



ReferNet National Consortium of the Czech Republic

VET Policy Report

Czech Republic 2008

Progress in the policy priority areas for
vocational education and training



CEDEFOP

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of Vocational Training

REFERNET

This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development. It has been produced as a contribution to Cedefop's third policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

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Executive Summary

This **Policy Report** forms part of the Cedefop ReferNet 2008 work programme; **National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV)** is responsible for its implementation in the Czech Republic in the period 2007-2008. This report includes the most important information about the "*national progress in VET towards EU policy goals within the framework of the Copenhagen process and according to the policy priorities defined in the Helsinki Communiqué*" (cf. Specification for ReferNet 2008 work programme).

The main section of this report is subdivided into **seven policy areas** identified by education ministers as priorities for national policy design in the VET sector (cf. summary below).

The **introductory chapter** of this report deals with national policy context, socioeconomic aspects and aspects of labour market relevance. The **final chapter** provides an outlook of possible educational policy priorities after 2010, when the Lisbon process will be completed.

The seven policy areas can be **summarised** as follows:

Improving access to and equity in VET: The participation of young people in initial VET in the Czech Republic is traditionally higher than average (in comparison with other European countries). On the contrary, the participation of adults in continuing VET is lower than average rate in European Union. A wide range of strategies (which facilitated access to VET) were formulated and implemented lately in both the aforementioned areas.

There are still not very many formal continuing VET opportunities for adults interested in continuing education (distance or tutor classes), but many measures have been launched, which should gradually improve the situation, and new opportunities for recognizing former results of non-formal education and informal learning have been implemented (the promotion of lifelong learning and counselling -e.g. VIP Kariera project; the introduction of the system of informal and non-formal learning recognition -UNIV project and the development of the National Qualifications Framework, NSK project, etc.).

Lifelong learning through VET: At the level of policy innovation a number of strategic and programme documents have been adopted the implementation of which should create necessary preconditions for setting up the area of LLL. Legislation gradually creates a framework for fostering LLL since 2005. The new School Act No.561/2004 Coll. increased permeability within the initial education system, as it made the education pathways more transparent and introduced the possibility for school heads to recognise and make exemptions for acquired parts of education programmes.

Another step was made by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on the Recognition of Further Education Results (effective from 1 August, 2007). It stipulates the creation of a National Qualifications Framework and the system of recognition of prior learning regardless the ways of their acquirement. Provisions of the new School Act and the implementation of the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results improve opportunities for individuals to increase mobility within and between VET and general and/or higher education both during their initial formal schooling and their lifelong (and life-wide) learning.

Ministry of Education developed the strategic document *The Strategy of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic* (2007) where the needed arrangements for implementing the LLL area in the Czech Republic are defined. The Necessary measures for improving the system of guidance and counselling in the Czech Republic address, first of all the development of the complex information and the counselling system which would be available for all population groups in the course of whole life, an increase of counselling services availability, connection of counselling and educational activities at schools, development of counselling and information services on education and employment for adults which would be available for all adults.

Improving quality of VET: In their declarations and strategies, policymakers keep stressing the principal role of improving the quality of VET and the support of professional

development of VET teachers during the entire monitored period. In fact, all these declarations and strategies stem from the document, the National Programme for Education Development in the CR (the White Book), from the year of 2001. We can see the emphasis on the quality and role of VET teachers in key conceptual and strategic documents that are in line with the White Book: Long-Term Aims and lately also in the Lifelong Learning Strategy in the CR and the operational programme “Education for Competitiveness” for the programming period 2007-2013 funded from ESF.

The development of the quality of education (including VET) is regulated by the School Act and related notices. Based on the School Act, VET schools are to regularly realize their self-evaluation, to create their own curricular programme (school curriculum) based on the Framework Education Programme and to establish their school council (administration body). The School Act also defined a new role for the Czech Schools Inspection Authority (not only an inspection role but also an evaluation and analytical role). The Further Education Results Recognition Act also helped to improve the quality of VET. Thanks to the School Act, schools now provide continuing education in a bigger extent and as authorized entities are starting to verify and recognize results of prior learning. The Pedagogical Staff Act No 563/2004 Coll. clearly defines the conditions for working as a pedagogue (including VET teachers), their further training and career system.

Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market: The new School Act that came into effect in 2005 is of key importance for IVET. This Act regulates the curricular reform in IVET, the basic feature of which is the two-level creation of curricula (schools will develop Framework Education Programmes for each field of study into their own School Education Programmes) and the emphasis on target competences and education results.

