

EDUCATION AND WORK IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

EDUCATION
WORK



euro|guidance

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The Czech Republic in a Nutshell

The Czech Republic can be rightly called the crossroads of European civilisations. Due to its position in the heart of Central Europe it boasts a unique natural and cultural wealth. The country is surrounded by extensive mountain ranges which form most of its borderline. The high concentration of popular tourist destinations in such a small area is unusual even in the European context. The atmosphere of Czech towns, villages and spas has always been a source of inspiration for visitors and guests from all over the world. Twelve important historical sights feature on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.



Background data

Established:	1 January 1993
Area:	78, 866 km ²
Population:	10.2 mil. (2004)
Population density:	130 inhabitants per km ²
Capital:	Prague
Major cities:	Brno, Ostrava, Plzeň, Olomouc, Liberec, Hradec Králové, Zlín
Neighbouring countries:	Austria, Germany, Poland, Slovakia
Border length:	2 303 km
Currency:	Czech crown (1 crown = 100 hellers)
Official language:	Czech
Political system:	Parliamentary democracy
Administrative system:	14 regions: Středočeský, Jihočeský, Plzeňský, Karlovarský, Ústecký, Liberecký, Královéhradecký, Pardubický, Vysočina, Jihomoravský, Olomoucký, Moravskoslezský and Zlínský and the capital Prague
The highest mountain:	Sněžka (1 602 m above sea level)

History

Until the early 20th century the country was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After WWI an independent Czechoslovakia was declared in 1918. Numerous members of the German minority lived in the new country, and this was the reason for the Nazi occupation of the Sudeten lands in October 1938 following the infamous Munich agreement. The adoption of the Munich agreement by the Czechoslovak president and government resulted in fundamental political, constitutional, economic and social changes. Czechoslovakia lost extensive territory and population in favour of Germany.

In March 1939 Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia and declared a protectorate. At this time Slovakia became an independent country under the strong influence of Nazi Germany. After WWII Czechoslovakia regained its independence. In the general elections of 1946 communists won 36% of the votes and formed a coalition government. In 1948 a communist coup took place and Czechoslovakia became a communist country.

In the 1960s gradual liberalisation occurred in the country under the leadership of the pro-reformist general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Alexander Dubček. This short period was abruptly terminated by an invasion of Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968 and Czechoslovakia retained its socialist system under the control of the Soviet Union.

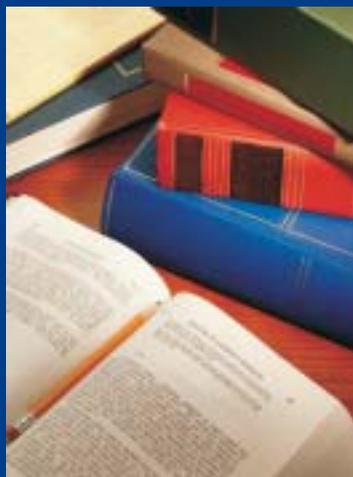
The events in neighbouring Eastern Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall also affected the development of our country. On 17 November 1989 participants in a student march clashed with the police. Furthermore, far more extensive demonstrations led by Václav Havel resulted in the resignation of the communist government. Václav Havel was elected president in December 1989. These events are known as the "Velvet Revolution" as no-one was killed. At the end of 1992 Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic.

After the change of the regime in 1989 and the division of the country in 1992 the Czech Republic focused on the implementation of social and economic reforms which resulted in the joining of NATO (1999) and the European Union on 1 May 2004.

Useful links:

<http://www.czech.cz> – Information about the Czech Republic

EDUCATION



1.1 A General Overview

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the central body of state administration which is responsible for the education system as a whole, and also develops strategic documents and the relevant legislation.

The most important laws related to the education system are as follows:

- Law on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Higher Professional and Other Education;
- Higher Education Act.

Kindergartens and basic schools are set up by municipalities (occasionally by individuals or churches). Regional authorities (occasionally by individuals or churches) establish secondary and higher professional schools. The responsibility for the quality of the educational provision rests with the Czech School Inspection.

Higher education (HE) institutions may be public, state or private. Public HE institutions are set up and closed down by law. State HE institutions (military and police) are part of the ministry which has established them. The quality of higher education is the responsibility of the Accreditation Commission.

Citizens of other EU member states have access to education and school services under the same conditions as citizens of the Czech Republic. Most basic and secondary schools provide education in the Czech language, but the number of bilingual schools has been rising. Higher professional schools may provide education in a foreign language. Higher education provided in Czech by public and state HE institutions is free; in other cases the institution collects fees. The provision of higher degree programmes in English and German is gradually expanding.

Education levels:

19		Tertiary Education
15		Secondary Education
11	Compulsory Education	Basic Education – 2 nd cycle
6		Basic Education – 1 st cycle
3		Pre-school Education

Useful links:

<http://www.msmt.cz> – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

<http://www.csvs.cz> – Centre for Higher Education Studies

<http://www.domavcr.cz> – Home in the Czech Republic – the “Education” section

<http://www.uiv.cz> – Institute for Information on Education

<http://www.eurydice.org> – The Eurydice Information Network on Education in Europe

1.2 Pre-school Education

Pre-school education for children normally from 3 to 6 years of age is provided by kindergartens. The children play and carry out individual and group activities in order to acquire basic behavioural habits and communication skills. Pre-school education helps make up for disparities in the level of development of children before entering basic education and provides special pedagogical care for children with special learning needs. The decision on kindergarten attendance is solely up to the parents. Despite this only a low percentage of children aged 5 do not attend these facilities.



