ANDREA MICHALCOVÁ
Director

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OUR PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Since our official establishment in August 2023, we have primarily focused on projects and activities of the Security Academy for the rest of the year. However, we have also been intensively working in the background on the development of activities in our other pillars: Resilience in the Infosphere and Resilient Democracy, which have become more visible during 2024. In fact, we presented the intent of our activities, which we consider pivotal in the CIS, at one of the Center's first events, which was the Press Conference on October 3, 2023, announcing the launch of the Center for an Informed Society.

SECURITY ACADEMY

The main initiative of CIS in 2023 was the Security Academy (SA), a year-long educational program designed for selected master's and doctoral students and recent graduates who are intensely interested in security and security policy. The Security Academy builds on a project of the same name, launched in 2020 under the auspices of the European Values Security Center. This program, which was created, coordinated, and successfully implemented by the current CIS team, continues to pursue the same efforts from its beginning.

All existing activities of the Security Academy were duly transferred to CIS to continue their development, including the exclusive right to use the licensed brand name "Security Academy."

At regular meetings with prominent security experts from the Czech Republic and abroad, participants have the opportunity to visit various institutions, non-governmental organizations, and companies active in the field of security in both the Czech Republic and internationally. Each participant is assigned a mentor based on their field of expertise, who helps them find suitable employment or internships that match their interests and professional knowledge.

90 % of Security Academy graduates have found jobs in the field or continued their studies after completing the program.

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In September, we opened the selection process for students interested in joining the 4th year of the Security Academy. Among the 28 applicants, the quality bar was set very high, and from a pool of highly qualified candidates, we selected 10 participants. A key part of the program remains mentoring from experienced practitioners, including those from the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and the Army of the Czech Republic, among others. These mentors also consult with participants about potential employment opportunities. Additionally, we assist participants in obtaining internships at relevant institutions beyond the SA program.

Since 2020, 34 students have completed the Security Academy, and 10 more were selected for the 2023-2024 edition.

The fourth year of SA is supported by key actors in Czech foreign and security policy. We have received patronage from Vít Rakušan, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Martin Dvořák, Minister for European Affairs, Lieutenant General Karel Řehka, Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces, and the National Cyber and Information Security Agency.

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Security Academy Activities for Students (September - December 2023)

November 16, 2023	**Workshops on selected topics of security policy** – Czech foreign policy and the current global security situation (David Konecký – Chief Director of the Security and Multilateral Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic).
November 30, 2023	**Workshops on selected security policy topics** – Indo-Pacific security complex, Taiwan, the role of the USA in the region, and the Czech Republic (Jana Sehnálková – Charles University and the U.S. Embassy in the Czech Republic, Zuzana Košková – Head of the Red Watch Program at the European Values Center for Security Policy, and David Toman – Analyst at the European Values Center for Security Policy). • This program also included a meeting with the Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Anna Azari.
November 30, 2023	**Discussion with Pak Čihjon** – North Korean defector and author of the book "My Life in North Korea."
December 14, 2023	**Workshops on selected security policy topics** – Visit to Czech Television, introduction to security institutions such as the National Center Against Organized Crime and the Security Information Service.

The SA program also opened its third year for assistants of members of the Parliament with the goal of increasing their expertise and competencies in national security, defense, and foreign policy.

Since its launch in 2022, more than 35 staffers from various political parties have participated in the Security Academy.

Security Academy Activities for Assistants of Members of the Parliament (September - December 2023)

September 13, 2023	**Discussion with Victor Breiner**, Director of the Institute for Resilience Building, on the Slovak elections.
October 20, 2023	**Discussion with Michal Lebduška**, Analyst at Association for International Affairs, on the Polish elections.
October 30, 2023	**Discussion with Irena Kalhousová**, Head of the Herzl Center for Israeli Studies at Charles University, on the role of information in the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas.
November 27, 2023	**Closed discussion – German politics, Czech-German relations, and working in the Bundestag** (Zuzana Lizcová – Head of the Department of German and Austrian Studies at Charles University, Šárka Strahalová – Central Europe Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and the International Parliamentary Scholarship Alumni Association).
December 4 - 6, 2023	**Study trip to Berlin** – Connecting Czech and German staffers.
December 10 - 11, 2023	**Study trip of Slovak opposition parties' assistants to Prague** – Connecting Czech and Slovak legislative assistants.

CIS IN MEDIA

During its first four months of public operation, CIS noted 22 media appearances in both Czech and international outlets.

OUR TEAM

As of December 2023, the CIS team consisted of five core members. The core of the new organization is made up of experienced young professionals from the Czech non-profit sector, with leadership experience in the implementation of international projects with visible impact and collaboration with key stakeholders in CIS areas of focus. This core team ensured the crucial handling of management and the daily operations of the new organization, spanning the three main content pillars, project management, or operational aspects.

CIS TEAM

Director	**Andrea Michalcová**
Deputy Director	**Michael Murad**
Analyst	**Veronika Víchová**
Project Coordinator	**Eva Smyslová**
Project Coordinator	**Klára Veverka**

SUPERVISORY BOARD

Chair	**Aleš Kudrnáč**
Member	**Barbora Petrová**
Member	**Lukáš Korous**

The team was supported by an external accounting firm and an external legal service.

