



ADVICE & TIPS – CZECH REPUBLIC



As a relatively new addition to the EU community, the Czech Republic is keen to open up opportunities to European citizens within its country. There are lots of graduate opportunities in the Czech Republic through international companies who have offices there, especially in Prague.

- *Typical problems encountered:* as in most post-Communist countries, bureaucracy in the Czech Republic may occasionally slow down official processes, but citizens of the EU should not encounter many difficulties.
- *How to improve your chances:* The biggest asset for getting a job in the Czech Republic is a good understanding of the Czech language. Tourism remains a lucrative and growing business in the Czech Republic. There are many ties to the UK in this industry, so tailoring your skills to the tourism sector is a good option for those without Czech language skills.
- *Language requirements:* English and German are widely spoken, with English being better known by younger people, but the ability to speak and write Czech is still an important requirement for job seekers.

Personal networks are of great importance. Belonging to the right social circle, combined with having an academic education, is even seen as some sort of status symbol in the Czech Republic. Next to personal contacts, newspapers are a great source of job information. So check newspaper advertisements and subsequently respond to those that appeal to you.

In the Czech Republic, CV databases are also very popular.

While English is the language of business, a sound working knowledge of Czech is highly appreciated, although not essential. Job interviews are for instance often conducted in English.

The application letter

The cover letter is even more important for your job application in the Czech Republic than the CV. Whereas the CV only gives information about your past, you are expected to explain your future plans in the cover letter. Since recruiters and employers are usually more interested in their companies' future, they want to know if you would be a good addition to the team.

You also use the cover letter to explain why you want to work for the respective company and what your special qualifications for the job are. Further, a connection to your CV should be established by explaining the previous positions you mentioned (do not, however, simply repeat what you have already said in your CV).

A cover letter is usually structured into three paragraphs. The first paragraph is used for a short self-introduction and a description of your future career plans. In the second part your educational background and skills are to be mentioned. This should closely follow your CV. The last paragraph includes your contact details. Make sure you provide an e-mail address.

Usually, cover letters are typed and not longer than one page. Handwritten cover letters may sometimes be requested.

The Curriculum Vitae

In the Czech Republic, a CV should be no longer than two pages. It provides an overview of your qualifications and previous experience. Besides your personal details, including your name, address, telephone/fax number, nationality, civil status and date of birth, all information on your higher education should be provided. These are usually stated in reverse chronological order.

Information on previous positions held and language skills follow. To round up your application, any relevant, not job related activities should be included. Your active participation in social organisations, for example, can highlight your people skills. Also the inclusion of your hobbies and interests allow your potential employer to gain a better insight into your character.

Always keep in mind that a CV gives you a lot of freedom to choose which information you want to include. It can, therefore, be tailored for any job you apply for. Too many details that are irrelevant for the job are as bad as too little information on your professional career.

The application procedure

If you have been invited to an interview, the most important and maybe hardest part still lies ahead of you. For the first interview – there might be up to four – you should take your CV and copies of the certificates you mentioned in the application. Since the selection procedure in the Czech Republic is very formal, being dressed appropriately is the first step to success. In some cases the interview is accompanied by tests in an assessment centre.

The questions you are confronted with commonly revolve around your personal and professional background. You should, however, also inform yourself about the company and the job offered beforehand. Knowing about the job will help you prepare for possible questions.

It is also important that you take the opportunity at your first interview to gather further information about the job and future career opportunities. This shows that you are interested in the job and, at the same time, makes it easier for you to decide whether or not you really want the job. The first impression you make at the first interview is very important since it usually lasts only 30 to 60 minutes.

The next job interviews are much longer and may sometimes take up to a whole day. A facility tour and interviews with different people at the company may be included as well as having lunch or dinner together with your potential new bosses. After these interviews you should have acquired a deep insight into the work environment and your job responsibilities and therefore be able to make a decision about any potential offer.

Where can I work?

- Major industries: automotive industry; the leisure and lifestyle sector; IT/telecommunications/electronics - driven by the deregulation of fixed-line telephone services, the growth of the mobile phone sector, data services, and demand for local hardware production; financial services - major international players in all fields from banking to management consultancy.
- Recent growth areas: an ambitious programme of privatisation and deregulation was started in preparation for EU accession and is on-going. The dramatic growth in the services sector has led to a shortage of some skills, and specialised manual workers are particularly in demand. The tourist industry continues to expand.
- Major companies: ČEZ, Agrofret Holdings, Agropol Group, Zentiva, Škoda , Budvar , Pilsner Urquell. Many of the large organisations in the Czech Republic are international and not home grown.
- Major cities: Prague (capital city), Brno, Plzen, Ostrava and Olomouc.

What's it like working in the Czech Republic?

- Average working hours: 39 hours per week.
- Holidays: typically, 20 paid days holiday per year.
- Average graduate starting salary: CZK187,248 (around £9,066) per annum. However, salaries are generally higher in Prague, where there is also a large commuter workforce.
- Tax rates: there is a flat rate of income tax at 15%, due to be reduced to 12.5% in 2009. Everybody working in the Czech Republic pays social and health insurance contributions.
- Working practices and customs: business meetings are booked well in advance, and arranged by a fax or formal letter. The country has a complex legal system left over from its Communist days, and bureaucracy may delay many business transactions. There is also a fairly laid back, thoughtful approach to business, so do not expect snap decisions. Business cards are recommended; they should include your academic qualifications and should preferably be in Czech.