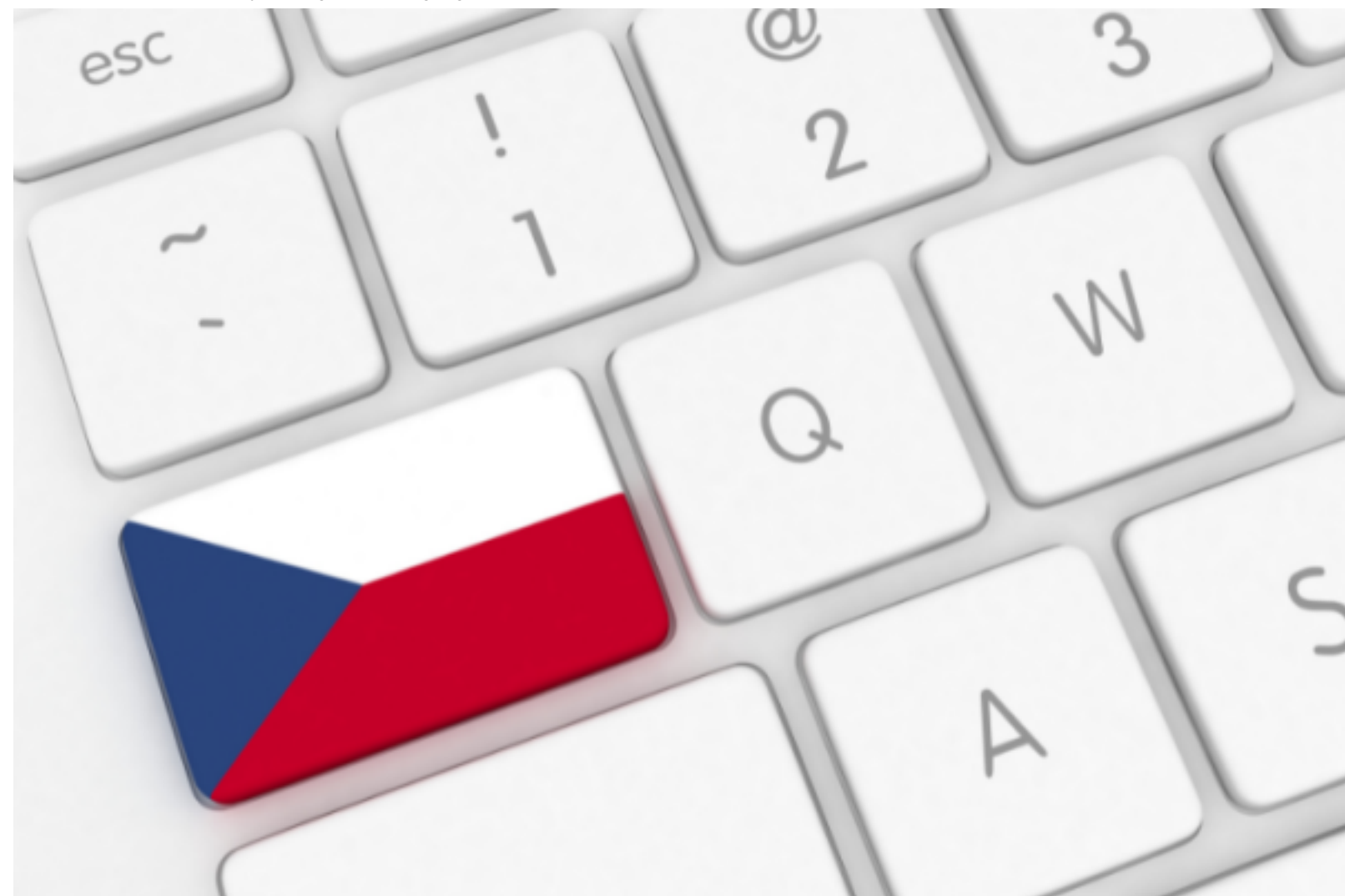# My First Year at a Czech University – Beginning of Everything

I came to the Czech Republic because I had always dreamed of studying abroad somewhere where there is a better educational system than in Angola. I came in spite of not having enough information about the Czech Republic and not knowing what to expect. The only information I had was that Prague is the capital. I also knew the national football team well.

I first enrolled in the Czech language preparatory course for foreign students at UJOP (The Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies, Charles University) in Poděbrady . The course was 10 months long. Czech was too difficult for me at the beginning because it was something completely new to me. Although I had heard Czech during the course for the first time in my life and the teachers would only speak in Czech to us, I was able to understand the language quite quickly as a result. I attended the course regularly all week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It was a little bit challenging at the beginning, but the teachers were well aware that the language was difficult for foreigners. In my free time, I went to the park and talked to people even though I needed to use a dictionary. That was a huge experience for me and I was quickly picking up the language.