1.3 Basic Education and Compulsory School Attendance

Basic education lasts 9 years, normally from the age of 6 to 15, and covers primary and lower secondary levels of education. It is divided into two cycles. The first, five-year cycle, takes place at basic school. The second, four-year cycle, may, apart from basic school, be undertaken at a six- or eight-year *gymnázium* (secondary general school), or at an eight-year conservatory. There is a nine-year compulsory school attendance, but the highest age limit for completion is 17.

The objectives of basic education include: acquisition of the necessary learning strategy, motivation for lifelong learning, capacity for creative thinking, problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills, and application of the skills and knowledge learnt in the career choice process.

The school year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. Main summer holidays are in July and August. Instruction takes place five days a week from Monday through Friday, one teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Student achievement is marked either using a five-degree scale (1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – sufficient, 5 – fail), verbal assessment or a combination of the two. Assessment methods are decided upon by the school director and must be agreed with the School Council. Continuous assessment is summarised on a school report at the end of each term.

Evidence of the acquisition of basic education is a certificate of successful completion of the ninth year of basic education, or a certificate of successful completion of the relevant year of six- or eight-year *gymnázium* or conservatory.

Enrolment into the first year of basic school takes place in January and February of the relevant year at the relevant school. The decision on acceptance is up to the school director.

1.4 Secondary Education

After completion of compulsory education students can continue studies at secondary school. Secondary education may take place in various types of secondary school (*gymnázium*, secondary technical school, secondary vocational schools, conservatory). This education may be general or vocational. Applications for the first round of admission proceedings must be filed by the end of February. The date for entry examinations, which is the same for all schools, is set by the Ministry of Education (normally in April). The content and the form of examinations (oral, written or a test of aptitude) is up to the school director.

The school year is divided into two terms and starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. The main summer holidays are in July and August. One teaching period lasts 45 minutes. A school report is given to students each term which contains assessment of their learning outcomes. This assessment may be expressed either by a mark (1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – sufficient, 5 – fail), verbally or by a combination of the two. The assessment method is decided upon by the school director and agreed by the School Council.

Education may take the form of daily attendance, evening courses, an individual study plan with consultations, distance learning or a combination of these forms. Forms other than daily attendance are usually one year longer.

Schools may be public, private or denominational. Education at public schools is free.



1.4.1 Secondary General Education

Secondary general education is provided by *gymnázium* (secondary general schools) which offer several subject areas e.g. humanities, social sciences, languages and sports. However, general education prevails. There are also bilingual *gymnázium* with instruction in a foreign language in selected subjects (i.e. Czech-English, Czech-German, Czech-French and Czech-Italian *gymnázium*).

The main objective of the *gymnázium* programme is to provide a broad general education and to prepare students for studies at tertiary level.

Studies last four years (except for 8- and 6-year *gymnázium* entered by students after completion of the 5th and 7th year of basic school respectively) and they are completed by a “maturita” examination. “Maturita” consists of examinations in the Czech language, a foreign language (English, German, Spanish, French, Italian or Russian), and in two optional subjects (area specific). The content of “maturita” falls within the purview of individual schools.

Admission to four-year *gymnázium* studies is conditional upon completion of basic education and the passing of entry examinations. Admission to 8- and 6-year *gymnázium* is conditional upon meeting the conditions set as part of admission proceedings.



1.4.2 Secondary Vocational Education

Educational programmes which lead to the acquisition of secondary vocational education are as follows:

Secondary education with “maturita” lasting 4 years (daily attendance). The aim of this programme is to prepare young people for the performance of technical, administrative and other occupations in the manufacturing sector or the service sector (e.g. healthcare, public administration, welfare services, education) where intellectual activities predominate. The curricula contain 45 % of general and 55 % of vocational subjects. The programme is completed by a “maturita” examination consisting of exams in the Czech language, a foreign language and additional two subjects or a practical examination. Graduates may enter the labour market directly or continue studying at tertiary level.

Secondary education with a vocational certificate lasting 2-3 years (daily attendance). The objective of this programme is to prepare young people for the performance of qualified activities where manual work predominates (e.g. sales assistant, fitter, bricklayer, auto-mechanic, electrician, etc.). The studies are completed by a final examination consisting of a written and oral part, and a practical examination. Graduates obtain a final report and a vocational certificate which serves as evidence of the relevant professional competences. Graduates may directly enter the labour market or continue with a two-year “follow-up” programme which leads to the acquisition of a “maturita” certificate authorising its holder to enter tertiary education.

Secondary education lasting 1-2 years (daily attendance). The objective of this programme is to prepare young people for the performance of very simple, auxiliary, normally manual activities in the manufacturing or service sectors. This programme is designed for students with special learning needs (mentally, physically or socially disadvantaged individuals). The studies are completed by a final examination. Graduates acquire the qualification of auxiliary workers in various industries (i.e. chemical, food, woodworking industry) or the qualification of fisher, fruit grower, gardener, pastry cook, care person, etc.

Conservatories provide a very specific type of secondary education. They prepare students for the performance of demanding artistic or pedagogical activities in music, dance, singing and drama. The studies last eight years (dance) or six years and are completed by “maturita” or “absolutorium”. Students are admitted based on tests of aptitude which normally take place in January.

Useful links:

<http://www.nuov.cz>

– National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education

<http://www.uiv.cz>

– Institute for Information on Education





1.5 Tertiary Education

1.5.1 Higher Professional Education

Higher professional schools (HPS) have been part of the Czech education system since 1995. Compared to higher education institutions their study programmes are practically oriented and prepare students for the performance of specific occupations which are demanding but do not require a university degree. HP Schools may be public or private – both collect tuition fees. Tuition fees at public HP schools are regulated by the state.

