



OSCE Factsheet Prague Office of OSCE Secretariat

Prague Office of OSCE Secretariat

CSCE/OSCE Archives and Centre for Documentation

Prague Office at a glance

- One of the oldest and smallest parts of the OSCE;
- Comprised of seven staff members headed by a senior diplomat seconded by the Czech Republic (currently Ambassador Jiří Parkmann);
- Main goal: supporting, preserving, and improving access and availability of CSCE/OSCE's institutional memory by various means (through intranet, public website and regular dissemination to depositary libraries and subscribers);
- Runs the OSCE Researcher-in-Residence Programme.

Origins and history

In 1991 the city of Prague became the seat of the newly established Secretariat of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). This first step towards the institutionalization of the CSCE followed the decision of the 1990 Paris Summit and a formal invitation by the then-President Vaclav Havel.

The mandate of the Secretariat encompassed four basic tasks:

- provide administrative support to the meetings of the CSCE Council of Ministers and of the Committee of Senior Officials – key decision-making bodies;
- maintain an archive of CSCE documentation and circulate documents as requested by the participating States;
- disseminate information about the CSCE to individuals, non-governmental and international organizations and non-participating States;
- support Executive Secretaries of the CSCE summit meetings, follow-up meetings and inter-session meetings.

From 1991 to 1994, the Prague-based Secretariat remained at the forefront of the CSCE institutionalization process, monitoring the first deployment of CSCE field operations, managing and sometimes servicing meetings of key decision-making bodies such as the Committee of Senior Officials, Councils of Ministers and the Summits (Helsinki 1992 and Budapest 1994), as well as emergency meetings on the crisis in Yugoslavia and on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. The CSCE Secretariat co-ordinated its work with the Office for Free Elections (later the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) in Warsaw and the Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna – the two other CSCE institutions also established by the Paris Summit.

In 1994, the CSCE changed its status and became the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The Secretariat moved to a larger Vienna-based organizational structure which incorporated the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC). This new structure provided direct support to permanent negotiating and decision-making bodies established in Vienna, and was better-positioned to monitor a growing number of field operations.

As a result of these transitions, the Prague Office kept two of its initial functions: it remained the CSCE/OSCE historical archives repository and continued to disseminate public information.



Prague Office today

Ongoing projects

With the aim to preserve and share CSCE/OSCE institutional memory, the Prague Office of the OSCE Secretariat, as the OSCE documentation centre, works on **digitizing substantial paper collections** and offers them on the OSCE intranet and on the public website; it is also engaged in publishing activities and provides reference services.

The Office manages the **Researcher-in-Residence Programme** which support representatives of academic and international community conducting research on CSCE/OSCE-related matters in the Prague archives.

In 2010, the Office initiated a **CSCE/OSCE Oral History Project**. The expected outcome of the project is a series of publications based on interviews with prominent officials and public figures involved in the Helsinki process and all three subsequent CSCE follow-up meetings (1972-1989).

In co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, the Prague Office also provides administrative and logistical support to annual meetings of the **OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum** – the key event of the OSCE's work in economic and environmental dimension of security. The Forum is hosted by the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic. Over the past 20 years, the Prague Office team has helped organize 18 such meetings and one preparatory conference, each bringing some 400 participants to Prague each year.

Four times a year, the Prague Office **disseminates official publications**, including the *OSCE Magazines*, CD compilations and a large number of conference documents to more than 2,900 subscribers worldwide, as well as to 67 official OSCE depository libraries. Subscribers can select and order documents and publications from a list the Office prepares for each quarterly mailing.

Since 1995 the Office has also been offering **presentations about the OSCE** and its history to groups of students visiting Prague.

Archives

The Prague-based CSCE Secretariat became a repository for all CSCE documents at the time of its establishment in 1991. Before that, between 1975 and 1990, foreign ministries which had hosted CSCE events also acted as executive secretariats and as a rule stored the conference or meeting documents in their own archives. After the Paris Summit decided to establish a Secretariat in Prague, these executive secretariats sent their respective holdings to Prague, where they were to be further catalogued and processed, and remain safely under one roof. New acquisitions integrated into these archive collections include personal records of ambassadors, chairpersons and meeting officers who attended the CSCE process in its early stages.

All CSCE policy paper records and documents dated from 1972 to 1994 have been digitized and are now chronologically classified in series organized by the negotiating and decision-





making bodies and field operations that released them. These collections constitute the basis of the primary source material that sustains the Organization's institutional memory.

Another part of this memory comprises records inherited from closed OSCE field operations. These series are kept in a remote location, along with a large collection of paper documents related to the annual exchange of military information and defence planning, as foreseen in the provisions set by the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation. The Prague Office as the permanent repository for operational and substantive paper archives continues to collect and archive such information.

Prague Office Reference Library

In addition to the archives of the CSCE/OSCE historical documents, researchers have access to a reference library of secondary sources containing more than 8,000 books, scholarly articles, videos, periodicals and online specialized journals in 34 Indo-European and four Asian languages.

The reference library includes publications related to international and European relations, legislation, economics, human and minority rights, fundamental freedoms, European security, as well as geopolitical maps, glossaries, dictionaries and atlases.





Researcher-in-Residence Programme

The OSCE Researcher-in-Residence programme was created in 1998 and initially aimed at academic community and political science researchers in need of primary source materials. Since then, the scope of the programme has broadened. In addition to PhD and MA candidates, the Office staff members assist professors, teaching assistants, representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as humanitarian aid workers, election monitors, historians and investigative journalists to conduct research for academic and professional purposes.

Researchers participating in the programme are provided a fully equipped office, a personal computer and access to documents collections. High-performance search engines, internal databases and catalogues, as well as a set of adjustable search tools allow researchers to quickly identify documents in their categories of interest, and the Office' archive staff is at hand to help locate and retrieves documents. An extensive reference library with secondary-source material is also at researchers' disposal. If needed, the Prague Office staff can help researches arrange interviews with OSCE officials in Vienna or in the field.

Since 1998, more than two hundred long- and short-term researchers, mostly from countries of the OSCE area, as well

as from China, Japan, Korea, Israel, Morocco, South Africa and Australia have taken part in the Programme.

To apply for short- and long-term research projects, the following documents need to be submitted to the Senior Assistant for Documentation and Information docs@osce.org, faxed to +420 233 085 487 or mailed to Náměstí Pod Kaštany 529/2, CZ-160 00, Prague 6, Czech Republic:

- Statement of intention including preferred dates for conducting the research in the Prague Office and sources of funding. Early registration is advisable;
- Outline of the project, or the foreseen structure of the thesis, research article or book;
- Curriculum Vitae of the applicant including publications and/or academic credentials, as applicable.

Registered researchers will be requested to sign the Conditions of Engagement before they are granted access to the CSCE/OSCE archives. On completion of the research project, the participants are requested to share copies of the completed work to be deposited in the OSCE archive collection.

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Náměstí Pod Kaštany 529/2
CZ-160 00 Praha 6, Czech Republic
Tel: +420 224 186 450
quest@osce.org
www.osce.org/secretariat/prague

To find out more about the programme and the application procedures, see: www.osce.org/secretariat/prague or www.osce.org/employment/43289