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The Sharing Economy in Practice in the Czech Republic: A Small Post-Communist Economy

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Abstract

The sharing economy represents a new business model which has been experiencing an unprecedented and increasing boom. However, differences are evident in the development of the sharing economy between individual continents and even countries, this being to the detriment of less developed countries such as post-communist countries. The aim of the study is to present a model of the sharing economy from the point of view of the practical experience of a small post-communist economy: the Czech Republic. An explanation of how the term sharing economy is defined and understood in a national context is provided in the chapter, and alternative types of the sharing economy which are applied in this country are specified. Discussion is presented of the key issues of an economic and legislative nature which are dealt with in the context of the model of the sharing economy in this country. Key and other major players in the sharing economy in the Czech Republic are also presented, and the scope of the sharing economy in this country is analysed and evaluated. The development of the sharing economy is discussed in relation to the opportunities and threats associated with this phenomenon.

Keywords: Sharing Economy, Collaborative Economy, Platform Economy, Accommodation Sharing, Ride-Sharing, Car-Sharing, Collaborative Finance

Introduction

The sharing economy has been increasing in importance in the Czech Republic in recent years, although not experiencing such a boom as compared to that seen in developed economies. In addition to this, platforms are frequently used only as a tool for innovation of older business models, and in fact, this concerns only a so-called platform economy. The fact is that the offer of sharing is limited in this country, be this from a territorial point of view (concentrated in large cities, in particular, the City of Prague) or from the point of view of the range of services (Klesla 2018). It is in particular

international platforms such as Uber or Airbnb which have found their place on the market, but over time, national platforms such as Zonky have also been emerging and developing. With or without the use of platforms, the sharing economy is, in particular, developing in this country in the field of customer-to-customer (C2C) sharing and business-to-customer (B2C) sharing. Over time, however, initiatives in the field of business-to-business (B2B), business-to-university (B2U), business-to-government (B2G), university-to-business (U2B), university-to-government (U2G), and government-to-government (G2G) sharing has also been gaining in importance.

The key problem, which plays an important role not only from the point of view of the Czech Republic, is the fact that the term sharing economy and alternative terms such as collaborative economy or platform economy are not precisely defined. Space is thus created for various interpretations of these terms, bringing with it many risks for the entities concerned. This is to say that a lot of initiatives are asserting themselves within the framework of the sharing economy model, which is, in fact, only circumventing the applicable legislation in the sector in question and avoiding meeting of their tax obligations under the “guise” of the sharing economy. The absence of regulation of sharing subsequently leads to a lack of interest among entities potentially interested in making use of the offer, in particular companies, in participating in the sharing economy. The reason for this is fears that their activities could be associated with efforts to circumvent the applicable legislation. Last but not least, the inadequate legislation leads to scepticism among potential users of sharing services who are worried that services provided within the framework of the sharing economy will be of lower quality as compared to services provided within the framework of traditional business models. This means that the benefits of the sharing economy cannot be utilised to the full, be these economic, environmental, or social. The priority is to define clear rules which will ensure the development of the sharing economy and which will at the same time lead to improvement of tax collection and protection of the rights of all entities on the market.

The aim of the study is to present a model of the sharing economy from the point of view of practice in a small post-communist economy: the Czech Republic. The partial aims of the study are: a) to explain how the term sharing economy is defined and understood in a national context; b) to identify the key problems which are associated with the functioning of the sharing economy in this country; c) to introduce the key and other major players of the sharing economy in the Czech Republic and to assess the scope of the sharing economy in this country; and d) to characterise the main opportunities and threats of the sharing economy from the point of view of the Czech Republic. The structure of the following parts of the chapter is based on the above-mentioned aims. In the introduction, the explanation is provided of how the term sharing economy is defined and understood, and the applied typology of sharing is introduced. This is followed by a discussion of the key issues which are dealt with in the context of the model of the sharing economy in this country. The key players on the market of the sharing economy are also presented, and the scope of the sharing economy in this country is assessed. Government activities relating to problems and efforts to regulate the sharing economy in the Czech Republic are also presented. The development of the sharing economy is also discussed in relation to the opportunities and threats associated with this phenomenon. Mention is made in the conclusion of other major players in the sharing economy in this country, and future directions of research are also set out.

