SUPREME COURT
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

ACA EUROPE

Seminar organized by

the Supreme Court of Estonia and ACA-Europe

"Due process"

Tallinn, 18-19 October 2018

Answers to questionnaire: Czech Republic

Seminar co-funded by the «Justice » program of the European Union

Due Process

Questionnaire for the ACA Seminar in Tallinn, 26-27 April 2018

This questionnaire focuses on the limiting of a person's procedural rights based on the principle of procedural economy. First and foremost, it seeks to answer the questions whether Member States have regulated the simplification of procedure in resolving certain types of administrative disputes, and where is the line drawn between effective court procedure and the protection of a person's procedural rights.

The principle of effective judicial protection is a general principle of European Union law stemming from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, which has been enshrined in Articles 6 and 13 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and which has also been reaffirmed by Article 47 of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (joined cases C-402/05 P and C-415/05 P: Kadi, p 335; C-432/05: Unibet, p 37, and the case law referenced therein). The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has stated that the principle of effective judicial protection laid down in Article 47 of the Charter comprises various elements; in particular, the rights of the defence, the principle of equality of arms, the right of access to a tribunal and the right to be advised, defended and represented (C-199/11: European Union v. Otis NV and others, p 48).

On the other hand, it is the CJEU's settled case law that fundamental rights, such as respect for the rights of the defence, do not constitute unfettered prerogatives and may be restricted, provided that the restrictions in fact correspond to objectives of general interest pursued by the measure in question and that they do not involve, with regard to the objectives pursued, a disproportionate and intolerable interference which infringes upon the very substance of the rights guaranteed (C-166/13: Mukarubega, p 53, and the case law referenced therein). In addition, the CJEU has stated that the principle of effective judicial protection does not only require that everyone should be able to exercise their right of access to court, but also that the administration of justice should be effective (F-3/11: Marcuccio, p 53). For instance, according to the CJEU, as long as the person can exercise their right to be heard, Article 47 of the Charter does not require an oral hearing in each case (see, for example, C-239/12 P: Abdulrahim, p 42; joined cases T-589/14 and T-772/14: Musso, p 59).

It follows from Article 52 subsection 3 of the Charter and the explanations relating to Article 47, that when defining the meaning and scope of the principle of effective judicial protection, it is also important to look at Article 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the topic.

According to Article 6 subsection 1 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the principle of a fair trial also includes the format of hearing a matter. According to the case law of the ECHR, a court case generally has to be reviewed in an oral hearing by at least one court instance; however, Member States can implement simplified proceedings for smaller and less complex disputes. This can serve the interests of the parties by facilitating access to justice, by reducing costs related to the proceedings and by accelerating the resolution of disputes.

According to ECHR case law, simplified proceedings can generally mean written proceedings, except in cases when the court deems an oral hearing to be necessary or if a party to the proceedings requests a hearing (in which case the request may be refused by the court) (see Pönka vs Estonia, No. 64160/11, p 30; on the obligation to hold a hearing see also: Göç v. Turkey [Grand Chamber], No. 36590/97, p 47, ECHR 2002-V, and the case law

referenced therein; Miller v. Sweden, No. 55853/00, p 29, February 8, 2005). ECHR has accepted exceptional circumstances for foregoing an oral hearing in cases where the proceedings concerned exclusively legal or highly technical questions, and which by their nature are not complex (see Koottummel v. Austria, No. 49616/06, p 19, December 10, 2009, and the case law referenced therein, Allan Jacobsson v. Sweden (no. 2), p 49; Valová, Slezák and Slezák v. Slovakia, p-s 65-68, Varela Assalino v. Portugal (dec.); Speil v. Austria (dec.), Schuler-Zgraggen v. Switzerland, p 58; Döry v. Sweden, No. 28394/95, p 41; and contrast Salomonsson v. Sweden, p-s 39-40; Jussila v. Finland [GC], No. 73053/01, p-s 41–42 and 47–48). A case can also be heard in simplified proceedings or written proceedings if the case raises no questions of fact or law which cannot be adequately resolved on the basis of the case file and the parties' written observations (see Döry v. Sweden, p 37) or if written proceedings are more effective than oral ones (Jussila v. Finland [GC], p-s 41–42 and 47–48).

