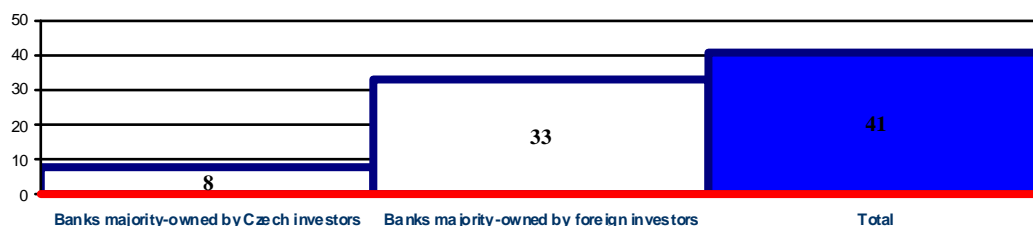


25. Business (Professional) Services

BANKING

The financial crisis triggered by the fall of Lehman Brothers in 2008 did not affect the Czech Republic directly. The banking system remained stable throughout the crisis and required no financial support from the government or the Czech Central Bank, unlike in many other countries. Just as before the financial crisis, the strengths of the Czech banking sector are good balance sheet liquidity, sufficient capital adequacy, high profitability, independence from external financing and a very low share of foreign currency loans, which protects domestic borrowers against foreign exchange risk. The last two characteristics in particular give the Czech banking system an advantage not only over Central European countries, but also over the EU as a whole.

Overview of Banks in the Czech Republic



Source: Czech National Bank, December 2010

The Czech Republic's accession to the EU had no immediate impact on Czech banks, as their integration into the European financial system had already been underway for several years, particularly after the privatization of large banks was completed. The ownership structure of the banking sector has been stable for several years, with foreign shareholders controlling almost the entire banking sector (there were 33 banks and foreign bank branches operating in the Czech Republic at the end of 2010).

Large banks <i>(balance sum above CZK 100 billion)</i>	Branches of foreign banks
Ceska sporitelna	AXA Bank Europe
Ceskoslovenska obchodni banka	Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ
Komerční banka	BRE Bank S.A.
	Citibank Europe plc
	Deutsche Bank
	Crédit Agricole Corporate a Investment Bank S.A. Prague
	Saxo Bank A/S
	ZUNO BANK AG
Medium-sized banks <i>(balance sum from CZK 15 to 100 billion)</i>	
Banco Popolare Czech Republic	Commerzbank
Ceska exportní banka	Ceskomoravská záruční a rozvojová banka
Evropsko-ruská banka, a.s.	Fio banka, a.s.
Fortis Bank	GE Money Bank
HSBC Bank	Hypoteční banka
ING Bank	J&T BANKA, a. s.
LBBW Bank CZ a.s.	Oberbank
Poštová banka, a.s.	PPF banka a. s.
Privat Bank	Raiffeisenbank im Stifland
Raiffeisenbank	The Royal Bank of Scotland N.V.
UniCredit Bank Czech Republic, a.s.	Volksbank CZ
Všeobecná uverová banka	Waldviertler Sparkasse von 1842 AG
Wüstenrot hypoteční banka a. s.	

Source: Czech National Bank, November 2010

Strong competition a convertible currency and the presence of international players ensure that the sector basically resembles a standard western banking system. Internet banking, already offered by most of the banks, has huge potential in the country and is expanding rapidly. A list of banks operating in the Czech Republic is available on the websites of the [Czech Banking Association](#) and the [Czech National Bank](#).

INSURANCE

The financial services sector also boasts a strong and stable insurance market. There are around 53 insurance companies operating in the Czech Republic. Most of the largest insurance companies are controlled by foreign insurers: Ceska pojistovna (CZI Holdings N.V. the Netherlands), Kooperativa pojistovna (Wiener Städtische Allgemeine Versicherung, Austria), Allianz pojistovna (Allianz, Germany), CSOB Pojistovna (KBC Bank N.V., Belgium) and ING Nationale-Nederlanden (the Netherlands). All corporate insurance products are provided and competition is strong. Insurance providers in the Czech Republic are members of and represented by the [Czech Insurance Association](#).

CAPITAL MARKET

[The Prague Stock Exchange](#) came into being in the Czech Republic in accordance with the provisions of the Stock Exchange Act in 1992. Its organization is similar to Western European stock exchanges, and trading is organized through appointed members of the Stock Exchange. The [Czech Securities Commission](#) was established in 1998 to regulate the capital market. Through its supervision and re-licensing of brokers the SEC has played a major role in strengthening confidence in the market.

AUDITING AND ACCOUNTING FIRMS

The services offered by auditing and accounting firms in the Czech Republic are fully comparable with western standards. All members of the Big Four audit firms are present on the Czech market. In addition, several other international auditing firms are present, along with dozens of independent Czech auditing and accounting specialists. The [Chamber of Auditors](#) trains and certifies Czech auditors and the [Chamber of Certified Accountants](#) provides similar services for accountants. All of the country's tax advisors are associated in the [Chamber of Tax Advisers](#).

LEGAL SERVICES

A variety of law firms are present in the Czech Republic providing top-quality, comprehensive legal services in all commercial areas. They can be divided into two main groups: those belonging to or affiliated with international law firms, and local Czech law firms. More information on law firms in the Czech Republic, including a search engine to find a law firm meeting particular criteria, is available in several languages on the website of the [Czech Bar Association](#).

VENTURE CAPITAL & BUSINESS ANGELS

The [Czech Venture Capital Association](#) has 37 members. Complete information on the association and on testing centers can be found on its website. [Business Angels Czech](#) was established at the end of the 2001 in Prague as a regular member of the European Business Angels Network. The opportunity to cooperate with local companies, and support their start-up and fast development of selected companies is one of the key elements of this project.

LEASING / FINANCING

Liberal government policies and the absence of restrictions on foreign capital have resulted in rapid growth and strong competition in the leasing sector. The [Czech Leasing and Financial Association](#) members are responsible for most of the leasing transactions in the Czech Republic

TESTING CENTRES

Czech testing centers are accredited by the [Association of Czech Testing Centers and Laboratories](#). Complete information on the association and on testing centers can be found on its website.

LOGISTICS AND FREIGHT FORWARDING

The Czech Republic's geographical position makes it a natural link between Western and Eastern Europe. The logistics and freight forwarding industry is highly competitive and a variety of international and domestic freight forwarding and logistics providers are present in the country. The majority of these companies are members of the [Association of Forwarding and Logistics of the Czech Republic](#). A full list of members can be found on the association's website.

REAL ESTATE

Real estate services are readily available in all parts of the country. The [Association of Real Estate Offices of the Czech Republic](#) runs a [database](#) of real estate agents and properties.