The studies contain both theory and practical training and last 3 years, including a placement (daily attendance), and 3.5 years in healthcare disciplines. The academic year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. It is divided into the winter term (September – January) and summer (February – August) term. The teaching period is 45 minutes. Assessment methods are set out in the assessment regulations of each school which are approved by the Ministry of Education. The assessment regulations determine an assessment scale (mostly four levels – excellent, very good, good and fail) and the form of assessment (e.g. examination). Students are assessed at the end of each term.

Education is completed by “absolutorium” i.e. a professional examination consisting of examination/testing/assessment in vocational subjects and a foreign language, and the defence of a thesis. Graduates are awarded the title “specialist with a diploma” (DiS).

Admission is conditional upon the passing of “maturita” and meeting the admission requirements. The date, content and form of admission proceedings is up to the school director. Entry examinations take place between June and September.

Useful links:

<http://www.nuov.cz> – National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education

<http://www.atlaskolstvi.cz> – Education Atlas

1.5.2 Higher Education

Czech higher education enjoys a tradition of over six hundred years. In 1348 Czech king and Roman emperor Charles IV set up what is today Charles University in Prague, the oldest academic institution in Central Europe. Other important institutions include the Czech Technical University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno and Palacký University in Olomouc.

In line with the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations most long four-to-six-year programmes have been transformed into three-to-four-year bachelor programmes and two-to-three-year master programmes.

Higher education is provided at the following levels:

- Bachelor study programme (three to four years) constitutes the first degree of higher education. Successful graduates may enter the labour market or continue studying a follow-up master programme with a similar focus.
- Master study programme may either follow up on a Bachelor programme so-called "follow-up" master programmes (two to three years), or may be a full programme (four to six years – e.g. in human medicine or veterinary medicine, pharmacy, law, psychology, teaching, etc.). The programmes are focused on the acquisition and application of theoretical knowledge and on the development of creativity and talent.
- Doctoral programme (normally three years) is designed for graduates of master programmes and focused on research and independent creative activities in research, development or arts.

Public and state HE institutions offer all degrees of study, private HE institutions primarily offer bachelor study programmes.

The academic year lasts 12 calendar months and its beginning and end is set by the rector (normally 1 September – 31 August). The studies are divided into semesters (trimesters at several private HE institutions), years or blocks which are further divided into periods of instruction, examinations and holidays.

The organisation of studies and the methods of assessing student achievement differ in various institutions/faculties, and they are laid down in study and examination regulations of the relevant institutions/faculty and the study plan for the relevant programme. These regulations set the links between subjects in terms of time and content, the volume and form of instruction, and student assessment methods.

- Full-time studies (regular attendance) normally consist of traditional components – i.e. lectures, seminars, exercises taking place in line with a regular, usually weekly schedule.
- In distance form the predominating part of the studies takes place through the use of multi-media approaches to instruction – i.e. study texts placed on the Internet, communication between teachers and students via e-mail or telephone. This form is not often implemented at Czech higher education institutions.
- The combined form of studies combines regular attendance with the distance form (i.e. consultations as part of workshops including a wide use of information and communication technologies, particularly the on-line learning centre)

There is a set number of teaching periods and credits allocated to each subject, the methods of instruction and final requirements. The subjects taught are completed at the end of each semester/trimester in one of the following ways: examination, a certificate of course completion and a certificate of course completion with graded assessment.

Performance at examinations is marked using normally a three-degree scale (excellent, very good and good). The fourth degree – fail – is not awarded. Most HE institutions have introduced credit systems compatible with the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). Each subject – i.e. one-semester course is – assessed using a number of credits which reflect the demands of the course.

Studies in bachelor and master programmes are completed by a state final examination which also includes the defence of a dissertation. In disciplines such as hygiene, human medicine and veterinary medicine the studies are completed by a so-called “rigorous” examination.

Doctoral programmes are completed by a doctoral examination and presentation of a dissertation where the student proves his/her capacity for carrying out independent research, theoretical knowledge or independent theoretical or artistic creative skills (depending on the field).

Graduates of bachelor study programmes are awarded the title of “Bachelor” (Bc.) or “Bachelor of Arts” (BcA). Graduates of master study programmes may get the following academic titles: “Engineer” (Ing.) in economics, technical disciplines and technology, agriculture, forestry and military sciences; “Engineer Architect (Ing.arch.) in architecture; “Doctor of Medicine” (MUDr.) in medicine; “Doctor of Dental Medicine” (MDDr.) in dentistry; “Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (MVDr.) in veterinary medicine and hygiene; “Master of Arts” (MgA.) in artistic disciplines; “Master” (Mgr.) in other disciplines. Graduates of bachelor and master programmes are authorised to practise regulated professions. Graduates of doctoral study programmes obtain the academic title “Doctor” (Ph.D), and in theological disciplines the title “Doctor of Theology” (Th.D).

The principal requirement for entering higher education is completion of secondary education with “maturita”. Students may apply for several study programmes at various institutions/faculties. The deadline for submitting applications is normally the end of



February or March. An administrative fee is paid for entrance examinations (normally 500 CZK). The application form is available as a printed copy, but most HE institutions offer the possibility of the application being filed electronically.

The date, content and form (oral or written examination, test of aptitude) of admission proceedings is decided by the dean of the faculty or the rector of the HE institution. Entrance examinations are normally held between June and September. The examinations at HE institutions providing education in arts take place earlier in January and the deadline for filing applications is normally the end of November.

Admission to a “follow-up” master programme is conditional on completion of the relevant bachelor study programme or its equivalent. Admission to doctoral studies is conditional on successful completion of a master study programme. Applicants must sit a special entrance examination and an interview.

Student administration departments at various faculties provide information about applications, admission requirements and studies. A comprehensive list of HE institutions may be found at the website of the Centre for Higher Education Studies.

