MANAGING PUBLIC DISCOUNTS: A SYSTEMATIZED REVIEW OF BENEFIT POLICIES IN CZECH STATE-FUNDED CONTRIBUTORY ORGANIZATIONS, 2014–2024

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ABSTRACT
Background: Discounts for economically inactive groups — children, students, seniors, and people with disabilities, who together exceed 40% of the Czech population — are a widespread pricing tool in the public sector, yet economic literature offers no comprehensive overview of the entities providing them. **Aims**: The article maps discount provision by Czech state-funded contributory organizations (SCOs) between 2014 and 2024 and quantifies the related fiscal burden on state economic policy. **Methods**: A systematized review cataloguing relevant sources, combined with demographic and economic data drawn from national statistical, ministerial, sectoral, and OECD sources. **Sample**: SCOs established chiefly by the Ministries of Culture, the Environment, and Agriculture, spanning museums, galleries, theatres, heritage sites, and caves. **Results**: Discounted admission is a structural rather than marginal element of pricing; in 2024, discounted entries to museums and monuments exceeded full-price ones, while institutions remained dependent on founders' operating contributions to offset reduced revenue. **Conclusions**: Public discounts simultaneously widen cultural access and erode institutions' revenue potential. **Implications**: Future research should weigh discounts' fiscal against social effects and consider investment-based benefit alternatives for students.

Keywords: price discrimination, public sector discounts, state-funded contributory organizations, cultural financing, social policy

JEL Classification: D63, H42, D11

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Introduction

The pricing strategy is intricately connected to the corporate guidelines, taking into consideration not only the usage level of individual production factors but also the diverse socio-economic circumstances of customers. A common practice in this context is the utilization of discounts or concessions, which is a widely accepted tool. These discounts are not solely based on the quantitative aspect but often vary according to the type of customer. By offering benefits like discounted prices on products or services, companies show their support for specific demographic groups or consumers. In contemporary society, demands for discounts are prevalent across various economic segments, including the Czech Republic. From online stores to specialized retail outlets, there is an effort to stimulate demand from economically inactive individuals[1] through reduced pricing in commercial transactions and public services like transportation or cultural venues. These expenses, perceived as outlays rather than income in the state's economy, are complemented by socio-political measures or government subsidies. A notable example is the solidarity shown among individuals enrolled in public health insurance, constituting around 60% of the Czech population (Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, 2023).

As of the end of 2023, the Czech Statistical Office reported a population of nearly 1,700,000 individuals under 15 years old and over 2,255,000 individuals aged 65 and above (Czech Statistical Office, 2024). Additionally, there were 503,189[2] secondary school students and 319,393 university students in the country (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2024). Among the population aged 15 to 64, there were over half a million individuals with a health disability (Czech Statistical Office, 2024). Although there may be overlaps in these statuses for some individuals, collectively they account for over 40% of the total population. Due to their prolonged economic inactivity and reliance on various benefits, this demographic is closely monitored by authorities responsible for social policy regarding discount provisions. The public sector offers a diverse landscape where these groups have ample opportunities to engage not only in leisure activities but also in societal roles. The financial savings resulting from these benefits, which can be substantial, lead to diminished profits for suppliers. To offset these losses, the state provides compensation or contributions to designated organizations (Peková, 2012; Tomeš et al., 2022). Nonetheless, there is a lack of a comprehensive overview of the numerous entities offering products or services in various forms in current economic literature.

The article delves into the concept of offering discounts to specific population segments within the Czech Republic's public sector from 2014 to 2024, shedding light on state contribution organizations (referred to as SPOs) that facilitate these discounts. It quantifies the impact on the state's economic policy and details the financial support received by these entities through discounts on their offerings and compensatory funding from the state. The article also maps the physical presence of these population groups in the specific institutions benefiting from the discounts.

Within the scholarly discourse, the article explores the theoretical framework of price differentiation as a foundational principle for discount creation, alongside the legal and economic definitions of contribution organizations. It also presents current research on the topic, focusing on cost-benefit analyses for decision-making and exemplary practices from international contexts. The methodological approach is delineated, outlining the steps involved in assessing the current status of the topic and emphasizing a systematic review as a crucial methodological procedure in academic writing.

In the results section, tables present the discounts offered by individual state-sponsored organizations. Concurrently, graphical representations illustrate the sales growth of these organizations in relation to the compensation received by their founders. Visual representations will also depict the evolution of the number of individuals covered by state-provided health insurance and the corresponding expenditures incurred by these entities over time. Furthermore, specific discounts will be showcased separately based on the particular demographic group they cater to. Lastly, the debate

[1] From the point of view of professional terminology, it is necessary to distinguish between non-productive and economically inactive population, i.e., they are not synonyms in an equivalent position. The differences are defined primarily in a methodological and statistical context. This article emphasizes the following population groups: children under 15 years of age, secondary and university students, people with disabilities, and pensioners.

[2] Status as of September 30, 2024.

concerning the socio-political perspective of these initiatives and their potential future trajectory in light of the current and forthcoming economic and political trends in the Czech Republic will be addressed.

Theoretical background

Various categories of products, or distinct consumers or consumer groups, are subjected to varying prices and discounts, illustrating a practice known as price differentiation. This strategy is driven by the aim of maximizing economic profits and consumer satisfaction (Bergemann et al., 2021). To effectively implement price discrimination, three fundamental criteria need to be satisfied. Firstly, a business must identify a minimum of two market segments or consumer clusters, typically characterized by differing income levels that sellers can discern. Moreover, these customer segments exhibit varying preferences, a trend commonly observed in markets with imperfect competition. Lastly, sellers must be capable of executing a dual pricing approach, a tactic that is viewed as a simple means to boost revenue and enhance consumer welfare (Jurečka, 2018).

Pigou (2002) outlined three tiers of price discrimination that differentiate prices based on different consumers (1st tier), quantities of goods (2nd tier), and consumer groups (3rd tier) as shown below. These classifications are not mutually exclusive. The first tier represents a somewhat theoretical notion of perfection. Conversely, the third tier, considered the most prevalent form of this economic phenomenon, functions effectively when distinct groups do not engage in arbitrage, i.e., they do not trade specific goods amongst themselves. Consequently, sellers can tailor prices according to geographical locations while extending preferential pricing to wholesale customers. In the modern era, an alternative classification based on compatibility, profitability, and information complexity has been introduced (Chao, Nahata, 2021). This classification comprises, in decreasing order, complete discrimination, direct segmentation, and indirect segmentation (Rabay and Andrade, 2019).

