

Introduction

The publication you hold in your hands freely follows its earlier edition and at the same time further expands it. It is mostly concerned with the comparison of the Czech Republic and European Union countries, but also with other world countries, in the form of selected indicators in tables and graphs. The major used country groups are exactly defined below. The selection of data was primarily governed by the interests of users and also by the existence and availability of data in international sources.

Also this year there are 11 thematic areas in the publication, covering economic, social as well as environmental areas of life. Apart from the standard information regarding the population, labour market, environment, individual economic sectors and macroeconomic data, especially the GDP, were also included indicators on information society, selected regional indicators and many others. Wide range of data and tables of international comparison can also be found on www.czso.cz or in other publications produced by the Czech Statistical Office.

Explanatory notes:

EU 15 refers to the European Union of 15 countries (till 30 April 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom).

EU 25 is the European Union of 25 countries. Ten new countries joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), which changed the EU 15 into EU 25.

EU 27 is the European Union of 27 countries after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007.

Euroarea refers to the territory of the EU Member States, which adopted the euro as the common currency in compliance with the Treaty establishing the European Community. The special supreme session of the European Union held in May 1998 stated that eleven of its countries had qualified for the introduction of the common "Euro" (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain). The exchange rates of the currencies of these countries to the euro were permanently fixed as of the end of 1998 in the form of conversion coefficients.

In 2001, these countries were joined by Greece and Euroarea (11 countries) became **Euroarea (12 countries)**. Euroarea further extended. Slovenia joined the Euroarea on 1 January 2007 – **Euroarea (13 countries)**, Malta and Cyprus on 1 January 2008 – **Euroarea (15 countries)** and Slovakia on 1 January 2009 – **Euroarea (16 countries)**.

EFTA (European Free Trade Association) – this group includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) is an artificial currency that reflects differences in national price levels that are not taken into account by exchange rates. This unit allows meaningful volume comparisons of economic indicators over countries. Aggregates expressed in PPS are derived by dividing aggregates in current prices and national currency with the respective Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) are the currency exchange rates that equalise the purchasing power of different currencies. This means that a given sum of money, when converted into different currencies at the PPP rates, will buy the same basket of goods and services in all countries. In other words, PPPs are the rates of currency conversion, which eliminate the differences in price levels among countries.

Participation rate expresses the percentage of general population over the age of 15 who are currently employed or are actively seeking employment (the labour force). Persons who are not in the labour force include retired people, stay-at-home parents, students, people in prisons or similar institutions, as well as discouraged workers who cannot find work etc.

Employment Rate (or Employment-to-population Ratio) is the ratio of employed persons to the population 15 years and over.

The data for the Chapter 5 **Industry, energy, construction** were extracted from Eurostat database and are based on the classification NACE Rev. 2.

The aim of this publication is to serve the wide range of users interested in information relating to the position of the Czech Republic in comparison to the other countries. The CZSO employees welcome possible further ideas and comments from the readers and will use them in further improvement of their work.