

Czech Republic: Assistance Centres for Female Entrepreneurship

Description: This project provides an integrated support offer to women entrepreneurs, including training, business advisory services and mentoring in two regions of the Czech Republic (Jihomoravský and Zlínský Region).

Context: The labour market in the Czech Republic varies greatly by region. A mismatch in the labour market between the skills supplied and the skills demanded has arisen due to a shift in economic activity from agriculture to the service sector. This has disproportionately negative impacts for vulnerable groups in the labour market such as youth and women, especially those in rural areas.

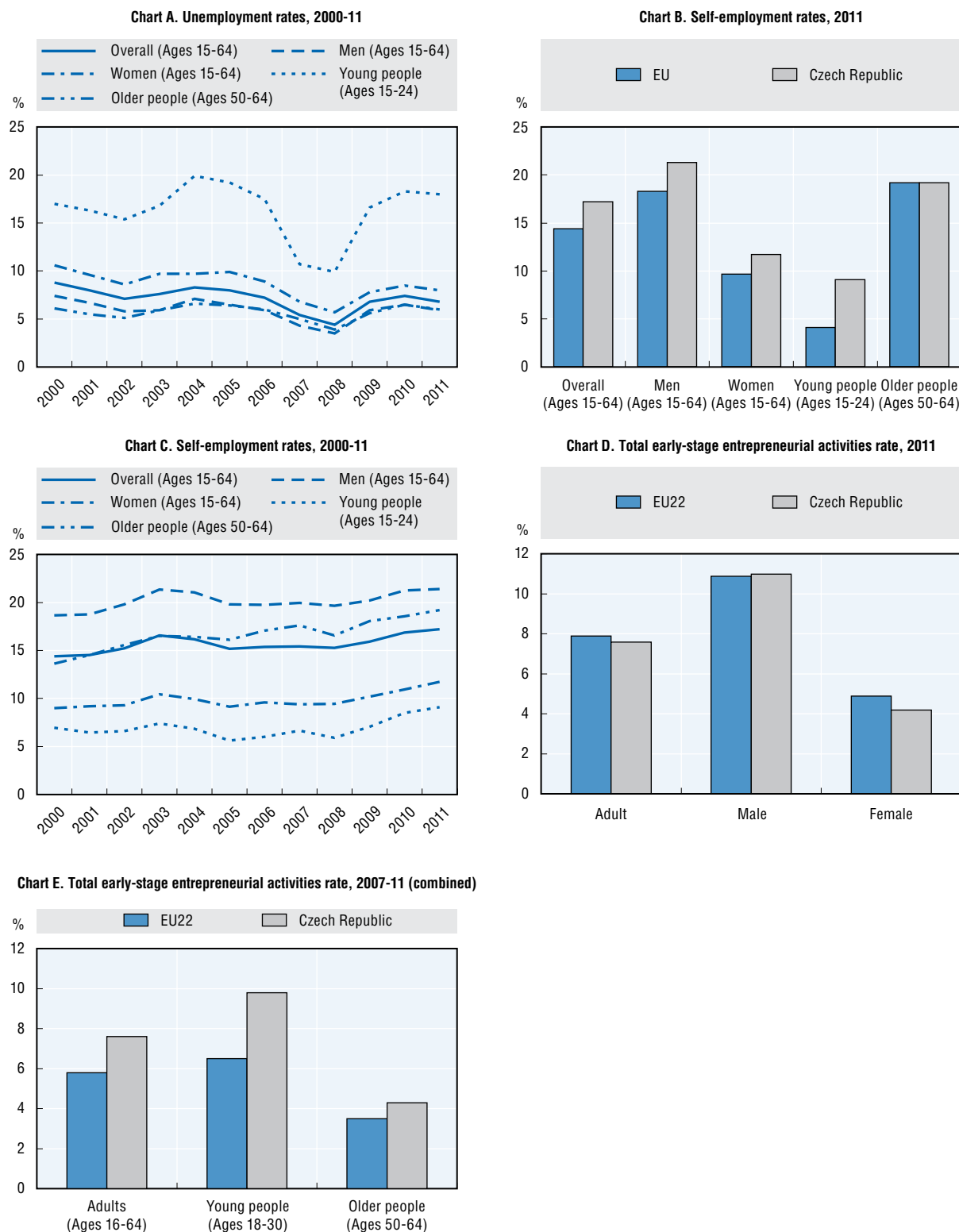
Problem addressed: Women have poorer labour market outcomes than men in the Czech Republic, including lower employment rates (16.8 percentage points lower in 2011), lower self-employment rates (9.6 percentage points lower in 2011) and higher unemployment rates (1.5 percentage points higher in 2011) (Chart A). Women face a number of challenges in entering the labour market, including the reconciliation of family and working life.

Approach: This project was created in 2005 as part of the EQUAL project through the creation of a partnership between the Moravian Association of Female Entrepreneurs and Managers (MAPM) and the Chamber of Commerce in Brno City. The Assistance Centres operate within the chambers of commerce and are co-ordinated by MAPM. Each centre employs a project manager, who co-ordinates the support services, and a professional consultant, who works with partners to deliver training and seminars on finance, law, accounting and marketing; assistance with business plan development and bank loan applications; individual consulting; and other services aimed at balancing work and personal life such as childcare. All services are provided free of charge and can be accessed for an unlimited amount of time. To qualify for the project, participants must have a trade certificate that is less than 2 months old and must not have experience with self-employment. Since 2008, this project was funded by the regional governments and the European Social Fund.

Impact: Between 2005 and 2008, the project cost EUR 760 000 and resulted in the creation of 60 new enterprises and 75 additional jobs. In addition, 171 existing enterprises benefited from the project, 2 469 women entrepreneurs received business counselling and 50 seminars were held for 600 women. In the final report of the Third Phase of On-going Evaluation of Community Initiative Programme (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2008), the scheme was identified as a model example of a procedure to identify and develop innovative products.

Considerations for success: One of the factors in the success of this project is the partnership that has been established between a non-profit organisation (MAPM) and the regional chambers of commerce. This has enabled synergies to be created between the service delivery experience of MAPM and the knowledge and professional skills of the chambers of commerce in supporting business start-up.

Figure 10.5. **Entrepreneurship and self-employment data for the Czech Republic**



Sources: Chart A. Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2000-2011; Chart B. Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2011 ; Chart C. Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2000-2011 ; Chart D. Special tabulations of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor adult population survey, 2011; Chart E. Special tabulations of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor adult population survey, 2007-2011..

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