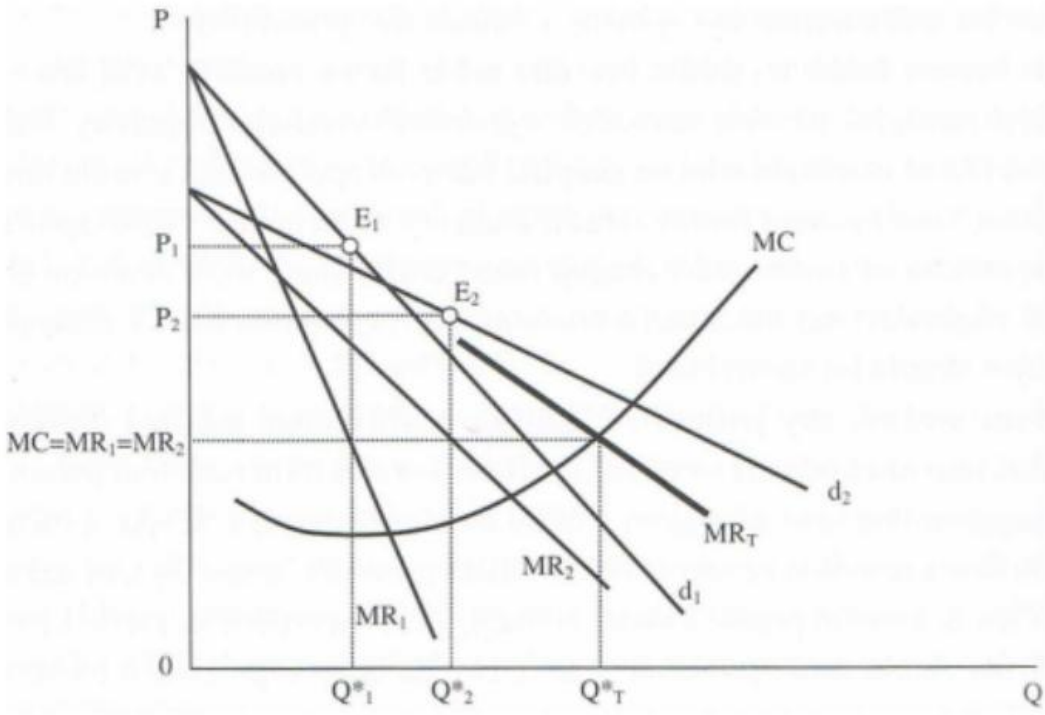

Figure 1. Third degree price discrimination

Source: Musil, 2009

The literature primarily focuses on examining the relationship between third-degree price differentiation and assessments of societal welfare, where a group of consumers paying a price above the equilibrium price is considered a strong market, while those paying a price below the equilibrium price are considered a weak market. This literature scrutinizes its potential advantages or drawbacks. The analysis indicates that societal welfare is enhanced for consumers who pay lower prices under price discrimination. Recent field-experimental evidence qualifies this picture: while aggregate consumer surplus may decline under personalized pricing, a majority of consumers still benefit from it, and under inequity-averse welfare criteria, consumer welfare may even rise (Dubé & Misra, 2023). To elevate overall societal welfare, there must be an increase in aggregate output, thereby fortifying the market. In oligopolistic markets, a specific segment may deviate from a uniform price, leading to consumption externalities within and between markets (Adachi, 2022). Recent studies in platform economics investigate these externalities within the context of imperfect competition (Belleflamme, 2021, Lu et al., 2025). The disparities between traditional third-degree price discrimination in monopolies and its contemporary interpretation in oligopolies are minimal, as both can be assessed through consumer behaviour (Wang et al., 2023). If firms exhibit symmetry, the graphical analysis applies to both scenarios. This rationale can be broadened to encompass inter-firm diversity through empirical investigations (Adams and Williams, 2019). Future theoretical advancements are anticipated to delve into third-degree price discrimination in imperfectly competitive intermediate markets (Gaudin and Lestage, 2022).

In duopoly markets, price differentiation can intensify competition and be advantageous for consumers. Nonetheless, if there is unequal access to data or processing technology, consumers may not benefit; instead, sellers and price-sensitive buyers may gain advantages (Graham and Mulley, 2012). While this may appear efficient, it disregards consumers' standards of living and raises concerns about social equity and privacy; notably, perceptions of fairness themselves differ systematically depending on whether the discriminating price is set by an algorithm or a human (Duani et al., 2024). Granting ownership of data, particularly big data, could diminish the drive to amass it and underscore the necessity for alternative data utilization methods beyond price discrimination or advertising (Ezrachi and Stucke, 2016; Dubus, 2024).

To safeguard competition and counteract market deficiencies, microeconomic policies encompass price regulation, including discounts. Mainly, these regulations target natural monopolies that exploit market participants through specific practices. Geographically, these activities are prevalent in contemporary, developed economies (Slaný, 2003). Price oversight should primarily function as a mechanism for rectifying exceptional price irregularities, to be employed with utmost care. Unauthorized interventions risk disrupting market dynamics and fostering imbalances. Measures that impede the pricing strategies of corporations, enterprises, or institutions are positioned on a fine line between contemporary economic policy and state interventionism. However, concerning long-term economic development, the regulatory perspective is as follows: gradually diminish the extent of state interventions; confine the range of goods and services subject to regulation; and adopt the principle of careful consideration of permissible costs and essential profits in sales prices (Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, 2022).

In the 1990s, the Czech Republic commenced the liberalization of its pricing policy, transitioning away from a centrally planned system[3]. Initially, these interventions affected approximately 15% of GDP and currently stand at around 5%, excluding monopolies, mainly in the procurement of goods or the provision of services through public budgets, in subsidies from the European Union, or in the collection of excise taxes (Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, 2022). State regulations also dictate the definition, calculation, and subjects of discounts. Specifically, this is governed by Act No. 634/1992 Coll. on Consumer Protection, which does not apply to the provision of services, and ad hoc measures in the public interest.

In the realm of discount provision within the public sector's institutional framework, the fundamental concept revolves around state-funded contributory organizations (SCOs). These entities,

[3] Although the state has given up all its regulatory options, it retains the authority to regulate price formation within the framework of Act No. 526/1990 Coll. (Price Act).

operating as non-profit legal bodies[4], engage in activities serving the public interest with a primary focus on delivering non-profit services (Peková et al., 2012). Their setup necessitates an independent legal identity, setting them apart from governmental structures. Collaborating with local self-governing bodies, these organizations are typically established by them and receive financial support to sustain their operations when their own revenue falls short. Additionally, these entities rely on proceeds generated through their activities, monetary contributions from individuals and corporations, foreign funding, and internal reserves for financial sustenance, such as the reserve fund, the property reproduction fund, the reward fund, and the cultural and social needs fund (Rylková, 2019). A positive financial outcome indicates enhanced economic performance, while a negative one signifies a decline. Any shortfall in an SCO's financial balance is covered by its reserve fund, the founder's budget, or the subsequent year's profits.

A pivotal aspect in funding these organizations is the allocation of their revenues. These funds, designated for state use, must[5] be managed efficiently, ensuring they are utilized solely for their intended purposes and essential requirements. This sets them apart from budgetary entities that are closely tied to their founder's budget and manage only the assets entrusted to them. The extent of the founder's financial support to contributory organizations fluctuates in accordance with changes in the state budget. In that case, the founder of an organization can order the organization to return operating funds if they exceed its needs by a significant amount (Merlíčková Růžičková, 2013). Nevertheless, this support is primarily dictated by Section 54 of Act No. 218/2000 Coll. on budgetary rules, stipulating that the contribution is determined when projected expenses, excluding state budget contributions, surpass projected revenues. Otherwise, an operational levy is computed. To standardize this contribution, it can be tied to performance-based funding, necessitating the use of relevant metrics to gauge performance accurately. By influencing the operations of these organizations in this manner, their scale and the caliber of the products or services they offer can be shaped. Nonetheless, the precise methodological assessment of the organization's quantitative and qualitative attributes remains a persistent challenge. To maximize operating contribution, SCOs can increase the number of clients served beyond the facility's capacity, while the quality of services provided remains unchanged, thus decreasing the relative contribution.

In October 2024, the Ministry of Finance recorded a total of 10,193 contributory entities in the Registry of Public Institutions, established and managed by local authorities, regions, or the government itself. The founders of these organizations are units within the state administrative bodies and are described in Figure 2. Their main areas of operation include education, culture, healthcare, and social services. These entities finance their activities primarily through self-generated revenue, such as entrance fees. They rely on operational subsidies to bridge the gap between projected and actual financial outcomes, covering variations in service pricing aimed at specific consumer segments sensitive to price changes, where prices are set differently based on their purchasing power and price elasticity of demand for a given good or service (Jurečka et al., 2018). These changes can impact the overall revenue of the institution. The planning of these subsidized programs by the government often underestimates the actual costs involved, particularly in the public transportation sector. Media discussions play a significant role in shaping the costs associated with providing discounts, focusing on the financial implications for the state budget and the effects of increased demand for discounted services (National Economic Council of the Government, 2022; Veselý, 2009). To ensure the long-term sustainability of the system, it is crucial to establish clear legislative frameworks at the national, local, and regional government levels for combined financing mechanisms involving revenues and subsidies[6] (Macharia, Baudens, 2024).

[4] The absence of an obligation to make a profit distinguishes a contributory organization from a state-owned enterprises.
[5] Based on the wording of Act No. 2018/2000 Coll., on budgetary rules and on amendments to certain related acts (budgetary rules), as amended, the SCO budget is prepared in a balanced manner and may include only costs and revenues related to services provided within the framework of the main activity.
[6] It is the decentralized nature of public support that allows for a flexible response to the specific needs of individual regions and municipalities, which is essential for the effective allocation of funds intended to compensate for the discounts provided (Kincl, 2004).

