

REPORT FOR DGVT ON NEW INITIATIVES IN VET (PERIOD SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2009)

Response to the crisis: Projects “Training is a Chance” and “Get into Training!”

In the context of the global economic downturn and in line with government plans for addressing it in the Czech Republic’s circumstances, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have initiated special calls and implementation of new projects as part of the European Social Fund schemes. The projects are designed to enhance the adaptability of employees and the competitiveness of enterprises via improving the professional knowledge, skills and competencies of both employees and employers. Moreover, the projects are expected to boost the professional development of employees and to increase the quality of training and the sustainability of jobs.

The “Get into Training” project

The measure is designed for employers who, due to the economic recession, have had or will have to scale down manufacturing in their operations and reduce the number of employees. As part of the project employers can obtain financial resources to implement training courses for those employees who are threatened by the implications of organizational changes in companies due to the crisis. The employees will get a chance of participating in continuing training, improving their specialist knowledge, skills and competencies in so-called general education (i.e. education that provides skills that are transferable to a larger degree to other companies or business areas). Employers will obtain room for a more effective addressing of the HR situation in their companies during the crisis. The level of public support depends on company size and the target group of employees, while account is taken of employees with physical and other disadvantages.

A total of 500 million CZK was earmarked for the first stage of the “Get into Training!” project, which ran from March until June this year and in which 923 companies took part. They submitted a total of 3,677 applications of which 3,237 were approved by labour offices. The rate of success was 93% and 57,454 employees participated in the training. A total of 336 million CZK was spent during the first stage of the “Get into Training!” project.

For the second stage of the “Get into Training!” project, which started in August 2009, a total of 1 billion CZK has been set aside. It is already clear that, after less than four months of implementation, the interest on the part of employers substantially exceeds the amount of financial resources available. In 2010 the project budget will be increased by another 1.5 billion CZK. This means that there will be some 3 billion CZK allocated for the two stages of the project. These are ESF resources from the Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment (OP HRE) and the Operational Programme Human Resources Development (OP HRD).

The “Training is a Chance” project

The measure is implemented via grant schemes where companies present projects and apply for resources. Employers can obtain financial resources to implement training courses for their employees, to develop training programs including the training of internal lecturers and instructors, to introduce HR development and management schemes in companies and other

similar activities. The level of public support depends on company size and the target group of employees, while account is taken of employees with physical and other disadvantages. Considerable preference is given to general education – i.e. education aimed at improving transferable skills (languages, ICT, etc.) – as compared to company-specific training. The objective is to boost the employability and mobility of the workforce. Project proposals may be submitted until the end of 2009.

Source: www.mpsv.cz

Tertiary professional schools: Termination or a radical change

This is what is forecasted for the VOŠs – i.e. schools providing tertiary professional education. For a long time the sector of tertiary professional education has been struggling to clarify its position within the education system and to redress the absence of a coherent vision of further development. It is therefore facing a radical change that will have to result in the formulation of a new and clear strategy. Otherwise this type of education will gradually, and not in too a distant future, cease to exist. The issues associated with profession-oriented tertiary education do receive attention in various strategic documents. However, they only provide general concepts with no specific measures.

In the light of the current situation the Ministry of Education has commissioned a study – based on a public tender for resources from the Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness – that deals with the current state of affairs and the possible development in this area. After a rather long period of time this is the first attempt to explore the situation of, and the outlook for this type of education in a comprehensive manner, and to provide a more detailed view of the results, problems and opportunities of the sector as a whole and of various groups of schools.

The output of the project is a study by **Michal Karpíšek, MSc. et al.** entitled “**An Analysis of the Situation and the Possible Development of the Sector of Tertiary Professional Education**”. The authors of the study suggest, apart from other things, that the existing sector of tertiary professional education should be divided into several streams that will respect the situation of individual schools, fields of study as well as the regional conditions. Some tertiary professional schools should support the development of profession-oriented tertiary education that will lead to a relatively advanced qualification. The primary feature of this education will be, above all, the capacity to apply the necessary amount of theoretical knowledge, and it will head towards full inclusion into the tertiary sector that will involve the provision of Bachelor programmes without compromising the professional focus. Schools that will not be able or willing to head in this direction – and analyses show that this will concern most of them – should be supported in their provision of relatively short post-secondary specialisation programmes that will assist in shaping and enhancing the profile, specialisation and qualification of graduates of secondary technical and vocational education.

National Action Plan for Inclusive Education

In 2009 a survey was carried out in the Czech Republic that dealt with diagnostic instruments applied in connection with pupils from socially and culturally different backgrounds with respect to Roma children. The objective of the survey was to ascertain whether the diagnostic

instruments used by school guidance facilities are sufficiently “neutral”. The Ministry of Education (MŠMT) intends to use the data resulting from the relevant analyses to develop a National Action Plan for Inclusive Education. The plan should identify comprehensive measures and main changes that are necessary to ensure inclusive education, including those concerned with socially disadvantaged children. The ultimate objective is an inclusive school that creates conditions so that all children – although they may differ considerably in terms of their capacities – can be educated in an environment that ensures their optimal development and where the diversity of the group in terms of performance and social background is maintained. The MŠMT should submit the plan to the government by the end of January 2010.

In this context there are a number of measures being put into effect. For example, a national project of the Centre for Support of Inclusive Education covering all regions was launched on 1 July 2009; the MŠMT is streamlining its guidance system (culture-free diagnostic instruments); and legislative changes are under development that will establish support measures for socially disadvantaged children.

The primary objective is to support equal access to basic education. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to take account of the fact that basic education is a prerequisite for acquiring any further technical/vocational qualification and, in this way, for better employment prospects.