

28/10/2010 - OPENING SESSION

Study in the Eastern Europe: Motivations, Expectations and Outcomes

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Slide 2:

The roots of the development of tertiary education in the present-day Czech Republic go back to medieval times. **Charles University**, the first university in the Czech lands and in Central Europe, was founded in Prague in **1348** by Czech King and Roman Emperor Charles IV. The second university in our area was established in **Olomouc** in **1573**. The development of higher engineering education started with the foundation of the **Engineering School** in **1707**, which became the Prague Polytechnic, later Higher Technical Institute. The statute and the name of this institution were changed to the Czech Technical University after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.

In the first year of existence of the independent Czechoslovak Republic (**1918**) three new universities were established in Brno: **Masaryk University**, **University of Veterinary Medicine** and **University of Agriculture**. The Czechoslovakia at that time belonged among the most developed countries in the world, with a dense network of schools at all levels. The high quality of technical universities should be highlighted.

Since 1989, after the fall of the communism, the tertiary **education system has changed rapidly**. Extensive international contacts, exchange of students and teachers, as well as the process of transforming research and teaching were immediately started up. New disciplines and new study plans came into being. New departments and new faculties were established. New higher education institutions were formed on this basis, and a number of existing institutions were structured.

At present time, there are 26 public, 2 state and 46 private higher education institutions in the Czech Republic – Slide 3:

Steering tools at the central (ministerial) level applied to public higher education institutions are basically indirect. For implementing the strategic goals and for developing higher education, the Ministry of Education has two important tools:

- the **distribution of financial support** from the state budget to the higher education institutions;
- **quality assurance** through the awarding or withholding of accreditation following the expert opinion of the Accreditation Commission.

Slide 3:

We are aware that these days there are many options for students to study abroad. So why should the Czech Republic become a study destination? There are several arguments and good reasons for choosing our country. You will have a chance to take a look at some of the possible reasons on the following slides (**Slide 4-9**).

Slide 10:

Within a system of Long-term Plans and Development Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to promote its strategic objectives, the INTERNATIONALISATION and transnational cooperation in education plays an important part.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic annually offers scholarships to foreign nationals, in accordance with bilateral intergovernmental or departmental agreements concluded with a number of countries (currently 40).

With regard to **nationalities** of incoming students, it is obvious that Slovaks form the most numerous group followed by Polish students. We also receive number of scholarship holders from Italy, Latvia, China, France, Hungary, Egypt and Russia (**Slide 11**).

As to study content, philology is the most frequent and demanded field of study followed by less frequent history and economy.

Scholarships of this type are designed for university students or graduates and Ph.D. candidates who wish to complete a **study or research stay** at one of the Czech public institutions of higher education. Its **length usually ranges from 2 to 10 months** depending upon the agreement made by the Czech government and the foreign government concerned that specifies also the categories of eligible recipients.

- **Most frequently**, scholarship-holders are admitted for **research visits** (i.e. they either attend non-degree courses of their choice, or pursue an independent research activity at the host institutions, depending on their qualifications and preferences). Since the **courses** they follow in the Czech Republic **do not lead to the award of a degree**, they are not required to sit entrance examinations. In compliance with the applicable legal regulations, decisions on admission to research or study stays are taken by the institutions of higher education. Prospective applicants are therefore advised to contact the selected university directly and request a letter of invitation from the relevant department. Although such a letter is not listed among obligatory attachments to the application form, its submission is recommended, since it simplifies and expedites acceptance. Applicants are requested to point out to the selected university that they are applying for scholarship award under an international agreement.
- It is also possible to apply for a **study stay at a university** (i.e. **enrolment in a standard study programme with tuition in the Czech language for the period of scholarship** specified in the respective intergovernmental/departmental agreement). In this case, a good command of the Czech language is a must and admission may be conditional upon successful passing of entrance examinations.

Slide 12: The Government of the Czech Republic offers a number of scholarships within the framework of its **Foreign Development Assistance Programme** in support of the study of foreign nationals from developing countries at public institutions of higher education in the Czech Republic.

Students are the most frequently of European, African, South-American and Asian origin as you can see on the pie-chart.

These so called **Government Scholarships** are designed to cover the standard length of study:

- **in Bachelor/Master study programmes plus one-year preparatory course of the Czech language** (which is combined with other field-specific training). Government scholarships of this category are awarded to graduates from upper secondary schools who can enrol only in study programmes in which they follow instruction **in the Czech language**. Depending on the subject area, applicants are normally required to take entrance examinations at the respective institution of higher education. The scholarship award is conditional upon a successful passing of entrance examinations;
- **in follow-up Master study programmes or Doctoral study programmes**. Government scholarships of this category are awarded to graduates of Bachelor or Master study programmes, respectively, who enrol in study programmes with instruction in the English language.

Slide 13, Slide 14:

Incoming students at the Czech higher education institutions account roughly 9 % of the total number of students. While the majority of foreign students are Slovaks, there has also been a significant growth of other foreign students.

Let me now turn your attention to overall numbers of foreign nationals studying in our country. As you can see on the screen (**Slide 13**), it is apparent that most foreign nationals in the year of 2009 chose for their study in the Czech Republic the Charles University in Prague which is the most demanded Czech public higher education institutions by foreign nationals in the long term. The oldest Czech university was followed by the Masaryk University. The University of Economics in Prague takes a third place. Within private higher education institutions (**Slide 14**), it is clear that the Banking Institute-College of Banking was the most demanded by foreigners in 2009 amongst the others.

Slide 15:

Considering subject fields, there is a significant interest of applicants in economic sciences that are standing on the top of the league. As to other choices, students focus on Technical sciences, Medical Sciences; Humanities and Social Sciences should also be mentioned here.

Slide 16:

Development in figures as regards foreign graduates in the Czech Republic is highly progressive. Their number is sharply rising and has increased by nearly 5 times since 2004.

Slide 17:

For the Czech Republic, the Erasmus programme has been of particular importance among other Socrates programmes after the Velvet revolution. Our higher education system took advantage of the programme to implement national goals, mainly mobility of students and academics. Another important aspect was the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. However, it is apparent from the curve on the screen that the number of incoming Erasmus students within the last ten academic years has significantly **increased by almost 17 times (!)** in 2009 compared to 1999.