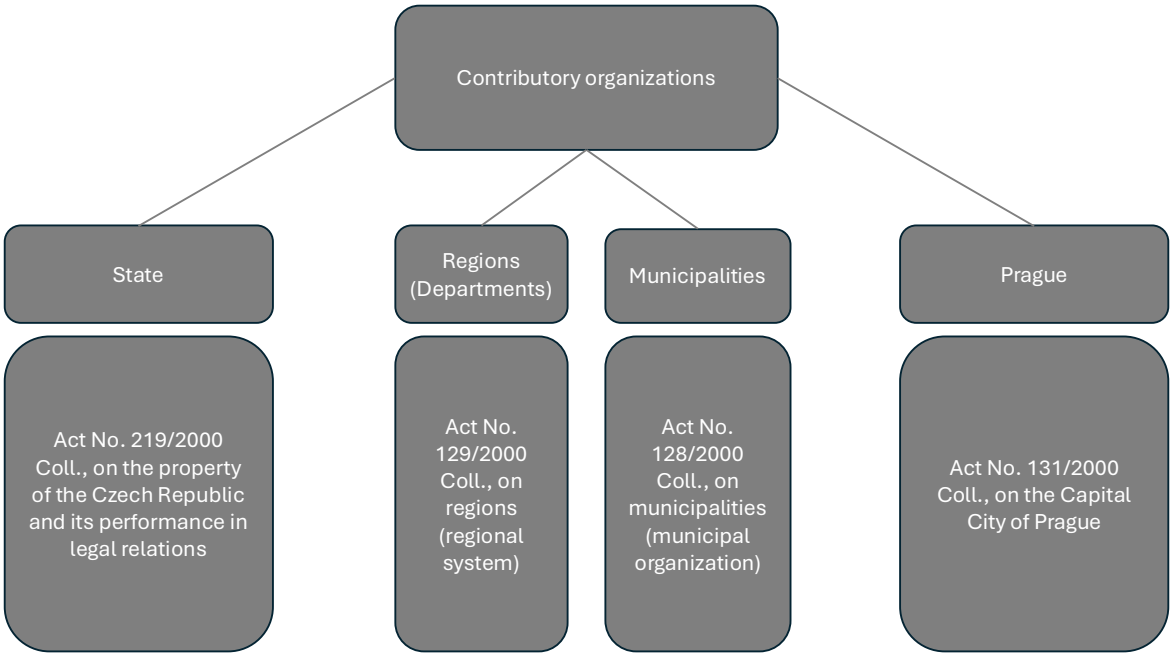

Figure 2. Founders of contributory organizations in the Czech Republic

Source: Own adaptation, https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/

Despite being a widely discussed topic with a long historical background, there is a scarcity of literature on providing discounts in the public sector. Detailed definitions and methodological guidelines are typically documented by the founding bodies of relevant institutions. In the Czech context, research is predominantly centred on a study by Tomeš et al. (2022) on public transport discounts and an older study by Scholleová and Čámská (2012) on the financing of cultural contributory organizations. These studies present the primary public policy frameworks for offering discounts. In the transportation sector, preferential travel arrangements are seen as tools to reduce individual car usage, promote sustainable mobility, and enhance accessibility for vulnerable groups. While these policies have led to increased rail passenger numbers in countries like the Czech Republic and Slovakia, particularly among pensioners, they also entail substantial fiscal costs and inefficiencies in altering the market dynamics of transportation services (Tomeš et al., 2022). More recent quasi-experimental evidence confirms that fare reductions and discounts do attract additional passengers, although the magnitude of the effect depends strongly on context and service quality (Huber et al., 2022; Wallimann et al., 2023). In the cultural domain, contributory organizations rely on public co-financing due to their low self-sufficiency, necessitating price concessions. The sector exhibits varying levels of self-sufficiency, with theatres generally being more financially independent compared to museums or galleries. Given the inconsistent funding from founders, providing discounts is viewed as a socially beneficial yet financially demanding measure (Scholleová, Čámská, 2012) – an exposure made starkly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, which tested the sector's dependence on public funding across countries (Betzler et al., 2021).

Foreign models also show considerable variability in the provision of discounts for public sector services, especially in public transport and cultural institutions. In France, the number of discounts is determined through an individual assessment by the social benefit authority, which allows for a better response to the real needs of the population and, at the same time, reduces inefficiencies in the system and the rate of non-use of claimed benefits. However, this approach increases administrative costs and can lead to system complexity that is difficult for users to understand and accept (Khoo & Mueller, 2025). For example, in Spain, the Verano Joven initiative was launched in the summer of 2023, aimed at young passengers, which included significant discounts not only on railways but also on long-distance bus lines (IRG-Rail, 2024). In Stockholm, public transport is financed not only through fares but also through tax revenues and road tolls applied to vehicles entering the city centre. The system of universal

discounts for children, students, and seniors is set up here so that all members of a given group are entitled to the same level of discount regardless of income. This practice reflects the Swedish model of a universal welfare state and, at the same time, shows the important role of mixed financing in ensuring the availability and quality of services.

Similarly, in Austria, the legislative framework allows for predictable planning of regional tariff initiatives such as KlimaTicket thanks to the guarantee of state co-financing. However, if there is a discrepancy between expected revenues and actual costs (for example, due to higher interest in discounted fares), the quality or scope of services could be reduced without additional compensation (Macharia, Baudens, 2024). Empirical evaluation of the KlimaTicket nonetheless suggests that its short-run effect on public transport demand was positive but small and statistically fragile, largely fading by 2022 (Wallimann, 2024). It can be observed that the success of introducing discount programs depends not only on their financial sustainability but also on the transparency of compensation mechanisms. Various strategies for financing, targeting, and implementing measures[7] are chosen, including voluntary mechanisms that expand the spectrum of mixed financing models to include other actors beyond state and local governments. In several European countries, compensation, or operating contribution to organizations, is set on an annual basis through budget items or negotiated grants by local authorities (Khoo & Mueller, 2025). Moreover, the value of institutions is not determined solely by direct revenues from services provided, but also by broader social benefits, such as attendance and the development of cultural capital. Methods for assessing this value that rely on preferences are not easily transferable across countries due to differences in the financing of cultural facilities (Wiśniewska et al., 2020). Overall, it can be stated that foreign models of discounting offer inspiration, especially in the areas of long-term financing planning, transparency in compensation processes, and innovative targeting of support based on data analysis of the needs of individual population groups (Rott et al., 2022).

Methodology

The following data analysis is based on the concept of a so-called systematized review. It was first described 15 years ago as a purpose-specific form of literature review, along with its associated methodology. It is the methodological requirements that distinguish it from a systematic review, especially in the scope of data search and examination, which are “too limiting” for a comprehensive systematic review. There are no specific standards or processing procedures for a systematized review, and it is usually a task for postgraduate students (Grant & Booth, 2009).

The objective of this article is to map the provision of price discounts by Czech SCOs, rather than an evaluation of the discounts’ causal effects, between 2014 and 2024 and to assess the related fiscal burden on the state’s economic policy. The descriptive ambition is deliberately framed by guiding questions:

- Which population groups are the recipients of discounts in the public sector, and how has their size developed over the monitored period?
- Which founders and which SCOs actually provide services to which a discount policy applies?
- What is the structure and magnitude of the discounts granted to individual target groups?
- How, and to what extent, are the financial consequences of these discounts reflected in the operating contributions paid to SCOs from the public resources?

[7] For example, in Switzerland and some German cities, a contribution to public transport is included in the tourist tax; this way a more stable income stream can be achieved without the need for complex individual compensation. Some employees also pay these costs, either as a tax-deductible work benefit (Germany) or even as a statutory commuting contribution (Belgium) (Khoo, Mueller, 2024).