Useful links:

<http://www.csvs.cz> – Centre for Higher Education Studies

<http://www.naric.cz> – NARIC Czech Republic

<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus>

– PLOTEUS – Portal of Learning Opportunities in Europe

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_en.html

– European Credit Transfer System

1.6 Learning the Czech Language

The knowledge of the Czech language is important if a long-term visit is planned. There is information on the Internet about various schools and Czech courses. Courses in Czech vary in terms of price, length and the quality of instruction.

Some Czech higher education institutions organise courses for foreigners or co-operate closely with specialist organisations. The instruction may take various forms (one-year courses, intensive courses etc.). The courses are usually paid, but there are exceptions – e.g. language courses as part of a scholarship, development assistance or based on the recommendation of associations of fellow countrypersons abroad. Some courses are designed exclusively for academic applicants, but most are available to the general public.

Useful links:

<http://www.bohemia.com> – All about the Czech language and culture

<http://www.ujop.cz> – Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies

<http://www.phil.muni.cz/kabcest> – The Department of Czech for Foreigners

<http://www.cuni.cz/UK-1151.html> – Charles University

<http://international.zcu.cz/> – University of West Bohemia, Summer Language School



1.7 Financial Support for Foreign Students Intending to Study in the Czech Republic

1.7.1 Inter-governmental agreements

The Czech Republic has signed over 100 bilateral international agreements on cultural co-operation which also cover education. These agreements are concluded for an indefinite period of time and provide the opportunity of acquiring scholarships in the Czech Republic. They identify the number of places, the length of stay, financial settlement terms, application terms, etc. Information about these agreements is available at Czech consulates and embassies or at ministries of education of the relevant countries.

Useful links:

<http://www.dzs.cz> – House for International Services

<http://www.msmt.cz> – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

<http://www.mzv.cz> – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a list of Czech embassies and consulates

1.7.2 Agreements between educational institutions

Exchanges of pupils and students between Czech and foreign institutions also take place on the basis of agreements on student exchanges or placements. Information about these agreements is not available centrally. It is necessary to contact the persons responsible for international relations at the relevant institution.

1.7.3 European educational programmes

The Czech Republic has been involved, since 1997, in all educational programmes of the European Union which, apart from other things, provide opportunities for undergoing placements or periods of study in the Czech Republic. The relevant institution must be involved in the given programme.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci programme supports the development of vocational education and training and the European dimension in the area, and contributes to mobility among the countries of the EU, EFTA and candidate countries. Students at vocational schools, young employees and recent school leavers may undertake a placement in the Czech Republic.

Socrates/Comenius

The Comenius programme is focused on the first stage of education from pre-school and basic to secondary education. It is designed for the entire education community in the broad sense of the word – pupils, teachers and educators. Pupils may take part in projects in which their institutions are involved (Comenius School Projects and Comenius School Development Projects), or may visit partner institutions as part of Comenius Language Projects.

Socrates/Erasmus

The Erasmus programme aims to promote European co-operation in higher education and, in this way, to improve the quality of education and to develop a European dimension in studies. Thanks to Erasmus a large number of students may spend 3-12 months studying at a foreign HE institution which is involved in the programme. Students receive a grant which does not always cover all costs, but it is designed as a contribution towards studying abroad. Erasmus students do not pay tuition fees at the host institution. The recognition of courses completed abroad is facilitated via the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

Useful links:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education>

– Information about European educational programmes

<http://www.msmt.cz> – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

<http://www.dzs.cz> – House for International Services

1.7.4 CEEPUS

The Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies is an activity aimed at developing regional co-operation in higher education. HE institutions in the following countries are involved in the programme: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Serbia and Montenegro.

The programme supports:

- Visits of higher education students (at least three months)
- Short-term visits of degree and doctoral students (1-2 months)
- Teacher mobility (mostly one month)
- Professional language courses
- Professional courses
- Excursions

CEEPUS offers scholarships for students, graduates and pedagogues in institutions involved in this programme. Students at the host institution do not pay tuition fees. Information may be obtained at the relevant HE institution or in the CEEPUS national agencies.

Useful links:

<http://www.ceepus.org/ceepus> – CEEPUS





1.8 Recognition of Diplomas and Certificates Obtained Abroad

1.8.1 Secondary education

Certificates obtained at foreign secondary schools are subject to so-called “nostrification”. If the relevant international agreement on recognition is in place, a certificate of equivalence is issued. The process of “nostrification” of documents which provide access to higher education is regulated by decrees of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

In the Czech Republic the responsibility for recognition of qualifications at secondary level lies with the relevant Regional Authority (Department of Education).

Applicants for recognition must present:

- A verified copy of a “maturita” certificate, a certificate of final examination, a certificate of “absolutorium” or other similar examination, or a final certificate,
- A verified copy of the certificate issued by the foreign institution,
- A verified copy of the curriculum of the foreign institution,
- A verified translation of the curriculum of the foreign institution,
- Evidence of permanent residency (officially reported place of stay).

The documents certifying the acquisition of secondary education must be translated into Czech. The department of education of the relevant regional authority will assess whether the curriculum of the foreign institution is comparable to that of a similar study programme in the Czech Republic in terms of content and scope. If the curriculum differs in some respects, the regional authority orders an additional examination.

Useful links:

<http://www.domavcr.cz> – Home in the Czech Republic – the “Education” section

1.8.2 Recognition of higher education degrees

Graduates of foreign higher education institutions may apply for recognition of their degree in the Czech Republic. A certificate of recognition is issued by:

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – if the Czech Republic has signed an international agreement with the country where the foreign HE institution is set up and recognised (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia; higher education diplomas acquired in Slovakia are recognised automatically, their holder need not apply for recognition).
- A public higher education institution – in other cases. The applicant files the application to an HE institution which provides a similar study programme. Recognition is up to the rector of the relevant institution.