The course ran as follows: we always had Czech first, and then mathematics and physics. Some of us studied economics and geography instead of mathematics and physics. During the summer term, I continued studying informatics because

our class was focused on IT. At the end of the course, we had to pass a final exam composed of three subjects. Because I received a scholarship, the course was free for me.

After I finished the ten-month course, I had to prepare for university entrance exams. I sent applications to the Czech Technical University in Prague, University of Technology in Brno, and University of Pardubice. Eventually, I decided to attend Pardubice. My friends asked why did I not want to study in Prague since I had been granted admission there, but coming from Luanda – the capital with five million people and an area of 2,257 sq. km – I wanted to find a bit of peace and quiet away from a big city.

<div class="card" style="cursor: pointer; text-align: center; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;" onclick="window.open('https://ujop.cuni.cz/UJOP-119.html')"> <div style="border: 1px solid #D22D40; padding: 10px; background-color: #d32d41; width: 100%;"> <h3 style="color: white; text-align: center; margin: 0;">Do you want to study at the best Czech universities for free?</h3> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #D22D40; padding: 10px; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <p style="margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;">You only need to do two things for thist – learn Czech and prepare well for the entrance exams.</p> <p style="margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;">All this can be done on ILPS preparatory courses of Charles University</p> <p style="margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;">Apply in time!</p> </div> </div>

The school year started in October and I was the only foreigner at the faculty. I was disappointed and surprised at the same time, and I was asking myself why there were no other foreign students. I was afraid whether I had chosen the right faculty for myself. I was also curious what my classmates and teachers would be like and if they would accept me. In the end, I met two guys who helped me with everything important, but it was still not easy for me. The teachers did not treat me in a special way, but I do not want this to become an excuse for being a foreigner. I wished to be evaluated honestly just like the rest of the students, but I would also like the teachers to know that studying is three times harder for foreigners than it is for Czech students. For example, when I took an exam and I failed it because I missed a few points, they would not take into account that I was studying the Czech language and communication in the language was still too difficult for me. At first, I was a bit sad about this. Eventually, I got used to the teachers, their teaching methods, and their requirements. Even now, I have to study a lot, but it is not as horrible anymore. I am pursuing my goal and I want to be able to achieve something.

I asked some of my friends how they felt about their first year at a Czech school:

- **Nazariy, Ukraine:** I have lived in Czech Republic for five years. It was quite difficult for me to study here, because of the differences between education here and in Ukraine in the teaching method and the evaluation of the students. I had thought about going back. In my opinion, studies in the Czech Republic are complicated and students' evaluation is not independent. There are two problems: 1. In my view, Czech teachers (at least the majority) do not like foreign students, and therefore impose stricter study requirements, which is a kind of discrimination (it is hard to prove, but you can feel it). 2. The problem at the universities is in the evaluation format – the largest part of the exams is written and not oral. One can copy and cheat while taking a test and then these exams are not able to show the real knowledge of a student. The oral exam, on the contrary, makes it possible to review whether a student understands the subject or not.

- **Krystina, Russia:** The beginning was good for me. I cannot compare or find differences between the universities in the Czech Republic and Russia. I never thought about dropping out and going back home. I think studying here is much better now, with a few minor exceptions. Some of the teachers are not that good, especially those who do not get along well with their colleagues.

- **Guisela, Peru:** I have lived in the Czech Republic for two years and the beginning was very difficult for me, I had to constantly learn and there are many differences between the schools in Peru and the Czech Republic. For example, here, we have modern laboratories and every student can use their own desk. Occasionally, I was thinking of dropping out and going back to Peru, but it is much better now because I understand more of the language and my teachers and fellow students are friendly.

- **Ariunjargal, Mongolia:** I have lived here for almost seven years. The beginning was horrible, especially because of the differences between the schooling here and in Mongolia. In the Czech Republic there are a lot of reference materials available. The teachers are helpful. The testing is fair, without any difference. Sometimes one has a "hard day", but such days motivate me even more to know that I have a goal I want to achieve and I have to do my best. I also have to say I never thought of going back. In my opinion, not all the Czech students realize they have quite a large opportunity for education here in the Czech Republic. Introduction of tuition fees might have a positive impact and make students appreciate university education more. I am satisfied with the work of the Academic Senate. I say that because I had a good experience with it. Students and teachers support the new proposals.

- **Kangamba, Angola:** I have lived in the Czech Republic for five years. The beginning was not so hard for me because I adapted quickly, so it was not a big problem. I think the difference between the schools in my country and those in the Czech Republic consists of the fact that here they teach you what you really need and prepare you for the exams afterwards. Meanwhile, in my country the opposite is true. Students get a lot of useless materials; teachers think we are machines, not humans. Luckily, I never thought of dropping out and going back home. Now, it is much better here because I speak Czech better than before. Studying is not difficult; the only barrier is the language. This is my personal opinion on Czech education. If I could rate it on a scale from 1 to 10, I would give it a 6.5.

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Author: Emiliano da Cunha