Definition

In the Czech Republic, the use of the term sharing economy is predominant as compared to the term collaborative economy. According to Deloitte (Marek et al. 2017), the sharing economy represents the preference of access to consumer durables and factors of production with the aid of digital platforms over their ownership. The Czech Chamber of Commerce (2018) takes this definition as its starting point and adds that this concerns a free online marketplace that helps more effective use of unused or underused factors of production and is a source of benefits in economic, environmental, and social fields.

According to Veber et al. (2016), the sharing economy represents an economic model in which suppliers willing to lease their assets are connected via technological platforms with consumers interested in the temporary use of these assets. The given authors state that the sharing economy can take the following three basic forms:

1) Genuine sharing—usually free loans when the partners know each other; this, for example, concerns services provided between relatives, neighbours, or colleagues (e.g., sharing transport to work).
2) Occasional sharing—occasional provision of items or services which is usually performed in return for a consideration, using both online platforms and also without them; in this case, the partners do not usually know each other.
3) Commercial (permanent) sharing with the use of online platforms—permanent provision of items and services in return for a consideration, when the communication link between the offering party and the inquiring party is performed by an intermediary via an online platform; here, both the offering party and the operator of the platform gain consideration.

The range of types of sharing is, however, much wider. From the point of view of technical provision, we can distinguish sharing using online platforms and sharing implemented without online platforms. Sharing can also be differentiated from the point of view of the subject of sharing, in terms of which it is possible to share products, services, premises, work, money, information, or knowledge. From the point of view of purpose, sharing can be implemented for the purpose of generating a profit (so-called commercial sharing), compensation of costs (so-called hybrid sharing) or philanthropy (so-called charitable sharing). From the point of view of frequency, sharing may be occasional or permanent in nature. From the point of view of participating entities, this could concern C2C, B2C, B2B, B2U, B2G, U2B, U2G or G2G sharing. Sharing can be implemented in various segments of the economy, for example, in accommodation, transport, financial services, insurance services or education. The above-mentioned forms of sharing intermingle in various ways in practice, this leading to the creation of a wide range of services which then leads to the satisfaction of the requirements of various entities in the national economy, frequently also associated with positive social impacts, in particular environmental impacts.

Key Questions

As is evident from the analytical material of the Government of the Czech Republic (2017), the sharing economy is, from the point of view of the Czech Republic, perceived as a spontaneous phenomenon that was created, is growing, and developing despite the current legislation and regulatory environment.

One of the issues which attention is paid to in this country is who is the driving force behind the development of the sharing economy and whether this really is a sharing economy. It is evident from the studies performed (e.g., Pichrt et al. 2018) that the driving force behind the sharing economy in the Czech Republic is not small entities associating to utilise their free capacity and to gain a certain economic benefit from this, but global giants. The sharing economy thus, on the whole, exhibits the nature of a platform economy. The fact is that sharing has high-quality foundations in the Czech Republic dating back to the pre-revolutionary period. The availability of a lot of goods was limited during the socialist era. Neighbours, friends, and acquaintances regularly shared goods such as garden equipment, trailers, and other such things. These transactions were performed free of charge or for minor consideration in-kind. Mutual sharing of work in various trades was also well-developed at this time. At the time when the modern concept of sharing was just beginning, sharing, in particular, occurred in this country in the field of transportation, when carpooling was in particular used by students. With the development of this phenomenon, the element of actual sharing is gradually weakening, and platforms are becoming a base for a highly profitable business by multinational companies (Pichrt et al. 2018).

Another key issue is that one of the important motives of entities for getting involved in the sharing economy in the Czech Republic is the possibility of breaching the valid legislation without punishment. Emerging platforms are represented in many cases by intermediaries mediating work (in particular for drivers, cleaners, or childminders) which do not respect the national regulations applicable to employment agencies. Thanks to the phenomenon of the sharing economy, the job market is deformed, and the legislation is breached in the field of taxation, social security and health insurance, taxi services or employment of foreigners and visa obligations. For example, adverts are published on the Internet, in particular in Russian, encouraging young men from the countries of the former Soviet Union to come to Prague on a tourist visa and to provide a “ride-sharing.” All they need for this is a driving licence and a smartphone; the intermediary supplies the car for them (Pichrt et al. 2018). Deformation is also occurring on the real estate market, this being thanks to sharing in the field of short-term accommodation. Prices of real estate in attractive locations, in particular Prague, are increasing significantly. Flat prices in Prague have increased by more than 40% since 2010, most of all in 2016 and 2017; one of the reasons for this pricing increase is the operation of the Airbnb platform (Siller 2017). In addition to this, apart from the tax legislation, these platforms also breach the legislation in the field of local fees.