Applicants for recognition of a foreign higher education degree must fill in a written application which contains the applicant's surname, first name, date and place of birth, address, the name and address of the foreign HE institution, the name of the study programme, and the dates of the beginning and end of studies.

The following documents must be enclosed with the application: an original or an officially verified copy of the diploma, certificate or a similar document issued by the foreign HE institution. The Diploma Supplement is also a useful document (it is part of the Europass document).

There is a National Information Centre for Academic Recognition (NARIC) in each EU member country. It provides information and advice as regards recognition of higher education diplomas and periods of study spent in other countries.

Useful links:

<http://www.naric.cz>

– Czech National Academic Recognition Information Centre – NARIC

<http://www.domavcr.cz>

– Home in the Czech Republic – the “Education” section

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_en.html

– European Credit Transfer System

<http://europass.cedefop.eu.int>

– Europass – Diploma Supplement



EDUCATION



WORK



2.1 A General Overview

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the central body responsible for labour market issues and employment policies. Administration of employment policy in the Czech Republic falls within the remit of the Employment Services Administration and labour offices.

The Employment Services Administration, which is part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, monitors and assesses the situation in the labour market and adopts measures affecting supply and demand in this area. It is responsible for drafting national employment policy and the administration of resources for implementation of employment policy and decides on their use. It also co-ordinates the activities of EURES (European Employment Services) in the Czech Republic, provides for national financing of employment and human resources development issues as part of the European Social Fund, and manages labour offices.

Labour offices

In terms of administration, the Czech Republic is divided into 14 regions. They are divided into districts (77). A labour office operates in each district. In order to improve accessibility of services for citizens, labour offices have set up branches and other units within their districts. In each region one labour office has been authorised to co-ordinate national employment policy in the territory of the relevant region.

Labour offices:

- Monitor and assess the situation in the labour market, identify employment development trends in their administrative areas,
- Adopt measures to influence supply and demand in the labour market,
- Provide job brokering services for job seekers,
- Provide counselling, information and other employment-related services to individuals and employers,
- Maintain a register of vacancies, job seekers, disabled persons and foreigners,
- See to the implementation of the instruments of active employment policy,
- Pay employment benefits and financial support to persons undergoing retraining.

The most important laws stipulating the rights and obligations of the players in the labour market in the Czech Republic are as follows:

- **The Labour Code.** It lays down the rights and obligations of employees and employers. The purpose of the Labour Code is to protect the physical and mental health of employees, to ensure a suitable working environment and safe working conditions for all.
- **Law on Employment.** The law regulates issues related to the right to employment, state employment policy, job brokering, the rights and obligations of job seekers registered at labour offices, and procedures on the part of employers employing citizens of the EU/EEA and citizens of third countries.

Citizens of the European Economic Area¹ and Switzerland enjoy the same rights as those of Czech citizens as regards access to the labour market – there are no limitations and no permits required. They are entitled to the same treatment not only as regards access to the labour market, but also job seeking, the use of public employment services, remuneration and dismissal terms.

Useful links:

<http://www.mpsv.cz> – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

<http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> – Public Employment Services

2.2 The Labour Market in the Czech Republic

In the last ten years the Czech labour market has undergone major structural changes and it is further developing. The changes primarily consisted in a transfer of the labour force between various sectors of the economy. This was accompanied by an increase in unemployment, a mismatch between the qualification structure of supply of and demand for labour, and growing disparities between regions.

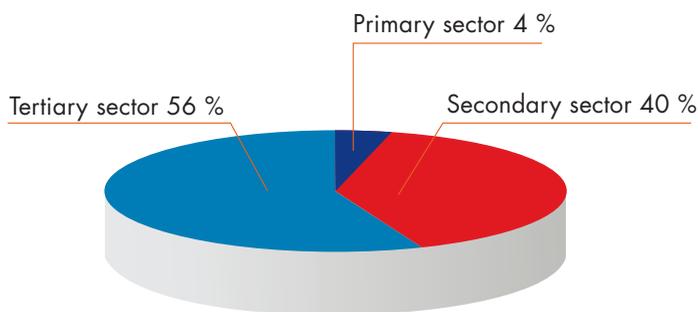
2.2.1 Employment

Over the last ten years employment decreased mainly in agriculture, and partially in industry, in favour of the dynamic services sector. The primary sector of the economy (agriculture, forestry and mining) accounts for 4 % of annual average employment, the secondary sector (industry and construction) amounts to 40 %, and the stake of the tertiary sector (services) in employment totals 56 %. In terms of comparison with other EU member states, the Czech Republic shows a rather low rate of employment in agriculture. The level of employment in the tertiary sector is below the EU-25 average and this sector therefore provides opportunities for the creation of new jobs.

The overall rate of employment in the population aged 15-64 hovered at around 64 % in 2004, for women it was 56 %. Although these data are above the EU average, they are still below the level required by the Lisbon strategy which sets out the objective of achieving an overall rate of employment at 70 % in general and 60 % for women by 2010.

¹) The European Economic Area (EEA) consists of the EU member states, Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein.