The units considered for analysis were state-funded contributory organizations established by organizational units of the state that are, in turn, able to set a discount policy for selected population groups by providing services or selling goods. The emphasis was placed on two founders in particular — the Ministry of Culture (as the founder of most museums, theatres, and monuments) and the Ministry of the Environment (as the founder of the Caves Administration of the Czech Republic) — complemented by the Ministry of Agriculture (founder of the National Agricultural Museum and the National Stud Farm in Kladruby nad Labem). The positions of the Ministry of Transport and the General Health Insurance Company are treated as specific and fall outside the core sample: in this context, they are not founders of SCOs but actors managing, respectively, the agenda of preferential fares in public transport and the agenda of state health-insurance policyholders. Because their instruments operate through a fundamentally different mechanism — state compensation and insurance transfers rather than the erosion of an SCO's own admission revenue — and differ by orders of magnitude in fiscal scale, they are excluded from the quantitative comparison and treated only as context.

From the full Registry of Public Institutions, the sample was narrowed to SCOs that charge an entrance fee and offer services to which a discount policy genuinely applies. SCOs providing services free of charge, or at a single uniform price for all visitors, or services of a type not covered by any discount, were excluded. This yields the 27 relevant SCOs listed in Table 1, observed over the period 2014-2024.

Research on the provision of discounts by these organizations was conducted primarily by cataloguing the included studies and other relevant sources in the manner of a systematized review. The evidence base was assembled from two streams[8]. Demographic data (number of children and pupils up to the age of 14 or 15, number of secondary-school students, number of university students, number of seniors aged 65 and over, number of persons with disabilities or holders of ZTP/ZTP/P cards) were drawn from the Czech Statistical Office, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, and the OECD. Economic data underlying the figures and tables were obtained from the National Institute for Culture (Czech Cultural Institute), and the Caves Administration — that is, from institutions established by organizational units of the state or themselves acting as founders of the relevant legal entities. These were supplemented by primary legal and accounting sources: the Acts on the State Budget for 2014–2024 (Appendix "Overall overview of state budget expenditures by chapters") and the final accounts of the Ministries of Culture, Agriculture, and the Environment. The detailed visitor-structure and admission-revenue data reported in Tables 4–7 were obtained directly from the Czech Cultural Institute and the Caves Administration on the basis of requests for free access to information under the applicable provisions of Czech law. The assembled data were then systematically analysed and interpreted. As is characteristic of a systematized rather than a systematic review, the formal appraisal of source quality and the synthesis of conclusions are constrained by the small number — and in places the absence — of prior source articles and publications, so that the procedure fulfils an academic requirement more than a strict methodological one.

Results

Generally, the objective of this article is a population that already, or not yet, has sufficient economic activity that would allow it to consume goods and services at the full, higher price. This mainly concerns people aged 65 and over, as well as children under 14. Together with secondary and university

[8] In terms of the form of the sources, there were also two approaches: In terms of the form of the sources, there were also two approaches: document analysis of publicly available ones (annual reports of individual institutions, final accounts of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, acts on the state budget for 2014–2024, price lists of individual organizations, ministerial methodological documents, statistical yearbooks and public datasets) and data obtained upon request, especially where visitor structure, admission categories or annual aggregated data were not publicly available in sufficient detail.

students and people with health disabilities, this constitutes most of the non-productive population of the Czech Republic[9]. This also includes other population groups with specific socio-economic status[10].

Figure 3 below shows the population over the years, with the most visible growth in the number of seniors. The captured development confirms the long-documented trend of demographic aging of the Czech population. While the number of younger cohorts remains relatively stable in the monitored period, the senior category is growing continuously and expanding the most significantly of all monitored groups.

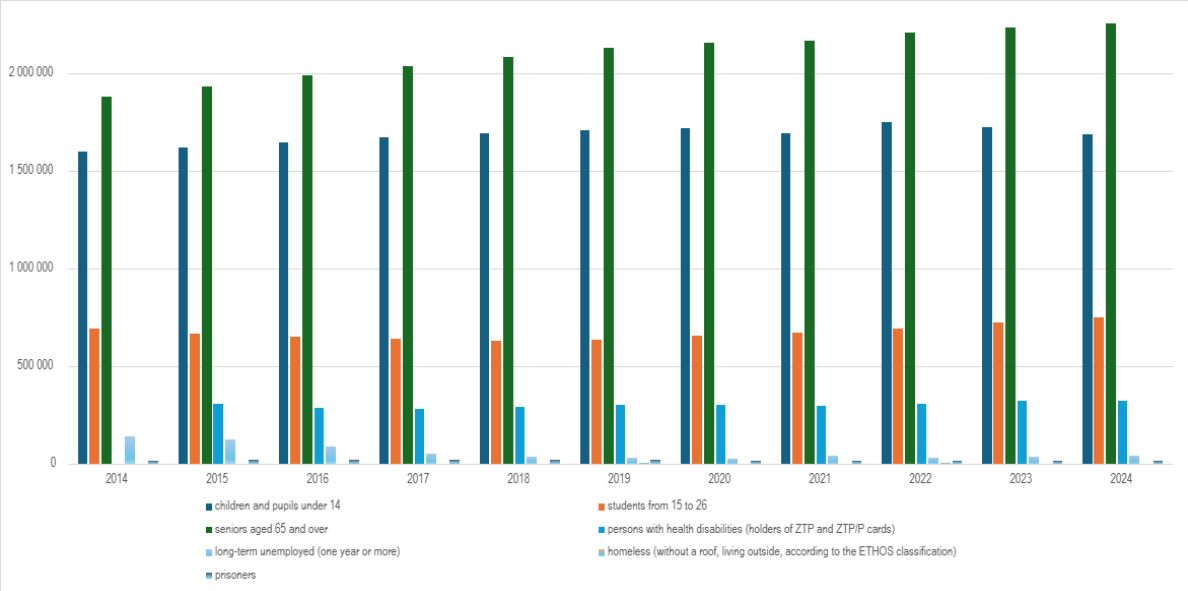

Figure 3. Development of the number of non-productive or economically inactive population in the Czech Republic from 2014 to 2024

Source: *own adaptation, data from the Czech Statistical Office (https://vdb.czso.cz/vdbvo2/), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (https://dsia.msmt.cz/vystupy/vu_vs_f2.html), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (https://mpsv.gov.cz/statisticka-rocenka-z-oblasti-prace-a-socialnich-veci-archiv), The Prison Service of the Czech Republic (https://www.vs.gov.cz/sekce/statisticke-rocenky-vezenske-sluzby), OECD (https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/11/data-on-homelessness-2024-country-notes_d0959ab4/czechia_5db5ac61/3dbbd1bf-en.pdf)*

The functioning of SCOs, or organizational units of the state, is based on their founders. In this case, to individual ministries, to which funds are allocated from the state budget each year, as shown below in Figure 4. The largest chapter is, of course, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Family, due to the payment of old-age pensions and other social benefits. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports follows with a considerable distance and its expenditure on state and public forms of education. Total expenditures from the state budget for ministries are shown in the table below. The subject of this study is mainly ministries under whose administration relevant SCOs operate, i.e., those that provide discounts to selected groups of the population. These are the Ministry of Culture (as the organizing institution of most museums, theatres, and monuments), the Ministry of the Environment (as the organizing institution of the Caves Administration of the Czech Republic), the Ministry of Agriculture

[9] In 2024, this number exceeded 5 million, i.e., approximately half of the Czech population.
[10] Possible differences in the definitions of the non-productive and economically inactive populations will not be considered. For the purposes of this text, they can be viewed as synonymous terms.

(as the organizing institution of the National Agricultural Museum and the National Stud Farm in Kladruby and Labem), and the Ministry of the Interior[11].

