

2.2.3. Support of the economic competitiveness

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ÈSSD will take part in creating the environment allowing companies to invest into the productivity and future expansion.

The competitiveness from a long-term point of view is based on the research and development necessary for the productivity increase and implementation of modern technologies including the results of the information revolution. Presently companies are not able to carry out the research on their own, especially as the basic research is usually not in their main interest. In this field we want to develop a state support through share funding, grants, establishment of science and technology parks with the participation of research institutions and universities but also by intangible investments in the form of the consulting and training of new managers. As one of the priorities we see the support of the development of the information sector, including larger access to the Internet.

We will support economy modernization through the faster depreciation of machinery capital goods, investments in technological development and education and also through the elimination of customs barriers to the import of modern equipment and technologies.

We will foster the modernization of companies especially in industry by long-term loans - for investment and technical development projects - partly funded and guaranteed by the state and granted by special development banks.

The development of small and medium companies is generally recognized as the main factor of the economic growth in developed countries. The influence of small and medium companies on the development of the Czech economy is even more important as they have a high potential for innovation, substantially enlarge the competition environment and their irreplaceable capacity to absorb free working force stabilizes both the economic and political systems. Direct and indirect support of small and medium companies will be a permanent part of the government economic policy of ÈSSD with the basic goal of creating a healthy business environment.

We welcome foreign investments as long as they contribute to the increase of the economic performance of the Czech Republic in accordance with its interests. Therefore our rules concerning the investing of the foreign capital in our companies are the same as the ones the developed countries apply as far as preferential treatment and the protection of their strategic interests is concerned.

A vitally urgent task and prerequisite of winning back the confidence of the public in the Czech banking system is in our view the consolidation and stabilization of the banks as well as the regulation of the capital market. We will carry out essential steps substantially increasing the bank and capital market effectiveness so that both the mechanisms of reallocation of free financial resources create favourable conditions for the development of the national economy.

As far as the separate branches are concerned:

ÈSSD will enforce an economic strategy aimed first of all at the support of growing **industry** competitiveness and the strengthening of its export and production capability using qualified workers. One of the most demanding tasks will be to reinvigorate viable areas of machinery and other traditional industries, a substantial part of which is threatened at present.

We intend to support the increase of competitiveness of viable important parts of the Czech industry - including the restructuring program - with the prospect of the extension of their domestic and foreign activities. An integral part of these programs will also be the social programs for released employees including their requalification.

We will also employ a balanced industrial strategy in relation not only to the large but also small and medium companies that are for whatever reasons disadvantaged in comparison with large industry.

One of the principles of the **energy policy** is the focus on the decrease of energy demands both in the business sphere and households. Building new or renovating the existing capacities we prefer using ecology-friendly primary sources and technologies, allowing as effective and economic a use of the traditional resources as possible, or an economic use of alternative and renewable resources. The solutions of problem in the area of energy must be based on the long-term state energy concept stating principles, goals and provisions of the energy policy with the regard to the first two decades of the next millennium.

Development of agriculture and the country is another of our priorities. It is not only a question of the agricultural production development but also of the full and meaningful lives of all the inhabitants of the country. As one of the basic elements of a prospering country we see the development of the agricultural sector, i.e. agriculture and forestry which requires the establishment of an adequate agricultural policy.

This policy will be based on:

- ensuring food self-sufficiency based on our own resources, especially in case of commodities in the mild climate
- recognition of non-productive functions of agriculture and forestry including their functions in the protection and creation of the landscape
- consideration of the business handicap of the agricultural primary producers given either by their location or by a policy laid down by management caused by the needs of protecting the ecological stability of the countryside or important natural resources.

We anticipate a gradual alignment with the standards of the common agricultural policy of the European Union including the implementation of the system of effective market regulations as a basic tool of food price stabilization both for the consumers and the primary producers. We will support this system by introducing market regulations of important commodities, by using future contracts, store vouchers, by creating functional commodity exchanges and by using commodity centres. We will support the joining of the primary producers into the commercial organizations.

We see subventions of agriculture as a system tool for stabilization of the food prices and the support of ecological and non-productive functions of the agri-ecological complex.

We will support any form of ecologically compatible large-scale agricultural production which we consider effective regardless of the fact of whether it is carried out by agricultural cooperations, companies or private farmers. Therefore we see as vital the curtailment of the growth of indebtedness of the agricultural sector. Consequently we want to use the already existing institutions, for example the Support and guarantee farmer and forestry fund and the State fund of the market regulations.

ÈSSD undertakes to solve the serious problem of the restitution and transformation shares in the agricultural cooperations payable in 1999 and 2000.

We want to allow the agricultural entrepreneurs to acquire the land under favourable conditions to conform its possession and right of use to the direction and coordination of The Land Fund.

Forestry of the Czech Republic will be oriented to continuous development of the production and non-production functions of forests. We will support the restructuring of the mainly technically underdeveloped domestic wood industry. We consider the forests an important property of the whole of society.

In accordance with the transport policy of the European Union, the **transport policy** of the Czech republic will be aimed at the increased quality and safety of transport, support of ecology-friendly transport choices, transparency of public funds participating in transport activities, extension of general transport services in the public interest, higher quality of transport services in the various regions, preference of public transport to individual transport and development of transport that is acceptable as far as the environment and living conditions are concerned.

We will present a concept of medium-term and long-term transport policy for discussion reflecting the renewal and adequate development of transport forces instead of their fast deterioration. It will cover a funding model allowing the acceptance of necessary help of the European Union for this purpose and charging foreign users of the infrastructure the amount corresponding to their share of the arising costs. This model will be based on the standardization of conditions of different types of the transport.

The key question is the transformation of the railways. It must allow for an increase of the railway share in the transport market and not its liquidation, wider range and better quality of its business activities and the creation of demand by offering services while undergoing rationalization. We will progress with the corridor construction allowing a speeding up of long-distance transport and the reconstruction of the existing infrastructure.

We will continue the urgent building of the basic network of highways and high-speed roads and its connection to the international network of highways. In areas allowing ecologically supportable constructions we will re-establish water routes and will support the development of the water transport system.

We will provide for the basic transport services within the whole country as a part of the civil and social rights of every citizen in Europe. We will prefer quality public transport to individual transport wherever it is reasonable and acceptable and we will create conditions for the development of integrated systems both in personal and freight transport. Thus the separate types of transport will carry out only the services they can provide at the lowest cost from the point of view of the whole society being at the same time the most suitable ones as far as the environment is concerned.

As far as **communications** are concerned we will develop a long-term strategy of building the telecommunications of the 21st century - the information highways and personal communication systems. We see as necessary to create the legislative and economic conditions by utilising the European expertise for providing general access to services. In accordance with the concept of the whole of Europe we will preserve the state influence on the liberalized market in this strategic industry by creating a regulatory body and stating basic elements of the regulatory frame.

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