Structure of Employment



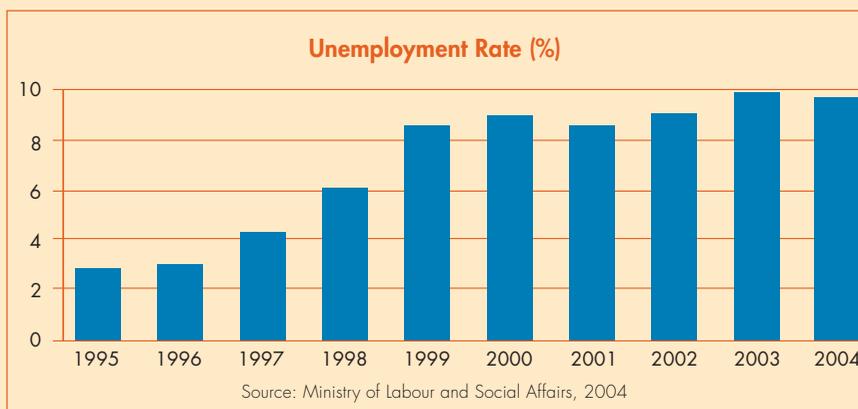
Source: Czech Statistical Office, 2004

2.2.2 Unemployment

Unemployment was very low until the mid-1990s and did not constitute a major problem in view of the ongoing restructuring of the economy and the fact that the gradually growing private sector absorbed part of the redundant workforce (e.g. in services). However, since 1998 unemployment has increased considerably and is running currently at around 9 % (a very similar rate of unemployment is typical of the EU). A slight increase in employment caused by economic growth in 2000 and 2001 failed to set off the imbalance between demand and supply in the labour market and to result in a worthwhile decrease in unemployment.

There is primarily structural unemployment in the Czech Republic, where the qualifications of unemployed persons do not meet the employers' requirements. There are large regional disparities in terms of unemployment, while the problem consists in limited opportunities and also low levels of willingness on the part of the population to move to where the jobs are (e.g. the underdeveloped housing market).

Unemployment reveals one particular setback, which is the growing proportion of the long-term unemployed. Long-term unemployment mostly occurs among disadvantaged groups of the population. These include people with various disabilities (or their combination), people with low or no qualifications, women with small children, elderly persons, school leavers and young people under 25. These groups receive special attention as part of the national employment policy.



2.2.3 Regional disparities

The Czech Republic is formed by the following historic areas: Bohemia in the west and Moravia and Silesia in the east. Various regions in these areas differ in terms of the rates of unemployment and employment, the proportion of the tertiary sector in employment, job opportunities, etc. Lower unemployment in Bohemia is generally the result of the proximity of the German and Austrian borders, which is a more favourable position in the eyes of investors. Prague has maintained the lowest rate of unemployment and a high rate of employment over the long term, and the city remains strikingly different from other regions in this respect. In Prague there is a concentration of the offices of foreign companies, headquarters of manufacturing and trading companies, central state institutions, financial organisations, top research centres, higher education institutions and other organisations. An opposite trend (compared to Prague) is apparent in Northern Bohemia and Northern Moravia which are tackling a severe decrease in the number of employed persons and a high rate of unemployment.

The regional nature of unemployment is directly linked to restructuring and the phasing out of some industries, and also to the qualification and occupational structure of the labour force. This is apparent to a varying degree in the regions. Regions in the north of the country are the most afflicted – i.e. regions with a large proportion of heavy industry (coal mining, metallurgy, mechanical engineering and the chemical industry). In Southern Moravia there is more agrarian unemployment. The capacity of industry and services to absorb redundant agriculture workers deteriorates particularly in rural areas, due to the low mobility and inappropriate qualifications of the laid-off workers.

Detailed information about the situation in regional labour markets in the Czech Republic is available at the European Portal EURES in the section “Living and working – Labour market information”.

Useful links:

<http://europa.eu.int/eures> – The European EURES Portal

2.2.4 Labour force migration

Labour force migration from other EU member states into the Czech Republic is not too large. The only exception is Slovak workers in the Czech labour market. There are several reasons for this: the common state of Czechoslovakia in the past, similar education systems and almost negligible differences between the languages. Furthermore, there is the demand on the part of Czech employers who, by employing Slovak workers – often via recruitment agencies – may respond flexibly to fluctuations in production. The overall cause is the better economic situation in the Czech Republic and lower unemployment as compared to Slovakia.

Polish workers rate second as regards the number of other EU citizens employed in the Czech Republic. Occupational migrants from Slovakia and Poland together account for 94 % of all EU/EEA employees in the Czech labour market. Occupational migrants from non-members of the EU are primarily Ukrainians and Vietnamese.

The Czech labour force most often heads for the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany and Austria. Around 13 thousand Czech citizens found employment in the UK during the first year of EU membership. In other countries the numbers amount to several thousands at the most. It is expected that after the opening of the German and Austrian labour markets the mobility of Czech workers into both countries will increase, particularly in borderland areas.



2.3 Work Permit and Residency Permit

Work permit

EU/EEA and Switzerland citizens do not need a work permit to work in the Czech Republic. The only requirement is registration at the relevant labour office which is done by the employer, at the latest on the date of the citizen's entering employment.

Residency permit

Citizens of any EU/EEA member state and Switzerland may enter and stay on Czech territory subject to no special limitations on the basis of a passport or an identity card. No residency permit is required for visits of up to 3 months. If the stay is longer than 3 months (e.g. for the purpose of employment, business or studies), it is possible to apply for a "residency permit for a national of a member state of the European Communities".