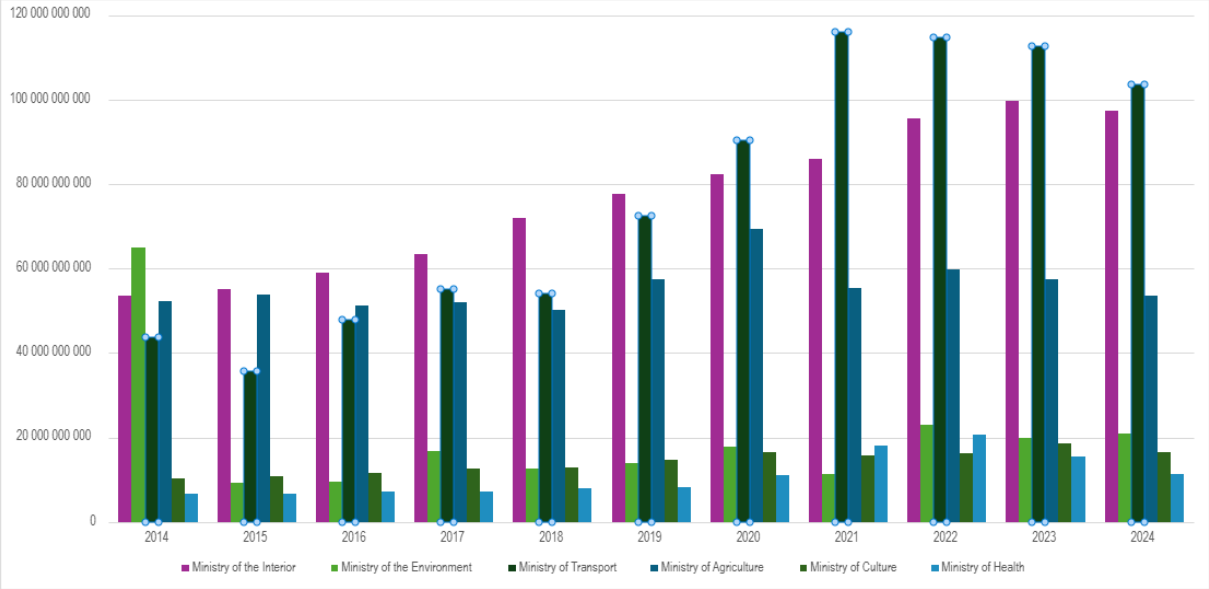

Figure 4. Allocated amounts from the state budget to selected ministries of the Czech Republic in the years 2014 to 2024, in billions of CZK

Source: Own adaptation, Acts on the State Budget of the Czech Republic for the years 2014 to 2024, Appendix "Overall overview of state budget expenditures by chapters", https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/

While the ministries themselves fall under the definition of organizational units of the state and manage state property, the SCOs established by them generate their own income through their activities, which is supplemented by contributions from the founders to compensate for losses caused by the active discount policy. These losses can also be offset, e.g., by internal redistribution, when the SPO compensates for the loss of sales through other commercial activities or sponsorship sources. Figure 5 below shows the number of SPOs in individual ministries[12]. For substantive reasons, selected SPOs from the Ministries of Culture, the Environment, and Agriculture will be analysed further.

Given the nature of SPOs, it is necessary to add that, in this context, they are mostly understood as administrators of individual objects that collect entrance fees to provide services. These are mainly castles and chateaux (under the administration of the SPO National Monument Institute) or accessible caves (under the administration of the SPO Cave Management of the Czech Republic). In other cases, the objects under study represent independent SPOs with their own identification numbers and management processes. The business of some SPOs does not offer the type of services covered by a discount policy, or these organisations provide services free of charge or at a universal, uniform price for all clients and visitors. Therefore, the SPOs listed in Table 1 are relevant to the issue under study.

[11] The activities of the Police Museum of the Czech Republic under the Ministry of the Interior are directly linked to the ministry's budget, and, as an organizational unit of the state, it transfers all income from entrance fees back to the budget.
[12] At the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the higher numbers are mainly due to the presence of many schools, hospitals, spas, and hygiene facilities.

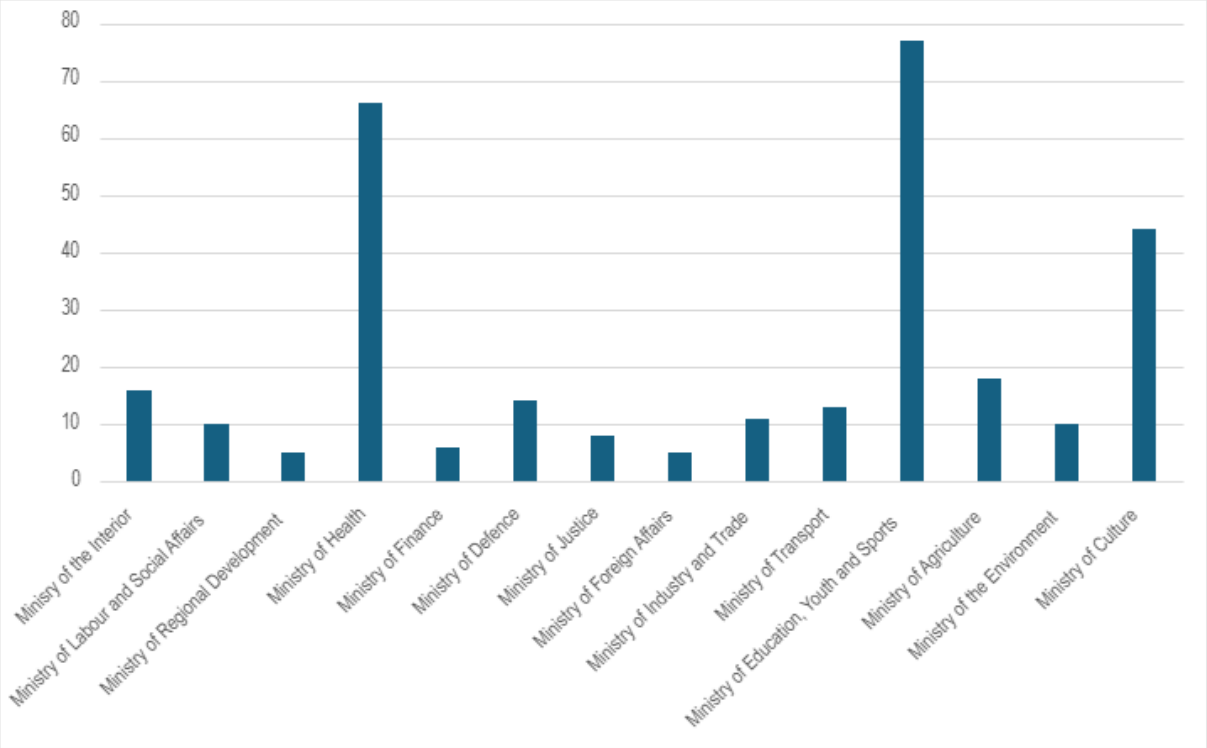

Figure 5. Number of SCOs by individual ministries
Source: Own adaptation, websites of individual ministries

Table 1. List of relevant SCOs in the Czech Republic providing services with the possibility of discounts

National Heritage Institute
Caves Administration of the Czech Republic
National Theatre
National Museum
National Literature Museum
Museum of Applied Arts
National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius
National Gallery in Prague
National Agricultural Museum, Prague
National Technical Museum, Prague
Lidice Memorial
Hussite Museum in Tábor
Museum of Glass and Costume Jewelry in Jablonec nad Nisou
Terezín Memorial
Museum of Puppet Cultures in Chrudim
Krkonoše Museum, Vrchlabí
Moravian Provincial Museum, Brno
Technical Museum, Brno
Museum of Roma Culture, Brno
Moravian Gallery in Brno
National Institute of Folk Culture, Strážnice
Museum of Jan Amos Comenius in Uherský Brod
Museum of Art Olomouc
Silesian Provincial Museum, Opava
Wallachian Open Air Museum, Rožnov p. Radhoštěm
National Stud Kladruby nad Labem
Prague Castle

Source: Own adaptation, Caves Administration of the Czech Republic, Czech Cultural Institute

As mentioned above, in the case of SPOs established by ministries, these include castles, chateaux, monuments, theatres, museums[13], and 14 caves that charge an entrance fee. In addition to preferential treatment for specific groups of the population, children, adolescents, students, seniors, and people with disabilities, there are often also special types of discounts for families, school groups, or holders of professional or departmental cards, which are considered more of a commercial, retail strategy than a social policy tool. Since the focus of this overview is on groups that represent objects of state social policy, the table below lists discounts for children and adolescents, students, seniors, and people with disabilities. These discounts, as shown below in Table 2, are mostly listed in interval values, as different conditions are set for individual objects, whether in terms of age or the obligation to provide identification[14].