Examples

Uber, Airbnb and Zonky represent the major players in the collaborative economy in the Czech Republic.

Uber (www.ubertaxi.cz)

Uber has provided transport services in the Czech Republic since 2014, whereas the only difference between a conventional taxi service consists in the fact that dispatching is substituted by a mobile application. Transportation for passengers is provided in two Czech cities, these being Prague and Brno. In Prague, the service operates in the form of UberPOP, UberSelect and UberBlack, in Brno only in the form of UberPOP. Delivery of food has also been provided in Prague since 2018.

Airbnb (www.airbnb.cz)

Airbnb has been mediating short-term accommodation in the Czech Republic since 2009, both for private purposes and for business trips. In both cases, these services can be combined with special interest stays. Registration for Airbnb and offering accommodation by hosts is free of charge. During registration, hosts are billed a service charge by Airbnb, usually at the level of 3%.

Zonky (www.zonky.cz)

Zonky has mediated online loans between people in the Czech Republic since 2015. The establishment of this company was ordered by Home Credit from the CreativeDock start-up incubator, which ensured the development of the IT platform and market launch. The majority owner (88.6%) is PPF Group, one of the largest investment groups in Central and Eastern Europe. The minority owner (11.4%) is the EMMA OMEGA investment holding. The company only operates in the Czech Republic for the time being but is now preparing expansion into Germany and Spain.

Uniqway (www.uniqway.cz)

One unique platform is constituted by Prague university Uniqway car-sharing, which commenced operations in 2018. This is the joint work of the car manufacturer ŠKODA AUTO, ŠKODA AUTO DigiLab and students from three universities in Prague—the Czech Technical University, the Czech University of Life Sciences, and the University of Economics. Within the framework of this project, ŠKODA AUTO provides fifteen ŠKODA FABIA vehicles and, together with ŠKODA AUTO DigiLab, finances the given project and provides mentors to students. Students at the above-mentioned universities developed the application, created the graphic design, organized marketing activities and chose the cars. To use this service, all students have to do is download the free Uniqway application and register using an International Student Identity Card. The student can then search for available cars and rent them. If the test stage is successful, the service will be available to the whole academic community of the three above-mentioned universities and expansion to other universities is anticipated in future.

The Current State of Affairs

According to the Czech Chamber of Commerce (2018), the volume of the sharing economy via foreign and national digital platforms has grown in the Czech Republic in recent years. However, precise figures about its volume do not exist. Deloitte estimated the volume of the sharing economy in 2017 to be CZK (Czech Republic Koruna) 0.9–2 billion (approx. EUR 35–77 million), i.e., 0.02–0.04% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the Czech Republic. Its potential in future is estimated to be CZK 25.7–59.9 billion (approx. EUR 0.99–2.3 billion), i.e., 0.5–1.2% of the GDP (Marek et al. 2017). The greatest potential of the sharing economy in this country is seen in transport, accommodation, and finance (Vesecky 2017). The multinational companies Airbnb and Uber, in particular, dominate the market, followed by the national company Zonky.

As regards the short-term accommodation segment, this has grown by a factor of twenty-eight within the territory of the City of Prague over the past four and a half years. From the point of view of the number of beds on offer, the accommodation capacity

offered within the framework of the sharing economy in Prague is comparable with capacities provided by traditional accommodation facilities. These accommodation abilities are mainly concentrated in the city centre but have started to spread out to other city districts in recent years. Whole flats or houses are mainly offered, this being in 75% of cases. The remaining 25% constitutes an offer of private rooms. The majority of accommodation providers in Prague offer one accommodation unit, although a significant number of accommodation providers offer five or more accommodation units (Government of the Czech Republic 2017). Specifically, Airbnb offered more than 11,000 flats in 2018 nationwide, of which approximately 3,000 were located in Prague. In 2017, the number of guests accommodated in the Czech Republic via the Airbnb application increased year-on-year by 52% to 1.02 million (Novinky.cz 2018).

As regards the taxi service type transportation segment, approximately 2,000 drivers were driving for Uber in Prague in June 2017 (twice the number as compared to 2015). The market share held by Uber in Prague is estimated to be approximately 12% (Česko v datech 2019). Growth potential is also confirmed by Liftago, which operates a taxi service. The company increased its turnover year-on-year in 2018 by 35% to almost CZK 300 million (approx. EUR 11.5 million). Its number of customers also increased by a third, this being to more than half a million (Hospodářské noviny 2019).