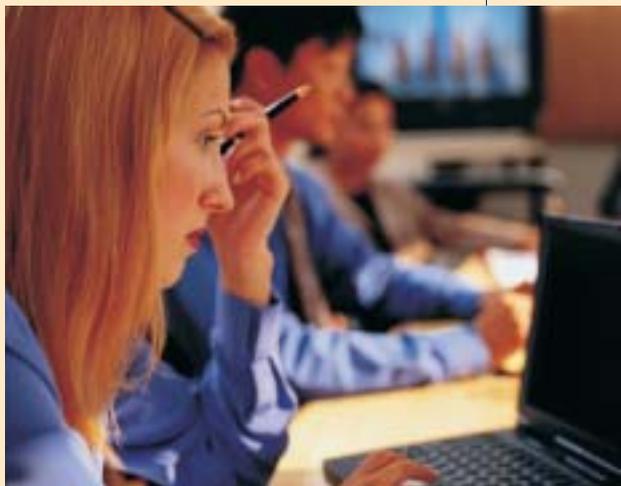
An application for a temporary residency permit or an application for extension of its validity may be filed by citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland both at a Czech embassy and at the relevant foreigners' police department depending on the place of stay in the Czech Republic. Travel documents and a document testifying to the purpose of the stay (e.g. an employment contract) must be enclosed with the application. In the case of a purpose other than employment, a document of health insurance must also be presented.

Useful links:

<http://europa.eu.int/eures> – The European EURES Portal – the "Living and working, Czech Republic" section

<http://portal.mpsv.cz/eures> – EURES Czech Republic

<http://www.domavcr.cz> – Home in the Czech Republic – the "Residence in CR" section



2.4 Seeking Employment in the Czech Republic

Those interested in taking up a job in the Czech Republic should use a combination of various approaches to increase their chance of succeeding in the labour market. Many professions require the knowledge of the Czech language, which is often a prerequisite for success in job search efforts. The knowledge of other languages (English or German) is predominantly required by multinational companies (so-called “white collars”). Better job opportunities are to be found in large cities.

EURES

The Portal of European Employment Services – EURES – offers not only vacancies in the Czech Republic, but also other important information related to work. The “CV – Online” section is an important service facilitating the compilation of a CV which is then made accessible for registered Czech employers. The Portal also provides contacts to EURES advisers who may be consulted about specific queries related to employment in the Czech Republic.

Public employment services

Labour offices offer a wide range of services concerning job vacancies, job brokering, career choice and, possibly, retraining. All services are provided for free. There are 77 labour offices, of which 14 are entrusted with regional authority. EURES advisers operate at these labour offices.

Czech employers report job vacancies to labour offices. Jobs available may also be sought in the central database on the portal of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. These are the same jobs as those presented on the European Portal EURES.

Recruitment agencies

When seeking employment it is possible to use services provided by private recruitment agencies which hold a licence from the Ministry of Labour. Such agencies are situated in all larger cities. They recruit individuals for various professions and also provide counselling. Most of them have their own websites listing job vacancies where the user may register. Major recruitment agencies operating across Europe are likely to have an office in the Czech Republic.

It is also possible to consult the Internet version of the Yellow Pages in English and to seek recruitment agencies under the heading “Employment Counselling”. The agency should have a licence to broker jobs and should provide services for free.

The press and Internet portals

One important source of job advertisements is the daily press which contains regular supplements listing job vacancies. The best known dailies are: *Mf Dnes* – with a special supplement entitled Employment on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and *Hospodářské noviny* – with a weekly supplement entitled *Kariéra*. There are also journals focusing exclusively on job opportunities: *Avizo* – issued three times a week and *Jobmaster* – once a week.

Internet portals constitute an often used source of job opportunities from manual to managerial professions. The portals usually offer the possibility of entering a CV into the database.

The best known portals include:

<http://www.jobs.cz>

<http://www.prace.cz>

<http://www.cvonline.cz>

<http://www.jobpilot.cz>

<http://www.jobdnes.cz>



Access to the Internet is provided by Internet cafes and public libraries.

Employers

Another possibility is to contact the employer directly by sending a CV and a cover letter. Most employers have their own websites and their contact details are listed in telephone directories.

Useful links:

<http://europa.eu.int/eures> – The European EURES Portal

<http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/local> – Labour offices

<http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz> – Public Employment Services

<http://www.zlatelyranky.cz> – Yellow Pages



Job applications and a CV

Interest in a job is normally expressed by sending not only a CV, but also an accompanying letter – job applications specifying interest in the relevant discipline/position.

The content of the letter should be brief and to the point, the data should relate to the position sought by the applicant. In the application the individual states why he/she is interested in the job and provides a brief overview of his/her experience to date. Many employers require a certificate of completed education and references from the previous employment. In many cases the employer asks the applicant to fill in an occupational questionnaire.

There are various approaches to compiling a CV. A so-called structured CV is mostly required, containing the following data:

- Personal data: name and surname, contact address, telephone, possibly e-mail, the date and place of birth, marital status and citizenship.
- Qualifications: this section should contain information as to the education achieved.
- Work experience: a very important section that should contain a brief description of each work experience. If the applicant is a graduate without work experience, a list of temporary, seasonal jobs or placements may be presented.
- Personal interests: a brief description of personal interests and pastime activities – particularly if they are related to the position sought.
- References: names and contact details of former employers who could provide references about the applicant.

The application and the CV should be written on a computer. Both documents should be signed by hand.

A job interview

If the applicant is invited by the employer for a personal meeting, he/she should bring a copy of the CV, and the relevant diplomas and references. A job interview in the Czech Republic is normally a formal matter and the applicant should dress accordingly. There are various types of interview, sometimes – often for managerial positions and in state administration – a psychological test is applied.

Awareness of the operations of the company where the job is sought is part of good preparation for the interview.

Useful links:

<http://europa.eu.int/eures>

– The European EURES Portal – the “CV – Online” section

<http://portal.mpsv.cz/eures>

– Versions of the Czech EURES portal in foreign languages

<http://europass.cedefop.eu.int/>

– A template for a European CV in various languages including Czech





2.5 Employment Contracts and the Labour Law in a Nutshell

The terms of employment relationship between the employer and the employee are stipulated in an employment contract.