Table 2. Overview of discounts provided in the SCOs in the Czech Republic

	Children and adolescents	Students under 26	Seniors aged 65 and over	People with disabilities (ZŤP) / guides
National Heritage Institute	70% - 100%	20%	20%	20% / 100%
Caves Administration of the Czech Republic	44% - 56%	8% - 25%		44% - 56%
National Theatre	50%			
National Museum	20% - 100%	20% - 40%		100%
National Literature Monument in Prague	100%			
Museum of Applied Arts in Prague	46% - 100%	46% - 60%		100%
National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J.A.Comenius	56%	45%		100%
National Gallery in Prague	33% - 100%	33% - 44%		100%
National Agricultural Museum, Prague	25% - 100%	17% - 60%		25% - 100%
National Technical Museum, Prague	25% - 75%	25% - 40%		
Lidice Memorial	53%			
Hussite Museum in Tábor	25% - 100%	25% - 43%		100%
Museum of Glass and Costume Jewelry in Jablonec nad Nisou	38% - 100%	38% - 69%		100%
Terezín Memorial	23% - 100%	23%		100%
Museum of Puppet Cultures in Chrudim	45% - 100%	45%		
Krkonoše Museum, Vrchlabí	43% - 100%	60%		
Moravian Provincial Museum, Brno	25% - 100%	25% - 50%		100%
Technical Museum in Brno	50% - 100%	50%		100%
Museum of Roma Culture, Brno	50% - 100%	50%		100%
Moravian Gallery in Brno	50% - 100%	50%		100%
National Institute of Folk Culture, Strážnice	57% - 100%	57%		100%
Museum of Jan Amos Comenius in Uherský Brod	50% - 100%	29% - 50%		50 CZK flat rate
Museum of Art Olomouc	32% - 100%	32% - 47%		
Silesian Provincial Museum, Opava	33% - 100%	33% - 50%		100%

[13] Specifically, 106 castles, chateaux, and monuments, 22 museums, and 1 theater.
[14] The youngest children have free entry to most facilities until they reach the ages of 3 to 6, and subsequently, in older school age and adolescence, this discount ranges from 20 to 50 percent. University students and people with disabilities must present a document proving their entitlement to a discount (ZTP/P cards, ISIC, etc.).

Wallachian Open Air Museum, Rožnov p. Radhoštěm	50% - 100%	21% - 25%	100%
National stud farm Kladruby nad Labem	17% - 100%	17% - 50% (free assistance for disabled people)	
Prague Castle	33% - 100%	33%	100%

Source: Own adaptation, websites of individual contributory organizations

From the above-allocated amounts from the state budget for individual ministries, contributions for operations, renovation, and development are paid to state-funded organizations. For this overview, these expenses can be understood as a basic operating contribution under accounting item 5331 - Non-investment contributions to established funded organizations. Discounts on admission fees provided by state-funded organizations do not have to be reported as separate compensation for "lost profits". The financial impact is usually reflected in lower organizational revenues and, therefore, in a greater need to cover the difference between costs and revenues of the main activity through an operating contribution. If this shortfall is part of the founder's general operating financing, it can be methodologically linked to item 5331. However, if financial support is provided as a separate purpose-bound non-investment transfer to a specific program, measure, or compensation, it is more appropriate to distinguish it from the basic operating contribution and classify it under item 5336 - Non-investment transfers to established contributing organizations. The eventual overview of non-investment contributions is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Non-investment contributions paid to SCOs of selected Czech ministries in the years 2014 to 2024

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Moravian Regional Library Brno	70 973 228,00	106 072 409,00	113 995 268,00	124 682 549,00	152 699 870,00	215 116 400,00	204 873 700,00	341 314 750,00	201 490 840,00	191 558 791,57	189 365 620,00
National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague	311 863 028,00	508 735 346,00	517 238 210,00	563 855 399,00	593 483 640,00	658 974 210,00	698 421 400,00	659 303 640,00	604 643 430,00	692 162 035,66	1 022 362 180,00
Moravian Gallery in Brno	64 208 401,00	83 588 466,00	81 281 317,00	93 192 974,00	95 329 980,00	118 403 640,00	219 014 260,00	195 363 100,00	130 882 510,00	319 238 779,09	211 834 010,00
Moravian Regional Museum in Brno	78 211 857,00	124 083 491,00	116 384 145,00	163 667 249,00	187 653 050,00	171 952 280,00	228 250 720,00	299 388 030,00	235 696 530,00	209 473 200,74	236 862 660,00
Jan Amos Comenius Museum Uherský Brod	11 871 481,00	13 323 718,00	16 608 596,00	17 782 282,00	21 092 620,00	26 098 530,00	23 253 610,00	35 005 980,00	21 516 350,00	24 912 470,00	23 371 080,00
Museum of Puppet Cultures in Chrudim	9 159 580,00	17 786 350,00	17 418 006,00	17 326 279,00	16 511 960,00	17 000 730,00	19 689 630,00	17 352 160,00	19 666 700,00	18 094 200,00	19 815 280,00
National Gallery in Prague	230 469 547,00	276 821 065,00	336 302 693,00	341 574 824,00	352 426 260,00	331 515 240,00	450 513 620,00	421 073 880,00	411 861 900,00	442 568 854,04	431 391 500,00
National Museum Prague	298 447 746,00	470 894 571,00	611 082 184,00	962 673 482,00	1 228 431 680,00	1 516 235 980,00	769 013 730,00	831 791 170,00	632 195 580,00	651 942 437,03	689 144 320,00

National Technical Museum Prague	74 691 642,00	250 932 263,00	118 973 643,00	132 660 717,00	150 359 470,00	141 570 440,00	184 470 330,00	278 510 910,00	288 039 060,00	285 658 856,48	183 025 690,00
Monument of National Literature	43 513 308,00	169 491 796,00	75 754 505,00	114 798 569,00	241 210 050,00	211 557 650,00	174 829 610,00	156 814 840,00	138 015 820,00	123 051 156,06	120 674 420,00
Terezín Memorial	26 022 278,00	53 431 694,00	37 444 441,00	47 469 497,00	47 400 400,00	60 030 110,00	107 394 690,00	102 546 740,00	85 665 650,00	88 277 297,24	73 258 510,00
Silesian Regional Museum in Opava	51 386 910,00	69 674 283,00	79 168 827,00	77 861 618,00	103 223 230,00	86 695 940,00	114 472 820,00	136 258 880,00	158 826 430,00	103 405 617,05	91 542 210,00
Technical Museum in Brno	62 691 937,00	78 805 533,00	116 376 979,00	100 556 328,00	96 860 180,00	104 290 120,00	136 375 110,00	146 928 730,00	129 249 010,00	125 126 326,03	144 109 110,00
Museum of Applied Arts in Prague	41 517 455,00	358 247 219,00	334 153 310,00	150 522 331,00	122 031 550,00	106 142 940,00	104 258 110,00	138 301 720,00	146 749 400,00	112 775 437,20	116 590 300,00
Wallachian Open Air Museum	51 903 908,00	87 289 787,00	70 960 517,00	61 666 035,00	73 659 960,00	122 284 330,00	146 154 380,00	138 346 980,00	279 450 750,00	233 673 731,32	166 387 370,00
Museum of Arts Olomouc	36 282 410,00	43 199 493,00	64 454 371,00	57 068 545,00	57 406 030,00	69 601 380,00	67 731 620,00	95 515 810,00	131 537 880,00	174 865 215,60	125 217 360,00
Hussite Museum in Tábor	16 174 692,00	36 416 233,00	27 802 368,00	33 148 589,00	62 045 090,00	47 097 110,00	52 658 240,00	60 908 180,00	42 956 710,00	72 223 803,46	56 517 700,00
Museum of Glass and Costume Jewelry in Jablonec nad Nisou	13 352 803,00	18 022 341,00	32 563 842,00	24 544 771,00	27 320 300,00	44 030 530,00	61 420 090,00	34 240 300,00	35 768 560,00	47 981 410,87	46 310 370,00
National Heritage Institute	631 609 384,00	1 397 752 133,00	1 060 503 496,00	1 160 394 886,00	1 393 028 590,00	1 594 284 710,00	2 153 912 030,00	2 297 727 000,00	2 329 682 420,00	2 754 053 034,71	1 841 944 790,00
National Information and Counseling Center for Culture (Czech Cultural Institute since 1.7.2025)	27 836 885,00	35 755 410,00	34 196 576,00	38 015 599,00	42 791 620,00	45 695 270,00	46 185 460,00	45 869 840,00	49 050 160,00	53 969 862,00	56 910 310,00
National Institute of Folk Culture, Strážnice	25 991 429,00	48 006 356,00	38 339 798,00	40 232 386,00	42 384 560,00	52 994 610,00	82 831 850,00	73 822 590,00	97 406 510,00	101 197 624,18	84 107 130,00
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra Prague	139 066 922,00	164 705 205,00	155 296 920,00	187 193 538,00	262 533 150,00	243 297 550,00	284 236 140,00	347 747 050,00	266 477 020,00	305 908 360,87	330 125 040,00
Institute of Arts - Theatre Institute Prague	18 971 902,00	63 939 080,00	41 987 523,00	61 337 320,00	75 967 140,00	97 743 860,00	81 306 130,00	79 919 170,00	82 151 840,00	109 450 724,54	121 673 170,00