In principle, the two-level creation of curricula promotes the links between education programmes and the needs of the labour market mainly by having both Framework Education Programmes (the national level) and School Education Programmes (the regional and local level) reflect the needs of the labour market.

For continuing education, the Further Education Results Recognition Act that came into effect in 2007 is of key importance for continuing education. The Act is designed in such a way so that it would motivate the adult population of the Czech Republic to continuing education, expand the opportunities of individuals to obtain new qualifications, improve their employability and improve the response of the education system to the needs of the labour market.

The system framework for the links between IVET and CVET is the National Qualifications System, the position of which is also confirmed by the key and umbrella document, Lifelong Learning Strategy in the CR. The strategy, approved in 2007, is a comprehensive concept of lifelong learning and the basic document for other sectional and partial concepts and policies in this area. It gradually sets attainable objectives that can be also supported from European funds during the programming period 2007 – 2013.

As an example of policy measures taken in this area can be named e.g. an Integrated system of typical positions (ISTP) which has become one of the tools of social partners (employers) for having education programmes respond to the needs of the labour market; The information system (www.infoabsolvent) which was created as a platform for transfer of information obtained based on labour market analyses to target groups; it includes e.g. information about what employers expect from graduates, what is the employability in the given field of study, including unemployment of graduates and wages. It is possible to download detailed analytical studies. Another example is so called “Sectoral Groups”. This Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport project is a response of the education system to the need to define required knowledge, skills and competences that must be reflected in VET programmes created at the national level (Framework Education Programmes since the year of 2005). The Sectoral Groups Project is mentioned as a measure related to the need to identify and predict competences and qualifications. In respect to the need to predict the development of competences and qualifications, sectoral groups prepare forecasts for each sector describing anticipated developments of qualification requirements for different professions for which students in education programmes are trained (e.g. electrical

engineering, agriculture,...). Further on we can name the quantitative forecasting model, UNIV Project or the Partnership and Quality Project.

Governance and funding: During 2001-2003, the public administration was reformed. During a short time period, the education system was decentralized and competences delegated. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports retained mainly conceptual competences, while founding and regular governance competences in VET are the competency of regions (founding and governance of **secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools**). The School Act regulates funding of public and religious schools. The funding of private schools is also regulated by a separate act on funding of private schools, pre-schools and educational institutions.

Conceptual changes in the regional education system are considerably supported by funds from the European Social Fund (ESF). In the programming period 2004-2006, the preparation and use of the operational program *Human Resources Development* was of principal importance. As part of this programme, national projects, system projects and support programmes were implemented as part of a grant scheme. As to support and changes in the system, so-called system projects (see the relevant sections of the report) are of the biggest importance.

Thanks to the grant scheme, schools obtained a sufficient amount of funds through projects that mostly helped the development of schools.

However, these projects sometimes meant: purposeless work with grants ("projects for the sake of projects"), activities parallel to regular school work or marginal activities in respect to the mission of the school, beneficial activities that ended when the funds were exhausted and were not thus sustainable, chasing projects (funds) without emphasizing the quality of projects, complicated and sometimes even absurd paperwork.

In respect to funds for the programming period 2007-2013, it is also true that if obtaining non-budget funds by schools is to be a natural part of their autonomous development, it is necessary to integrate to the decentralization policy such strategies that would help schools and all other relevant entities to succeed in working with grant schemes so that schools would mainly work on their main activity – provision of education.

EU tools and geographic mobility within VET: The process of creating the National Qualifications Framework for the Czech Republic – the National Qualifications System (NQS) – was launched and is successfully in progress. It will be possible to compare qualifications in the system and the NQS will be connected to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). At the same time, the system of recognition of non-formal education and informal learning results within the limits set by law is being created and pilot tested.

In the Czech Republic, the conditions for implementation and use of the European Qualifications Framework are regularly created.

As far as the Europass is concerned - the general public is informed about this useful tool continuously and public interest in this European tool is constantly increasing.

The proposed European system ECVET is not sufficiently defined and the Czech Republic is not able to initiate activities that would overcome this obstacle.

The mobility support is stressed in many strategic documents that have been declared by the Czech Republic at the national or regional level since 2002. Even though there are no comprehensive implementation documents (plans, etc.), there is a lot of activity in this area.

Development of VET statistics: This chapter analyses the statistical data resources available in the Czech Republic and identifies weaknesses in VET statistics, e.g. there are areas for which there are no or only partial data and it is necessary to make qualified estimates. This concerns in particular continuing education and the funding of VET (mainly data regarding private funding) and certain gaps in data about pedagogical staff, i.e. teachers and their wages.

