

European Union Grants Advisor Czech Republic

The Czech Government and SMEs Improve Computer Literacy with IT Training for All

Microsoft learning partner ComputerHelp is a leader in computer education for adults in the Czech Republic market and cooperates with Microsoft and its partners on information system projects. As an authorised training centre for Microsoft products, ComputerHelp offers a range of courses and consultations led by certified trainers. Together with the Czech government, ComputerHelp is working to progress the local knowledge-based economy and improve the skills and employability of Czech people.

The Czech Republic government is keen to make a transition to become a knowledge-based economy. Aspiring to develop its information and social economy, it launched a programme aimed at nationwide improvement of computer literacy. The government-funded programme offers courses in basic IT training in learning centres across the country.

As part of the government-funded training, Czech Republic citizens can learn to use the computer for everyday activities. The training aims to improve users' skills and increase their ability to work with files and folders, launch programmes, use simple applications, and configure their systems. The programme also teaches the specifics of working on a network, mastering the text editor, how to work with e-mail, Internet Explorer and search, and how to classify and use information on the Internet.

Petr Novák, General Manager, ComputerHelp, says: "The goal of this

initiative is to really break the barrier for people who have never worked with computers. The initiative is open to all adults who feel they will benefit from the ability to use a computer, from farmers to those who are retired. This is to bring something new into their lives, maybe bring something new into their career, regardless of where they are at the moment. The whole thing is done by professionals so it provides them with quality training and shows them possibilities for future learning and development."

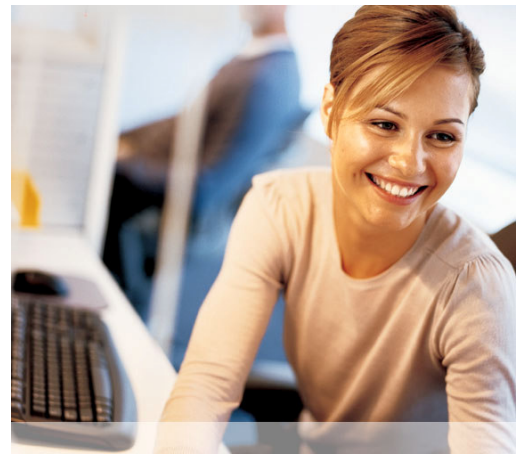
For the Czech Republic to realise its full potential as a knowledge-based economy, it needs to generate a knowledge-based workforce, one where all citizens have basic IT skills and training. Education and training are essential factors in achieving a knowledge-based economy and creating opportunities for future generations. The Czech Republic—and the whole of Europe—require more people with advanced IT skills that will provide the infrastructure and innovation required to create the knowledge-based economy.

As part of the Lisbon Agenda, between 2000 and 2006 the European Union has given an estimated €117 billion (U.S.\$141 billion) to small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) across Europe for technology-related investment. This figure is expected to double between 2007 and 2013.



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Petr Novák, General Manager, ComputerHelp



Verheugen, EU Commissioner, Enterprise and Industry, says: "The new growth and employment initiative known as the Lisbon Agenda can only work if it is a partnership project. We particularly need to rely on the involvement of the private sector."

Microsoft believes strongly in the importance of technology and training. It runs an annual campaign among its learning partners urging them to make of the available EU funds. This campaign is part of the European Union Grants Advisor (EUGA) initiative.

Microsoft works with a consortium of organisations—including banks, technology companies, and consulting agencies—to increase awareness of available EU funds and provide facilitated application process to SMEs and local and regional governments. After learning of the available grants through the Microsoft campaign, ComputerHelp applied for funding from the Czech Republic government.

The awarding body granted €380,000 (U.S. \$480,170), 50 per cent of the budget, to cover the cost of hiring and training professionals, hardware, software, and new infrastructure. Using this money, ComputerHelp subsidised fundamental training in computer literacy to the public free of charge, aiming to train 20,000 to 50,000 people in one year. Each session caters for between 10 and 20 people and is approximately four-hours long. A second, more advanced training programme was offered for a reduced fee to any interested participants. An expected, 25 to 30 per cent of people will continue this training.

The ComputerHelp programme is just one example of how the Czech Republic is quickly becoming a champion of the knowledge-based economy. It recognises that there is an urgent need for more investment in better vocational training and education to equip present and future workers with employable skills. Using these literacy, numeric, IT, and communication skills, people can engage in more interesting, better-paid work, and improve productivity and competitiveness at an enterprise level.

Fast Facts

URL

www.computerhelp.cz
www.microsoft.com/cze/mojefirma/euga/

Country

Czech Republic

Profile

Part of the former Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic is home to more than 10 million people. After the collapse of Soviet authority in 1989, Czechoslovakia regained its freedom through a peaceful "Velvet Revolution". On January 1, 1993, the country split into its two national components, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

Situation

For the Czech Republic to realise its full potential as a knowledge-based economy it needs to generate a knowledge-based workforce, one where all citizens have basic IT skills and training. Education and training are essential factors in achieving a knowledge-based economy and creating opportunities for future generations.

Solution

Microsoft learning partner ComputerHelp applied for, and received, government funding of €380,000 (U.S.\$480, 170) to provide basic training sessions to the general public in a number of branches around the Czech Republic. Using this money ComputerHelp subsidised fundamental training in computer literacy to the public free of charge. A second, more advanced training session is also being offered.

Benefits

- Increased funding means an increased number of the general public can be trained in a shorter time frame.
- A nationwide improvement in computer literacy will lead to further job creation and innovation.

Contact:

For more information please contact Microsoft Corporate Affairs, or visit the Web site: www.microsoft.com/emea/euga