OUR FINANCIALS FOR 2023

INCOME BY PARTNERS

TOTAL
CZK 886,454

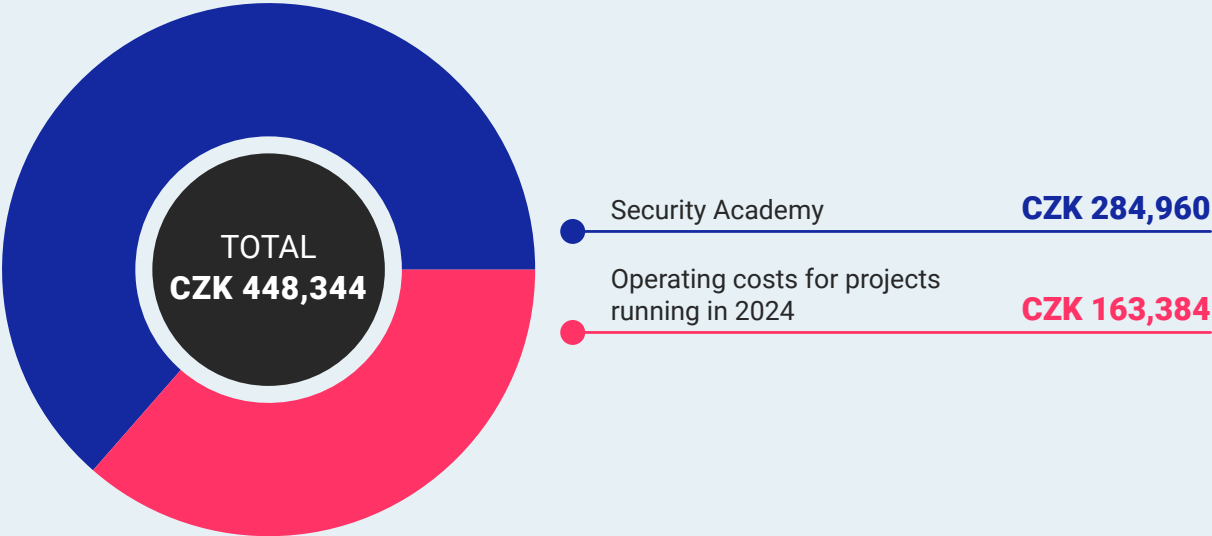|	
Donations	**CZK 510,000**
Konrad Adenauer Foundation	**CZK 249,543**
Hanns Seidel Foundation	**CZK 50,334**
Robert Schuman European Centre	**CZK 12,230**
Institute for Education and Innovation in Politics	**CZK 7,347**
European Values z.s.	**CZK 4,000**
Interest and currency gains	**CZK 53,000**
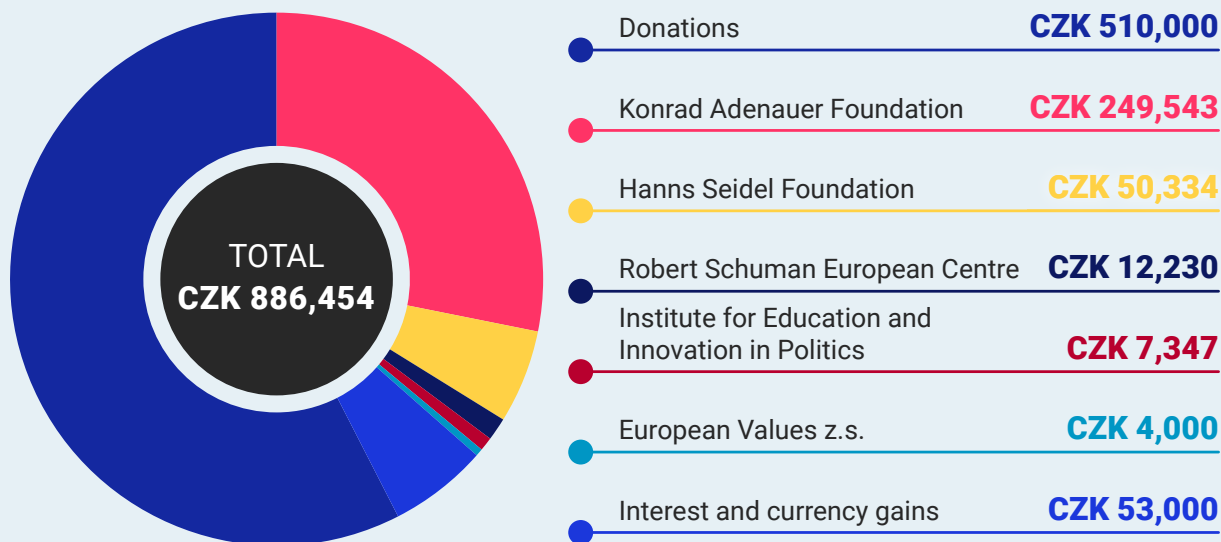
64 % of our total income came from private sources, while 36 % came from public sources.

The donations received in 2023 were from Pale Fire Capital (CZK 500,000) and Andrea Michalcová (CZK 10,000).

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EXPENSES BY PROJECTS

TOTAL
CZK 448,344

Security Academy — **CZK 284,960**

Operating costs for projects running in 2024 — **CZK 163,384**

CIS ended the fiscal year of 2023 with a surplus of CZK 438,110 (for the first five months since its formal registration on August 1, 2023). The surplus is attributed to the ongoing Security Academy project, which received both income and expenses that are scheduled for 2024.

SUPPORT US

We will be grateful if you decide to support us via the donation platform **Darujme.cz**

- you can find us there under the name Centrum pro informovanou společnost z.s.

YOU CAN ALSO SUPPORT US VIA QR PAYMENT:

IN CZK:

IN EUR:

CONTACTS

FOLLOW US ONLINE:

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	@cis_cz
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	informedsociety
	Centrum pro informovanou společnost
	Podcast TEĎ NAOZAJ!
	info@informedsociety.cz

Registered and Invoicing Address:

Centrum pro informovanou společnost z.s.
Španělská 1073/10
Vinohrady
120 00 Praha 2
ID: 19474857 (not VAT payers)

Financial Details

We use transparent accounts at Fio banka
in CZK, EUR, USD, and GBP.

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