At the beginning of 2008, a very important step in education statistics was adopted when ISCED97 was implemented as a national classification (as of 1 January 2008), including the

classification of vocations. The implementation of ISCED97 as a national classification will help to improve statistics sent abroad and to compare the Czech education system with the education systems of other countries.

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1. National political and socio-economic context

1.1. National political/policy context

In 1989 the radical change took place in the country's political, social and economic environment, and VET had to respond effectively to the newly developing dynamic labour market. This required a major overhaul: streamlining IVET content, introducing new types of programmes to expand IVET provision, amending decision-making mechanisms and granting more power and responsibilities to schools, introducing new funding methods (per capita funding) etc.

The share of students in vocational programme at the secondary level in the CR is traditionally very high (about 83% of newly admitted students of secondary schools in the school year of 2006/07). However since the year of 1989, the interest in secondary vocational education has shifted from 3-year vocational programmes (ISCED 3C) to 4-year vocational programmes (ISCED 3A), mainly technical ones, focused more on theory allowing to enter the labour market as well as higher education. The decrease was bounced with the restructuralisation and privatisation of big companies during which many vocational training institutions (ISCED 3C) lost their bonds to companies and consequently the education lost its connection with labour market needs. At the same time, there is a slightly increasing trend of preferring general education, which, in combination with demographic developments, may result in a lower status of vocational education. Therefore, **improving the attractiveness of vocational education** (esp. ISCED 3C programmes) is an important part of the Czech education policy.

The graduates from vocational education form also an increasingly higher share of tertiary education students. With the expecting growing number of tertiary education places this trend will grow. With regard to these facts the **strategy of convergency of vocational and general forms of secondary education** becomes important.

The share of tertiary educated people is significantly lesser in the CR than in EU-27. However the number of tertiary graduates slowly grows. Although the share of students in technical science is relatively high compared to the other fields of education (22%) it is still insufficient for the labour market with high employment in industry. The strategic aim of the education policy **is to make tertiary education available to wider spectrum of applicants** and to improve its quality, which is also connected with support of higher education institutions' participation in science and research and reinforcing their links to the business sphere. There are also political discussions regarding a change in the statute of tertiary professional schools that were established after 1996 in order to create a vocation-oriented education segment of the tertiary level; however, so far their role in the education system has not been clearly defined and experts have different opinions about it.

Employers feel insufficient quality of young workers which could be a result of shortages in educational curriculum. The employers often miss soft competencies like self-reliance, team work and responsibility. They require more intensive connection between schools and companies which could prepare the students for real working environment.

The curricular reform that should improve the quality of IVET is a response to employers' demands. Besides others, the reform increases the autonomy of schools that can thus quickly respond to specific demands of the labour market in a certain region.

The participation of adults in lifelong learning is not sufficient. The importance of continuing vocational training will grow due to demographic changes and lowering number of IVET graduates which is combined with rapid economical and technological development.

Support of lifelong learning is thus another political priority. In 2007, the Lifelong Learning Strategy was adopted that sets for CVET the following main strategic objectives: recognition of non-formal and in-formal education results, equal access to education, functional literacy,

social partnership, stimulation of demand for education, quality assurance and development of information and counselling services.

	Policy priority	Main causes and reasons	Policy approach
1.	Curricular reform	New qualification requirements (demand for key competences); technological developments and the necessity that the education system respond quickly to the needs of the labour market; the necessity to increase the autonomy of schools so that they could respond quickly to the needs of the regional labour market.	Change in the legislation that regulates the process of creating curricular documents; System and pilot projects to support schools in implementing the new system of curricula; Creation of framework curricula at the national level.
2.	Creation of National Qualification Framework	New qualification requirements; need for more transparency; enabling recognition of non- and in-formal learning results.	Creation of new legislation; System projects supporting the creation of NQF, and the information system, institutional framework and tools for maintenance of NQF.
3.	Ensuring quality and evaluation of educational outcomes (including reform of completion of upper secondary education)	Increasing schools' autonomy; need for more standardisation, transparency.	Change in legislation that regulates the process of completion of secondary education (ISCED 3A, ISCED 3C); System projects to help schools in implementing reformed final examinations.
4.	Development of integrated information and counselling system in education	Support in choosing education and career path, drop-out prevention.	Adoption of the standards of counselling services; System project helping to develop a counselling system at schools and to create an information web-based system; Legislation changes – a change in curricula (adding information about the labour market).
5.	Ensuring equal opportunities in education	Demographic change, prevention of social exclusion.	System projects for integrating students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (minorities integration centres, drop-out prevention and