As regards the finance segment, Czechs borrowed CZK 3.2 billion in 2018 (approx. EUR 123 million) via the Zonky platform (a growth of 100% was registered as compared to the previous year). The share held by the Zonky platform on the market for new consumer loans is 3–4%. The company has approximately 50,000 clients, of which approximately 30,000 took out a loan, and more than 25,000 are investors. People, in particular, borrow money via Zonky to refinance more expensive loans (25%), for the renovation of real estate (20%) and to buy cars (15%). The average loan is CZK 150,000 (approx. EUR 5,800) (České noviny 2019).

Interest in car-sharing is also experiencing a fast rate of growth in the Czech Republic. The largest player on the market is HoppyGo. This company acts as a mediator and connects owners of cars and drivers. It currently offers 1,500 vehicles and has 40,000 registered users. Its main competitors offering the car-sharing that are actually owned by the company are Car4Way, Autonapul and AJO. Car4Way operates in Prague and in Brno and currently has 500 vehicles available (Car4Way 2019a). Autonapul operates in ten large cities in the Czech Republic and has 73 vehicles at its disposal (Autonapul 2019). AJO operates in Prague and Brno and has 48 vehicles at its disposal (AJO 2019).

Context

The issue of the sharing economy is dealt with in the Czech Republic, in particular, in the context of the two key players, these being Uber and Airbnb. Governmental activity is thus focusing on the ride-sharing services sector and the short-term accommodation sector.

As regards ride-sharing services, an agreement was entered into on April 30, 2018, between the Government of the Czech Republic, Uber, and the City of Prague (Government of the Czech Republic 2018). This agreement regulates the obligation of Uber to share data with the Ministry of Finance for the purpose of tax administration. The parties also agreed that the company would introduce electronic records of sales for its services. All of the drivers should also start to meet the conditions determined

by the respective legislation. An amendment to the Road Traffic Act is also being prepared in the Czech Republic, discussion of which should begin this year, and which should introduce differentiation of conventional taxi drivers with a taxi meter and taxi drivers using an application (Institute for Politics and Society 2019b).

Several judicial disputes have been held in the Czech Republic in relation to the ride-sharing industry. This, for example, concerns the following. In the spring of 2017, the Regional Court in Brno granted a petition for the issuance of a preliminary ruling relating to a ban on operations by Uber within the territory of this city. The Supreme Court in Olomouc subsequently overruled this decision. The Regional Court issued the given ruling again in 2017, and the Supreme Court definitively overruled it in the autumn of 2017. See more in (Pichrt et al. 2018). A judicial dispute is also being held on the issue of imposition of fines on drivers of platforms for performing taxi services without a licence. Specifically, a dispute is being held with drivers from the Uber platform, in which the Municipal Court in Prague decided that drivers on the platform do not have to pay fines. In the autumn of 2017, the Supreme Administrative Court overruled this decision and returned the case for further adjudication.

As regards short-term accommodation, the General Financial Directorate (2017) issued a report in October 2017, according to which short-term accommodation mediated via a platform is classified as an accommodation service. The accommodation provider is thus obliged to hold a trade licence, to pay income tax from a business on its revenue and to pay social security and health insurance on its revenue. In April 2018, the Ministry of Finance then presented an amendment to the Act on Local Fees (Chambers of Deputy Parliament of the Czech Republic 2019); the main aim is to introduce an accommodation fee instead of the existing local fees or fees to be paid for spa or recreational stays. The introduction of this fee is a reaction to the activities of Airbnb, whereas this fee could now be introduced by any municipality.

The Government of the Czech Republic is also developing other initiatives, the aim of which is to spread awareness of the concept of the sharing economy, to map its level in the Czech Republic, its opportunities, and threats. The government has, for example, had several studies elaborated via the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. Issues of regulation of the sharing economy are then also the subject of tripartite negotiations.

Developments

In the Czech Republic, the development of the sharing economy is in particular registered in the field of transportation (in particular thanks to Uber) and short-term accommodation (in particular thanks to Airbnb), this being primarily within the territory of the City of Prague.

The fact is that Uber is still registering growth in the Czech market as it offers customers attractive services. On the other hand, however, earnings made by drivers who transport people for Uber (after deduction of the 25% fee for mediation of work and other costs) are minimal.