Simplified proceedings in the context of this questionnaire mean special arrangements in administrative court procedure (a type of procedure) that allow for the court proceedings to be carried out in a simpler or faster manner than usual (shortened proceedings, accelerated proceedings, simple proceedings or any other special arrangements for resolving an administrative case in administrative court). Simplified proceedings, their prerequisites and nature are dealt with in part A of this questionnaire. It must be noted that in part A of the questionnaire, simplified proceedings do not include written proceedings without any other simplification, nor limitations of the right to appeal. The possibilities for resolving administrative cases in written proceedings will be dealt with in part B of the questionnaire, which also briefly touches upon the possibility of conducting a hearing via videoconferencing.

If simplified proceedings do not exist as a separate type of procedure in administrative courts in your country, when answering please do consider whether there are other, specific possibilities to make procedures more effective in certain ways (for example, exceptions in taking the minutes, procedural deadlines, format requirements, delivering the procedural documents, pre-trial proceedings, the formatting of a decision, the court panel, holding an oral hearing, etc.).

Part A

Efficiency of Court Proceedings (at the Expense of Procedural Guarantees)

1. Simplified proceedings

Does your administrative procedural law provide for the possibility of resolving administrative cases in simplified proceedings: on the level of the highest administrative court and/or in lower administrative courts? (YES/NO)

The Czech administrative procedural law does not provide for the possibility of resolving administrative cases in simplified proceedings neither on the level of the highest administrative court (Supreme Administrative Court) nor in lower administrative courts.

The exception can be found in the court panel in lower administrative courts. In matters of retirement insurance, social security, sickness benefit insurance, sickness care in the armed forces, job applicants and their material benefits according to the regulations governing employment, and state social benefits, in matters of infractions as well as in other matters provided for by a special law, decisions are made by a specialized judge sitting alone.

There are also specific matters which should be disposed of preferentially regardless of the chronological order in which petitions reach the court. These are petitions for adjudication of suspensory effect, petitions for provisional rulings, petitions for exemption from judicial fees and petitions for the appointment of a representative.

The court furthermore preferentially deals with petitions and complaints concerning asylum, decisions on detention of a foreigner and decisions on the termination of special protection of and aid to witnesses and other persons in connection.

The Act no.150/2002 Coll., Code of Administrative Justice distinguishes between eight specific types of proceedings – (i) proceedings concerning a complaint against a decision of an administrative authority, (ii) proceedings concerning protection against inaction of an administrative authority, (iii) proceedings concerning protection against unlawful interference, instructions or enforcement from an administrative authority, (iv) proceedings concerning justice in electoral matters and in matters of a local referendum, (v) proceedings in matters of political parties and political movements, (vi) competence complaint proceedings, (vii) proceedings for the annulment of measures of a general nature or of a part thereof and (viii) proceedings for the annulment of service regulations.
But these cannot be labelled as "simplified proceedings".

Part B

Right to Public Hearing

1. Are there any types of administrative cases or any court instances in which only oral proceedings are allowed (i.e. written proceedings are prohibited)?
No, there are not.

2. Under which circumstances may cases be resolved in written proceedings? Can the justification be, for example:

a. exclusively legal questions;
b. highly technical questions;
c. the case raises no questions of fact or law that cannot be adequately resolved on the basis of the case file and the parties' written observations;
d. other bases, for example at the request of one of the parties to the proceedings?

The court may decide on the matter without a hearing, if the parties jointly move for this or agree to this. It is understood that agreement is also given when the party has not expressed disagreement with such a procedure within two weeks from the delivery of the call by the presiding judge; the party has to be notified of this in the call.

As a rule, the Supreme Administrative Court decides on a cassation complaint without a hearing. If the Supreme Administrative Court sees fit or if it produces evidence, the Supreme Administrative Court orders a hearing to determine the cassation complaint.

3. Can oral proceedings also be carried out via videoconferencing (i.e. in a manner where either a party to the proceedings or their representative or counsel can be in a different place during the hearing and carry out procedural acts in real time, through an audiovisual transmission)? (YES/NO)
Yes, it is possible. There are no legal limitations but it is use rarely.
No, the risks of videoconferencing and the protection of a person's rights have not been discussed.

4. Can oral proceedings also be carried out outside the court-room (in prison, hospital *etc*)? In which circumstances is this possible?
It is not possible in administrative proceedings.

Thank you!