			<p>support of socially disadvantaged secondary school students);</p> <p>Support (methodological, material, personnel....) of schools teaching handicapped children.</p>
6.	Increasing the professional standards and social position of teachers	<p>Demographic change (ageing of teachers), improving quality of VET;</p> <p>Concurrence of several reforms and changes (higher demands on flexibility and adaptability of teachers)</p>	<p>Adoption of legislation that regulates teachers' continuing education and career growth, implementation of professional standards for teachers;</p> <p>Projects supporting teachers' education;</p>
7.	Support for the development of tertiary education	Demographic change, technological changes.	<p>Complex reform of tertiary education: change of legislation. Grant schemes supporting the development of study programmes, internationalisation of studies, research and development and cooperation of higher education institutions' with employers.</p>
8.	The development of CVET as part of lifelong learning	Demographic change, technological changes.	<p>Creating new and change of existing legislation, creating an institutional framework for:</p> <p>system of CVET, monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance of CVET, guidance and counselling, recognition of non-formal and in-formal learning outcomes, forecasting labour market needs, system of incentives to enhance participation in CVET.</p>
9.	Support of foreign languages and information and communication technologies	Internationalisation, migration, technological change.	<p>Change of curricula (more classes of foreign language teaching);</p> <p>Grant schemes and national projects to improve language teaching (especially teachers' training) and support of ICT usage in teaching.</p>

1.2. Socio-economic context

Demographic trends

The population of the ČR was 10.3 million in 2007. After a decline in the 1990s the total population started to grow slightly in 2002 which has been caused mostly by the immigration¹. A long-term demographic prognosis² envisages a change in the population structure showing a relative fall in the younger age groups. The age index (the ratio of population aged 65+ to 0-14-year-olds) is expected to rise from 89 in 2002 to 181 in 2030. The net migration has been positive since 2002. The number of immigrants increases every year and it was 66 thousands in 2006 according to official statistics.³

Due to the population ageing and an increase in retirement age the importance of education of adults and older people will grow considerably because of the lack of people with up-to-date knowledge from initial vocational education. The VET institutions will therefore have to implement specific teaching methods for adult students and the CVET system must be more developed. There is still lack of financial tools for stimulation of CVET participation, information and guidance, system of validation and recognition of results of CVET and quality assurance. Enhancing the position of CVET aimed to different target groups is necessary.

The immigration could partially fill in the gap in the labour market caused by population ageing. The integration of immigrants into the Czech educational system will be necessary in order to achieve their employment also in more demanding jobs and to prevent their social exclusion. There are not many immigrants participating in VET now as a result of their age structure – most immigrants are the adults and their children at the age of primary and lower-secondary education. However, mastering the language by children at basic schools is essential for their future participation in VET.

Economic and labour market situation

The share of economically active population has been continually slowly decreasing since the 1990s. The unemployment rate reached the highest level since 1989 in 2000 (8.7%) and then in 2004 (8.3%)⁴. Due to the positive dynamics of the economic growth, which was 6.4% in 2006⁵, the rate of employment started to grow and the rate of unemployment to decline in 2004. The problem of insufficient number of qualified labour force appears and the role of anticipation of future skills and competences is becoming increasingly more important. Foreign investors pose higher demands on the quality of graduates and the educational system needs to react more flexibly on the employers' requirements. The currently implemented curricula reform should serve as a tool for that.

Rates in population aged 15-64 years (%)

	1998	2002	2007
Participation rate	72.2	70.8	69.8
Unemployment rate	6.4	7.3	5.4
Employment rate	67.3	65.4	66.1

¹ ČSÚ: Vital Statistics of the Czech Republic between 2001 and 2007

[http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/pohyb_obyvateľstva_v_česke_republice_v_letech_2001_2006_rei/\\$File/obyacr3q07rel.xls](http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/pohyb_obyvateľstva_v_česke_republice_v_letech_2001_2006_rei/$File/obyacr3q07rel.xls)

² ČSÚ: Projection of population of the ČR until 2050, own calculations

[http://www.czso.cz/csu/2003edicniplan.nsf/t/FF004F34A7/\\$File/4020rr02.xls](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2003edicniplan.nsf/t/FF004F34A7/$File/4020rr02.xls)

³ ČSÚ: Foreigners in the ČR <http://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/engkapitola/uvod>

⁴ ČSÚ: Timeline of basic indicators of VŠPS

[http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/tab_casova_rada_zakladnich_ukazetelu_vsps/\\$File/czam020108_CR.xls](http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/tab_casova_rada_zakladnich_ukazetelu_vsps/$File/czam020108_CR.xls)

⁵ ČSÚ: Macroeconomic indicators

[http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/macroeconomic_indicators/\\$File/16941714.xls](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/macroeconomic_indicators/$File/16941714.xls)

Source: ČSÚ⁶

The proportion of agriculture and industry has decreased after 1989 and conversely, the proportion of services has grown. As compared to the EU-27, the share of industry is significantly higher. The medium-high tech industries still prevail but an overpass to the high-tech sectors continues, for which a higher number of people with technical education at a tertiary level will be necessary. At the same time the desired development of knowledge intensive services will require growing number of highly educated professionals.

