

REPORT FOR DGVT ON NEW INITIATIVES IN VET (PERIOD MAY-AUGUST 2009)

Within the reported period, several extensive project have been launched:

Development and Implementation of NQF

The development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF 2) is an individual national project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT); its partner is the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education; and it is co-financed by the European Social Fund and from the Czech Republic state budget. The project will be carried out during the years 2009-2015.

The basis of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) evolved in the years 2005-2008 in a system project of the MŠMT under the name Development of National Qualifications Framework, which supported the links between initial and further education (NQF 1). A register of statewide recognized qualifications was established, to obtain them is, in brief, a prerequisite of acquiring the apprenticeship certificate.

In the National Qualifications Framework, all partial and even complete qualifications will be described, which are in demand on the labour market. A special standard will be prepared for each of them enabling one to prove their individual skills, regardless of the fact, if they were acquired at school, in praxis or in some course. People will be given a chance to be re-examined and thus to acquire a statewide valid certificate recognized by all employers, without having to attend a school for couple of years. This possibility will help those, working in another field from which they studied. Since August 2007 it has been made possible by the Act No 179/2006 Coll., on Verifying and Recognizing the Results of Continuing Education.

The National Qualifications Framework mostly contains qualifications on trades and services. The main objective of NQF 2 is to include in the qualifications framework also higher level qualifications, i.e. levels based on Maturita leaving exam and even higher level qualifications dependent on the labour market requirements. Again, so called standards will be used, defining the content of each qualification and describing the ways, on how to prove the mastering of relevant competencies. The structure and content of the qualifications results from a consensus; the employer representatives associated in sectoral councils will play there the leading role. Importance and quality of the output will be guaranteed by a large number of specialists involved from all parts of the working world.

A public register of all qualifications asserted on the up-to-date labour market of the Czech Republic will be created, describing not only what each qualification requires, but also all the ways and conditions leading to its acquirement. It will be an important contribution that real skills and competencies will be recognized, independent on the way in which they were acquired. From a national economic point of view, the flexibility and the adaptability of the labour force in the labour market should be enhanced, and the competitiveness of the Czech Republic economy should thus increase as a result. The project's secondary effect should strengthen the public's interest in all forms of life long learning. Qualifications, acquired in newly conceived and designed programmes on further education, will be transparent for employers.

The possibility of acquiring a statewide valid certificate confirming one's qualification, without having to attend a school, can help those who will lose their jobs and will have problems finding a new one during the present economic crisis.

Path to Quality

Path to Quality is an individual national project of the MŠMT (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports); its full name is "Self-evaluation: The creation of a system and the support of self-evaluation in schools". It is implemented by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education together with National Institute for Further Education, and is financed by the European Social Fund and from the Czech Republic state budget.

Within the running reform, all basic and secondary schools are bound to regularly carry out an assessment of their own work. It isn't easy to look at one's own work from a bird's eye view and the schools consider it to be a problematic task. But thanks only to a well carried out self-evaluation, the positives and negatives of the school's previous work can be shown and can be seen as basis for positive change, and at the same time the schools' autonomy will be enhanced. The Path to Quality offers a helpful hand to the schools.

For the schools there will be information prepared concerning how they shall carry out a self-evaluation, in order to maintain effective and for it not just to be seen as burdening office work. The teachers will be given evaluation instruments helping their self-assessment; and an explanatory dictionary on self-evaluation and methodological instructions.

Headmasters and teachers can take part in accredited educational programs and mini-conferences, which will be held in each region.

The schools will have an opportunity to share their experience with each other. A database containing examples of good practice in the area of quality control will come into being, providing an inspiration to all schools in their own self-evaluation.

A supporting advisory system will be created, which will provide help to the schools.

Concept

Concept, with the full name Conception of Further Education, is an individual national project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, its partner is the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education. The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund and from the Czech Republic state budget.

The project should support all prospective adult applicants for further education after finishing school. Only 6 percent of working-age adults are taking part in the further education in the Czech Republic. It is a small number compared to other European countries. This is a negative situation mainly concerning the possibility of one's chance to professionally assert them, and the competitiveness of our country on the whole.

Till now, only sub-aspects of the further education system have been discussed, taking mostly into account the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on Verifying and Recognizing the Results of Continuing Education. This project is the first goal leading to the creation of system procedures in the area of further education, that would result in the interconnection of the initial and further education. As a result, the main target group, i.e. the participants of further education, could move in an environment enabling them to be educated through quality courses according to the labour market needs, and they could use all available information, guidance, or financial support as their case may be.

The main objective of this project contains a systematic support of further education, which will replace existing uncoordinated solutions and isolated activities.

This support should result in an increasing participation in further education, better matching of the offered courses to the labour market needs, increasing standards of the educational courses, development of an intergraded information system, which will refer to the possibilities of further education, and thus better availability of further education.

The project results can be used by all prospective participants in further education, educational institutions providing further education, and also employers, willing to support education for their own employees and improve the quality of human resources needed in a competitive economy (the project is addressed mostly to small and middle-scale enterprises, that have fewer resources for the further education of their employees).

UNIV 2 Regions

UNIV 2 – Regions is an individual national project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, its operative partner is the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Institution. The project is co-financed from the European Social Fund and from the Czech Republic state budget. It follows up on the project UNIV- Recognition of the results of informal learning and non-formal education (2005-2008). Some chosen schools from 6 regions of the Czech Republic took part in this project.

In the Project UNIV 2 – Regions schools from all regions of the Czech Republic are engaged, except those in Prague. Thanks to this project, these secondary schools should be transformed into lifelong learning centers. The schools involved in the project will offer various programmes for adults, besides their normal training. Such an extended offer should contribute to an increasing participation of citizens in further education, and at the same time, helping schools to cope with the distinct reduction of the pupils due to a population decrease.

Within the project, 325 lifelong-learning centers should originate, every each of them will prepare at least 3 further educational programmes in cooperation with the employers. Those new educational programmes will be of a modular character enabling people to choose one part they really need and which they are interested in.

The involved schools (lifelong-learning centers) will create mutually cooperating and interconnected networks. The educational activities: the offer of further educational programmes will be coordinated to correspond to the real labour market needs in a specific region, which is important in light of the current economic crisis. A participation in educational programs offered by schools could help people bridge their difficult times or to find a new job.

The created programs will be involved in the project's information system and in the schools' web-sites in each region. A system will come into being as a result of their interconnection; interested parties will find there consistent information on further education provided by schools throughout the Czech Republic.

The schools could benefit from the lifelong learning project by enhancing their activities into the further educational area, and this could be a compensation for the present decreasing number of pupils caused by a population decrease. It seems that due to the weak interest, some fields of study in the initial education will not be open. But if there will be a demand for them on the labour market, then they could be offered as a part of the further education.

The teachers in all involved schools will have the possibility to disseminate their competencies to be prepared for working with adults. Educational seminars should thus be held targeting the creation of modular educational programmes on: lecturer competencies, career consulting and on marketing as well. 3 250 teachers should take part in these courses, working in the lifelong-learning centers after. Besides, the acquired skills could be used within the initial education, for example: by creating school educational programmes.