Before signing the contract the employer is obliged to acquaint the future employee with the rights and obligations resulting from the contract, particularly the working and wage conditions under which the work is to be performed. When concluding employment contracts and during employment, the employer is obliged to ensure equal treatment for all employees as regards their working conditions, including remuneration, their professional training and promotion opportunities.

In labour relations any discrimination due to gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, social background, language, health conditions, age, religion, property, marital and family status or family obligations is prohibited. Moreover, it is not permissible to discriminate on the basis of activities in political parties or movements and trade unions.

Employment contract requisites

The employer is obliged to conclude an employment contract in writing. One exception is a situation where the contract concerns a period shorter than one month, but this contract must also be in writing if the employee so requests. The employee must always get one copy of the employment contract.

According to the contract, the employer is obliged to agree with the employee the type of work he/she is employed for, the place of work and the date of entering the employment. The employment contract may include other terms that are of interest to the contracting parties – this will no doubt be the level and means of remuneration, the payment date, etc.

It is important that the content of the contract be clear, non-controversial and not admitting of more than one interpretation. Employment is agreed in the contract either for an indefinite period of time, or for a specific time.

A probation period may be agreed in the employment contract. The probation period must be agreed in writing and may last for a maximum of three months. During the probation period the employee and the employer have the right to terminate employment without stating a reason.

If a problem occurs related to employment the employee should turn to his/her superior and then to trade unions. If the employer violates the Labour Code in any way, the employees may raise a complaint with the nearest Labour Inspectorate. Labour Inspectorates have the power to levy fines in the case of unlawful behaviour.

Working hours

The working hours total 40 per week, and they are divided into five working days. Lunch break is not considered to be part of working hours.

Large companies normally have collective agreements which may amend specific working conditions – e.g. the working hours, payment for overtime work, compensatory periods of leave and various holiday and pension contributions. They may also set up company kindergartens, agree better work safety terms, etc.

Holidays

Employees are officially entitled to four weeks of holiday per year. Longer holidays may be agreed in a collective agreement. Entitlement to holidays comes into force at the latest 60 days after entering employment. For each full month at work the employee is entitled to one twelfth of the holidays for one calendar year.

Useful links:

http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/obecne/prav_predpisy

– Legal regulations in employment

<http://www.domavcr.cz>

– Home in the Czech Republic – the “Employment” section

http://archiv.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/1126/No_65_1965.pdf

– The English version of the Labour Code



2.6 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is subject to a business permit which is issued by the Trade Licence Office. Certain requirements must be met. The basic ones include:

- An 18-year age limit,
- Competence to perform legal acts,
- Integrity,
- Evidence that the individual has no tax, social security or health insurance arrears.

Recognition of professional qualifications

There are professions which may be practised without major limitations, but also professions which are regulated. In the case of practice of a regulated profession it is necessary to receive a certificate of recognition of a professional qualification. More details see the next chapter.

Taxes, social security and health insurance contributions

Each individual who is self-employed in the Czech Republic (who holds a trade licence), is obliged to pay taxes, and social security and health insurance contributions. If the annual income (for the last 12 months) exceeded 2 million CZK, the person is liable to value added tax (VAT). Other self-employed persons with lower income may decide whether they wish to pay VAT. Business activities in manufacturing, exports or imports of selected products are also liable to the consumer tax. This applies, for example, to fuels, alcohol, beer, cigarettes and wines.

Useful links:

<http://www.mpo.cz> – Ministry of Industry and Trade

<http://www.businessinfo.cz> – BusinessInfo

<http://www.domavcr.cz> – Home in the Czech Republic – the “Business” section

2.7 Recognition of Professional Qualifications

Recognition of professional qualifications for the purpose of the practice of a regulated profession is fostered by the law on recognition of professional qualifications. This law regulates the procedures for recognition of professional qualification or applicants – citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland who wish to practice a regulated profession or activity in the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the national co-ordinator as regards recognition of professional qualifications in the Czech Republic.

Regulated professions or activities are such professions or activities the practice of which is subject to the meeting of specific requirements laid down in the legal regulations of an EU country (e.g. a level and field of education, work experience, integrity, health condition, etc.).

If the profession is not regulated, it may be practised subject to no further requirements – i.e. under the same conditions that apply to Czech citizens.

If the profession is regulated, it is necessary to apply for recognition of a professional qualification by the relevant body. The body responsible in this area is the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In special cases laid down in the law recognition is the responsibility of professional associations.

A list of regulated professions, the relevant recognition bodies and forms to be downloaded are available at the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports at <http://www.msmt.cz/uok> (also in English).

Sectoral directives

Sectoral directives have been issued for the professions of physician, pharmacist, veterinary doctor, dentist, nurse, midwife and architect. These directives facilitate an automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates of education. Directives for law-related occupations fall within a specific category.

The ministries which regulate the various professions are responsible for the sectoral directives for the practice of the following professions:

- Ministry of Health – physician, dentist, midwife, nurse, pharmacist,
- Ministry of Agriculture – veterinary doctor,
- Ministry for Regional Development – architect,
- Ministry of Justice – law-related occupation (the recognition body is the Czech Bar Association).

Useful links:

<http://www.msmt.cz/uok>

– Recognition of professional qualifications in the Czech Republic

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/qualifications/

– Information about professional qualifications within Europe

<http://www.mzcr.cz>

– Ministry of Health

<http://www.mmr.cz>

– Ministry for Regional Development

<http://www.mze.cz>

– Ministry of Agriculture

<http://www.cak.cz>

– Czech Bar Association



WORK