Growth is also registered by Airbnb, although thanks to the fact that short-term accommodation using this platform is becoming a mere business, calls for its greater regulation are appearing ever more frequently. This is to say that several entities are

buying up flats in the centre of Prague for the purpose of rental via accommodation platforms, and this is leading to an increase in real estate prices in these locations, depopulation of the historical centre and the inevitably related changes in the structure of shops (shops in which the original inhabitants shopped are being replaced by shops with goods for tourists), but also negative impacts such as excessive noise, uncontrolled movement inside apartment buildings or disorderliness.

After the fashion of the large multinational companies, several national companies are being created in the Czech Republic operating not only in the transport (e.g., Car4Way, HappyGo, Liftago) and short-term accommodation segment (Flatio, Mojechaty) but also, for example, in the finance segment (e.g., Zonky, Startovač), the segment of work tools and other durable consumer goods (Sharygo), education (Seduo, Nostis), services and hiring of work (e.g., Hlidačky.cz, NejRemeslnici), cloud services (Uloz.to) or media (Alza Media).

Respecting the valid legislation, these entities can expand the range of selected types of services and their quality and at the same time constitute a source of new job opportunities thanks to additional types of services which relate to them, but also a source of income for public budgets. They could also contribute towards the fulfilment of the concept of social responsibility, in particular in the field of the environment.

Potential for growth from the point of view of the Czech Republic can be seen in the transport segment in the form of car-sharing, sharing of motorcycles or bike-sharing. Development of this segment is supported by public institutions (e.g., the possibility of free parking in residential zones), as well as by private enterprises (e.g., the operator of passenger rail and coach transportation services RegioJet, in an effort to support car-sharing in combination with train travel, offers a significant discount on the services of Car4Way). The services of platforms in this sector are not targeted only at private individuals but also at companies. For example, Car4Way offers corporate car-sharing.

Another market segment with potential for growth is the segment of short-term sharing of recreational facilities, specifically cabins and cottages. This is to say that there are more than 400,000 of these buildings in the Czech Republic (Vavron 2012). Another potential possibility for sharing is represented by gardens which could be used within the framework of the sharing economy for longer-lasting sharing.

Issues

Research performed by IPSOS (Horecka et al. 2018) shows that only 29% of the population of the Czech Republic knows the term sharing economy. The following is also evident from this research. Approximately 25% of Czechs have used sharing at some time. 8% of Czechs already have some experience with an offer of services within the framework of the sharing economy, and another 10% are planning to use such services. The main motives for sharing are financial savings (64%) and a desire to try new things. On the contrary, the main reason why Czechs do not use sharing is, apart from misgivings about sharing (20%), the insufficient offer of sharing services where they live (33%). Among other things, support for regulation of the sharing economy is also increasing; in 2018, this was supported by 41% of people, 33% were opposed to this (for the sake of comparison, 37% of people supported this, and 39% were opposed to it in 2017). This phenomenon is in particular used by the younger generation up to the age of 34.

An interesting finding is that individual brands are better known to citizens of the Czech Republic as opposed to the term sharing economy. 74% of respondents know Zonky; the reason for this being the massive advertising campaign on television, in the press, online and Out of Home (OOH). Uber is known to 62% of respondents; in this case, it is, in particular, the negative publicity in relation to breach of the legislation by drivers of Uber, which is responsible for knowledge of the brand, this breach having led to conventional taxi drivers blocking the roads for several days in February 2018 using a convoy of taxis in busy locations in the centre of the capital.

Another very interesting problem of sharing is environmental responsibility in the transport segment from the point of view of supply and demand. Companies offering car-sharing are attempting to offer more environmentally-friendly vehicles. For example, in Prague, the re.volt company has offered twenty electric cars and four electric motorcycles since 2018 (Re.volt car-sharing 2019). Apart from conventional vehicles, electric cars are also offered by Car4Way (Car4Way 2019b). On the other hand, eMuj, a company offering sharing of (nothing but) electric cars in Brno, had to discontinue its operations at the end of 2017 due to a lack of demand and the unprofitability of its activity (Horcik 2017).

Other Major Players

The Czech Association of Sharing Economy and the Czech Car-sharing Association rank among other major players on the market of the sharing economy in the Czech Republic. The Czech Association of Sharing Economy was established in 2017 and currently associates nine companies that do business in the field of the sharing economy. The association advocates the principles of the sharing economy and the interests of its members, increases awareness of the sharing economy and its benefits, helps to set standards for the operation of companies in the field of the sharing economy and conducts dialogue with all stakeholders. The Czech Car-sharing Association has an analogous subject of activity for the field of car-sharing. This association was established in 2015 by five companies. It currently associates three members.