National Theatre Prague	596 929 331,00	695 385 075,00	1 028 579 304,00	890 357 950,00	1 258 216 580,00	1 534 824 570,00	1 735 607 030,00	1 306 830 940,00	1 081 941 610,00	1 132 725 977,68	1 045 626 810,00
Prague Philharmonic Choir	32 726 116,00	35 037 615,00	41 553 544,00	48 060 827,00	61 156 680,00	57 089 110,00	65 774 020,00	66 806 590,00	65 230 430,00	71 992 945,00	80 492 280,00
National Film Archive Prague	39 411 063,00	92 918 339,00	177 039 365,00	75 302 579,00	83 949 100,00	118 640 260,00	101 306 990,00	104 782 570,00	119 835 140,00	134 399 761,73	117 918 680,00
Lidice Monument	21 397 456,00	26 518 582,00	29 555 416,00	26 042 691,00	33 444 380,00	29 410 780,00	36 301 630,00	34 045 400,00	44 714 530,00	31 802 011,00	33 226 350,00
Museum of Roma Culture in Brno	9 938 510,00	11 957 376,00	13 592 766,00	16 693 842,00	476 315 790,00	32 279 880,00	37 364 220,00	38 942 750,00	50 437 930,00	131 601 146,25	69 225 270,00
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
National Agricultural Museum	50 014 278	52 797 084	63 001 756	99 960 915	121 964 972	94 944 932	110 822 130	119 985 978	117 473 986	138 867 231	138 507 512
National Stud Farm Kladruby nad Labem	90 094 785	127 310 178	103 369 124	111 977 122	133 796 980	122 011 744	148 343 141	144 220 547	156 663 688	209 376 015	191 727 801
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Cave Administration of the Czech Republic	10 950 000	10 200 000	9 800 000	9 800 000	9 000 000	7 600 000	6 650 000	29 511 000	10 693 000	9 539 000	8 599 000

Source: Own adaptation, Final accounts of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (https://mk.gov.cz/zaverecny-ucet-cs-1326), the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic (https://mze.gov.cz/public/portal/mze/ministerstvo-zemedelstvi/povinne-zverejnovane-informace/statni-zaverecny-ucet-kapitoly-329), and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic (https://mzp.gov.cz/cz/ministerstvo/informace-o-hospodareni-resortu/zaverecny-ucet-kapitoly-315-mzp)

Discounted admissions represent a significant, long-term, stable part of the visitor policy, but their weight varies across sectors. The data below in Tables 4 to 6 shows that in theatres, the number of visitors in 2014–2019 ranged between approximately 466–573 thousand people per year, while admission revenue fluctuated between 251–310 million CZK; after a significant drop in the pandemic years 2020–2021, the sector recovered in terms of revenue to 348.1 million CZK by 2024, although attendance remained slightly below the 2014 level. Since 2018, there has been more systematic evidence of discounts for people with disabilities, students, and seniors, with students and seniors being the most numerous categories. Museums and galleries also show a recovery in attendance after the pandemic decline. From 2.48 million visitors in 2014, they increased to more than 3 million in 2024, while revenue from admission fees increased from CZK 132.1 million to CZK 264.0 million. It is significant that in 2024 the number of entries with a discounted admission fee exceeded the number of full admissions, which indicates a high role of price concessions in the visitor structure. In terms of both attendance and revenue, cultural heritage sites are the most significant: after a peak in 2017–2019 and a pandemic decline in 2020–2021, their attendance recovered to 7.29 million people in 2024, while revenue reached its highest value in the monitored period, namely CZK 1.549 billion. At the same time, the high absolute number of discounted admissions to monuments is evident, amounting to 2.61 million in 2024, i.e., a significant share of all paying visitors. For theatres, only the number of units providing a discount and its amount are listed until 2018. Since 2018, the average discount amount and the number of tickets sold with this discount have been listed. For museums, the methodology for reporting family admission changed in 2022. This was included in the reduced admission fee. Similarly, for monuments, since 2022, family admission has been included in the reduced admission fee.

Table 4. Structure of customers and sales at theatres with the status of SCOs

Year		"Admission revenue [in thousand CZK]"	"Until 2017 number of units providing a discount Since 2018 avg. discount in [%] for "			Until 2017, the average discount Since 2018, the number of tickets with this discount for		
	Number of visitors		Disabled	Students	Seniors	Disabled	Students	Seniors
2014	572 524	280 654	1	-	-	50	-	-
2015	559 624	303 281	1	-	-	50	-	-
2016	562 311	309 869	1	-	-	50	-	-
2017	513 503	250 906	2	-	-	40	-	-
2018	493 124	262 377	50	50	50	2 120	50 020	14 442
2019	465 672	279 879	50	50	50	2 117	29 630	14 808
2020	153 662	94 786	50	50	50	827	8 078	4 787
2021	158 557	86 586	50	50	50	443	7 382	13 076
2022	426 659	225 035	50	50	50	999	17 942	33 272
2023	505 491	312 717	50	50	50	1 259	33 048	33 112
2024	542 834	348 144	50	50	50	1 301	23 232	37 794

Source: Own adaptation, Czech Cultural Institute (the data was obtained based on a request for free access to information according to the statutory provisions of the Czech legal order)

Table 5. Structure of customers and sales at museums and galleries with the status of SCOs

Year		of which for the entrance fee					Admission revenue [in thousand CZK]
	Number of visitors	Full admission fee	Reduced admission fee	Increased fee for special services	Family admission	Non-paying visitors	
2014	2 482 326	647 016	792 687	162 910	231 841	647 872	132 148,1
2015	2 623 578	821 900	782 908	66 810	219 461	732 499	143 156,3
2016	3 038 121	831 585	1 011 945	81 169	267 456	845 966	166 557,9
2017	3 236 792	885 163	910 390	73 321	286 774	1 081 144	183 813,9
2018	3 373 829	839 245	950 103	83 916	297 720	1 202 845	191 848,4
2019	3 122 293	944 566	823 684	18 948	274 948	1 060 147	183 810,1
2020	1 577 316	500 623	322 326	13 292	200 785	540 290	85 522,0
2021	1 600 094	509 356	357 009	12 311	216 066	505 352	108 517,6
2022	2 576 872	821 608	905 128	77 397	-	772 739	181 588,4
2023	2 957 690	894 556	1 114 720	79 564	-	868 850	245 616,8
2024	3 031 233	887 249	1 058 094	71 814	-	1 014 076	264 028,6

Source: Own adaptation, Czech Cultural Institute (the data was obtained based on a request for free access to information according to the statutory provisions of the Czech legal order)

Table 6. Structure of customers and sales at monuments with cultural use with the status of SCOs