Another important player is the Czech Chamber of Commerce, which has devoted itself both to the issues of the sharing economy in general and specifically to the market for short-term accommodation and ride-sharing services. It, for example, formulated 50 recommendations for the development of the sharing economy (see more: Czech Chamber of Commerce 2018).

The issue of the sharing economy is also dealt with in the Czech Republic by several universities and non-profit organizations which perform research, organize conferences and discussions on this topic. Very active in this field is the Faculty of Law at Charles University in Prague. This faculty has been performing a research project since 2017, and within the framework of this, a cycle of scientific conferences focused on the issue of the sharing economy. Another academic site that is engaged significantly in the topic of the sharing economy is the College of Entrepreneurship and Law. This college has elaborated several studies for the Government of the Czech Republic. The issue of the sharing economy was also dealt with in 2018 by several other universities, this being within the framework of diploma theses. The most active in this field was the University of Economics in Prague. The following diploma theses were, for example, elaborated at this site: “Sharing economy and its taxation,” “The

phenomenon of sharing economy with a focus on the United States of America and the Czech Republic," "Impact of sharing economy on housing prices in Prague 2013–2016," "Does Airbnb increase housing prices?," and "Sharing economy and crowdfunding as a new trend in project financing."

The Institute for Politics and Society also ranks among other major players in this field. It is the most active Czech political think tank that cultivates the political environment and offers solutions to current social problems (Institute for Politics and Society 2019a). This non-governmental organization organizes seminars, public discussions and publishes policy papers and briefs on the topic of the sharing economy.

Future Directions of Research

In future, research in the field of the sharing economy should, from the point of view of the Czech Republic, focus on several areas. It is first and foremost necessary to elaborate alternative options for enshrining the sharing economy in the legislation in the context of the legal, economic, social, and environmental benefits and risks with which these concepts would be associated with. Research should also focus on the socio-economic evaluation of the effectiveness of various types of sharing, including the development of methodology for valuation of the costs and benefits of sharing, which cannot be valued on the market. Last but not least, it would seem expedient, within the framework of further research, to focus more attention on those types of sharing which have so far been neglected to some extent, these being in the form of B2B, B2G, B2U, U2B, U2G or G2G sharing.

Summary

The sharing economy represents a new business model which is growing in importance over time, even from the point of view of a small post-communist economy such as the Czech Republic. This is a business model which is based on sharing of surplus assets, usually using an online platform, but also without it. This sharing may be implemented in various sectors of the economy, among various entities in the national economy (customers, businesses, universities, and governments), this being in order to generate a profit, for compensation of costs or for the purpose of philanthropy.

It is evident from the above-mentioned explanation of how the term is defined and understood that the range of services in the sharing economy is wide. In addition to this, new types of services are constantly emerging. It is very difficult to determine the borders for its precise definition and enshrinement in the legislation. All of the entities on the market in the Czech Republic are having to face up to this fact. In this country, the sharing economy tends rather to exhibit the nature of a platform economy, and the motive held by several entities for participation in it is an effort to circumvent the applicable legislation in the given sector and in the field of taxation. The market for the sharing economy in the Czech Republic is dominated in particular by the multinational companies Airbnb and Uber, but the national company Zonky has also earned its place on the market. From the point of view of segments of the national economy, an important role is played by the short-term accommodation segment, transportation, both in the form of ride-sharing and car-sharing, but also the financial segment.

Due to the fact that the sharing economy is growing in importance in the Czech Republic, it is increasingly found as a subject of discussion among the professional and lay public. It is, in particular, the negative aspects which are discussed, this being in the form of inadequate regulation of the phenomenon of the sharing economy, but the benefits of the sharing economy are also talked about, these relating to savings on financial and non-financial resources, positive environmental and social impacts. Newly created associations are in particular contributing towards the development of this discussion and spreading awareness of this phenomenon, for example, the Czech Association of Sharing Economy and the Czech Car-sharing Association, but also universities and other non-profit organizations, for example, the Czech Chamber of Commerce. Certain initiatives are also being developed by the Government of the Czech Republic, which has so far had several studies drawn up which are devoted to the issue of the sharing economy. The government is also preparing changes to the legislation, for example, in the field of fees relating to short-term accommodation or in the field of harmonisation of conditions for conventional taxi services and ride-sharing provided via platforms.

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