Year							Admission revenue [in thousand CZK]
	Number of visitors	of which for entrance fee					
		Full admission fee	Reduced admission fee	Increased fee for special services	Family admission	Non-paying visitors	
2014	6 288 026	3 356 710	1 727 744	707 436	111 016	385 120	699 851,1
2015	6 819 686	3 723 555	1 829 179	766 548	81 775	418 629	780 871,6
2016	8 528 113	4 637 272	2 222 737	963 164	115 587	589 353	910 882,7
2017	8 752 948	4 818 252	2 177 889	1 100 318	111 149	545 340	1 071 131,6
2018	7 753 552	4 432 237	1 839 574	946 303	67 514	467 924	994 330,4
2019	8 530 446	4 591 452	1 957 771	1 350 775	144 989	485 459	1 127 536,6
2020	4 636 940	2 230 269	896 606	1 141 602	35 015	333 448	525 942,6
2021	4 341 891	2 658 930	1 321 528	99 617	7 633	254 183	476 128,1
2022	5 679 706	3 275 104	2 097 942	-	7 669	298 991	814 019,5
2023	5 857 292	3 682 687	1 917 732	-	4 244	252 629	1 006 930,3
2024	7 286 634	4 352 478	2 611 405	-	5 777	316 974	1 549 030,9

Source: Own adaptation, Czech Cultural Institute (the data was obtained based on a request for free access to information according to the statutory provisions of the Czech legal order)

The discount policy of the Cave Administration of the Czech Republic shows a relatively stable structure in the monitored period. As standard, it combines full admission with several forms of reduced admission: reduced, children's, family, and free. In terms of visitor structure, the dominant group remains adults, whose share from 2022 to 2024, analysed in more detail, ranged from 50% to 52% of the total number of visitors. This was followed by children at approximately 30%, and seniors and university students at 15%. The share of non-paying visitors, which was low and stable at 3% throughout the monitored period, indicates greater reliance on price differentiation than on free entrances. In recent years, as shown in Table 7, revenue from entrance fees has recovered after the pandemic slump. From 107.3 million CZK in 2022, they reached almost 123 million CZK in 2024, i.e., the levels of 2018 and 2019. In the sales structure, adult visitors accounted for approximately 65% of income. A special benefit in the form of free entry applies to children aged 3 and over, guides of persons with disabilities, members of speleological societies, kindergartens, or mass groups of children with disabilities. From a methodological perspective, it is a multi-layered system that integrates social functions, tourism support, and professional benefits.

Table 7. Structure of customers and sales at caves in the Czech Republic

Year							Admission revenue [in thousand CZK]
	Number of visitors	of which for entrance fee					
		Full admission fee	Reduced admission fee	Increased fee for special services	Family admission	Non-paying visitors	
2022	681 866	351 171	211 199	86 391	9 038	23 810	107 348 483,00
2023	714 394	364 995	205 387	102 070	10 514	23 713	126 467 856,00
2024	683 707	344 576	205 387	102 070	8 988	22 673	122 633 684,00

Source: Own adaptation, Caves Administration of the Czech Republic (the data was obtained based on a request for free access to information according to the statutory provisions of the Czech legal order)

Discussion

Overall, it can be stated that discounted admission does not represent a marginal social benefit but rather a structural element of the pricing policy of state-established cultural institutions. It simultaneously affects their revenue potential, visitor accessibility, and the need for public funding. As an important part of the pricing strategy, discounts help to preserve the availability of natural and cultural heritage for more sensitive groups in the population without fundamentally disrupting the organization's income stability.

The provision of discounts by institutions is conditioned primarily by the number of recipients, i.e., the population that has the status that entitles it to a discount. This entitlement does not arise automatically, however, but is the result of multilateral debates between individual actors. The goal is to achieve reconciliation as a construct of social policy and as its principle of solidarity. More often neglected groups are the long-term unemployed, homeless people living outside, and prisoners with the status of accused and convicted persons, together with inmates in detention institutions. In these cases, it is necessary to look more carefully at the methodological approach to defining their states; however, this is not the population to which the discount policy of relevant economic entities is addressed.

It is worth mentioning the specific case of two organizational components of the state, namely the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Transport, which are not primarily discounts provided by contributory organizations, but rather broader public policy instruments financed from the state budget. Its deliberate exclusion from the quantitative comparison is itself analytically informative. Instruments of both ministries operate through a different mechanism and at a far larger order of magnitude than the own-revenue erosion examined here, which means the discount system mapped in this study represents only one, comparatively modest, layer of the broader public-discount architecture. A further equity caveat deserves attention: because subsidized cultural services are disproportionately consumed by groups with higher cultural capital and education, the redistributive intent of price concessions is not automatically realized, and the question of *who actually benefits* warrants dedicated empirical scrutiny.

In effect, examined discounts are an implicit transfer – a deliberate forgoing of revenue in pursuit of a social policy objective. The economic weight of this trade-off is not uniform across the sector. The data revealed pronounced heterogeneity in self-sufficiency: theatres recover admission revenue comparatively well and depend less on price concessions, whereas museums, galleries, and monuments remain more reliant on founders' contributions, a pattern consistent with the differing levels of self-sufficiency reported by Scholleová and Čámská (2012). The Caves Administration represents a third

model, in which a stable, multi-layered system of reduced fares – rather than free entry – sustains accessibility while preserving income stability, as shown by the consistently low share of non-paying visitors.

Conclusion

The article examined the provision of public discounts in selected Czech state-funded contributory organizations between 2014 and 2024, focusing mainly on cultural, heritage, museum, gallery, theatre, cave, agricultural, and monument institutions established by central state administration bodies. The analysis showed that discounted admission is not a marginal or occasional benefit, but a stable component of Czech state-funded contributory organizations between 2014 and 2024, focusing mainly on cultural, heritage, museum, gallery, theatre, cave, agricultural, and monument institutions, established of the pricing policy of these organizations. Discounts are most often directed at children and adolescents, students, seniors, and people with disabilities, while many institutions also apply special regimes for families, school groups, professional cardholders, or members of selected associations. The results further indicate that the economic significance of these discounts differs across sectors. Theatres, museums and galleries, and heritage monuments experienced a sharp decline in visitors and admission revenues during the pandemic years, followed by a gradual recovery. At the same time, discounted and non-paying admissions remained an important part of the visitor structure, especially in museums, galleries, and monuments. This confirms that public discounts simultaneously serve two roles: they improve access to publicly provided cultural and educational services, but they also reduce the revenue potential of institutions that are already dependent on operating contributions from their founders.

Several limitations qualify these findings. Methodologically, the study is a systematized rather than a systematic review: the scarcity, and in places absence, of prior literature constrains formal quality appraisal and the synthesis of conclusions. Empirically, the discounts in Table 2 are reported as interval values because eligibility conditions differ across objects, so no single precise rate can be assigned to a group; more importantly, the fiscal cost of the discounts cannot be measured directly, since it is absorbed into general operating contributions (item 5331) or purpose-bound transfers (item 5336) rather than reported as compensation, and the contribution figures in Table 3 therefore reflect total non-investment support, not the discount-attributable share. The scope is deliberately bounded to SCOs founded by central state bodies (chiefly the Ministries of Culture, the Environment, and Agriculture); regional and municipal contributory organizations are not included, and the large transport and health-insurance instruments are set aside because their mechanism and scale differ fundamentally — so the totals reported here understate the full system of public discounts. Finally, the visitor-structure data in Tables 4–7 were obtained via the Act on Free Access to Information and are aggregated at the sector level rather than by individual object or group, and a change in reporting methodology (the reclassification of family admission into reduced admission from 2022) limits strict inter-year comparability.

Further research should therefore move from descriptive mapping towards an evaluation of the real economic and social effects of these discounts. It would be useful to compare the fiscal cost of discounted admission with its actual impact on participation, accessibility, cultural capital, and social inclusion among the supported groups. A more detailed methodology for reporting discounted tickets, non-paying visitors, and compensation mechanisms would also improve transparency and allow comparisons across ministries and institutions. In the case of students, the current system of consumption-based benefits, such as reduced admission fees or transport discounts, could be critically compared with alternative instruments aimed at long-term individual development. One possible direction is an investment-based benefit model, for example, a state-supported savings or investment account, an educational and cultural capital account, or a targeted public contribution linked to study progression and future social participation. Such an approach would not necessarily replace existing discounts, which remain important for immediate accessibility, but it could complement them by shifting part of public support from short-term price relief towards long-term capacity building, financial resilience, and intergenerational fairness.

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