Employment in NACE sectors (2007, %)

		CZ	EU-27	EU-15
A+B	Agriculture	3.7	5.7	3.5
C-F	Industry	40.1	27.6	26.3
G-Q	Services	56.3	66.4	69.9
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat. Population and Social Conditions. LFS 2q 2007(29.1.2008). Own calculations.

The occupational structure of employment is influenced by the sector structure. The share of technicians and plant and machine operators is significantly higher in the ČR than in the EU-27. The number of professionals has been increasing slowly but it is still lower than in the EU-27. The number of people employed in elementary occupations is very low and it is continually decreasing as a consequence of the high share of upper-secondary education attainment.

Employment by occupation (2007, %)

ISCO		CZ	EU-27	EU-15
1	Legislators and managers	6.7	8.3	8.9
2	Professionals	11.0	13.5	13.7
3	Technicians	22.3	16.1	17.0
4	Clerks	7.1	10.6	11.6
5	Service, shop and market sales workers	11.7	13.6	13.9
6	Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	1.5	4.5	2.7
7	Craft workers	18.5	14.0	13.3
8	Plant and machine operators	15.6	8.6	7.9
9	Elementary occupations	5.3	9.7	10.0
0	Armed forces	0.3	0.6	0.7
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat. Population and Social Conditions. LFS 2q 2007(29.1.2008). Own calculations.

Education

The educational attainment in the ČR shows a considerably lower proportion both of lower secondary and tertiary education and a very high proportion of upper-secondary education. The low share of those with tertiary qualifications is attributed mainly to the still insufficient provision of short study and bachelor programmes. The number of tertiary education graduates has grown recently but the problem of a low number of graduates in technical and

⁶ ČSÚ: Timeline of basic indicators of VŠPS
[http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/tab_casova_rada_zakladnich_ukazetelu_vsps/\\$File/czam020108_CR.xls](http://www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/tab_casova_rada_zakladnich_ukazetelu_vsps/$File/czam020108_CR.xls)

natural sciences persists and may negatively influence the innovative potential. At the upper-secondary level the share of students at ISCED 3A level grows and the participation in VET programmes at ISCED 3C level decreases.

Population 25-64 by highest education attained (2007, %)

	CZ	EU-27	EU-15
ISCED 0-2	9.5	29.3	32.6
ISCED 3-4	76.8	47.2	42.3
ISCED 5-6	13.7	23.5	25.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat. Population and Social Conditions. LFS 2q 2007 (11.2.2008). Own calculations.

1.2.1. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Support in increasing the capacity of schools for adult education (2002 -) and for recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning (2005 -)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale; Demographic developments are responsible for a gradual decrease in the number of secondary school students (see Chapter 1.2) and this trend will continue in the next years as well. At the same time, demands for knowledge and skills of the workforce are changing and thus there is more need for continuing education and recognition of non-formal education and informal learning. As a response, there are efforts to use the free capacity of secondary schools for continuing education of adults and for recognition of skills and knowledge obtained outside formal education. The long-term education objectives from 2002 set the creation of Continuing Education Regional Centres as one of the priorities. Continuing Education Regional Centres (hereinafter CERCs) are created by linking several IVET schools that teach different vocations and/or provide different level of education (general secondary schools – gymnasias, secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools, tertiary professional schools...) and are able to coordinate the education offer (so-called Continuing Education Local Centres). An effective participation of non-governmental entities, including employers, is also expected. • Objectives and/or measurable targets; The objective of CERCs is to use the free capacity of schools for continuing education and thus to expand the offer and improve the quality of continuing education. • Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s) The target group are people interested in continuing vocational education, mainly adults in the given region. The measure does not focus on certain sectors or education groups; however, it is assumed that CERC projects will respond to a specific situation in the given region. • Status of implementation In 2003-2005, the first two CERCs were created based on individual projects. One

project was based on an initiative of the region and the other one based on an initiative of schools. Currently, they are already autonomous legal entities providing education and participating in other lifelong learning projects. Since 2005, the following CERCs have been created as part of the UNIV system project (recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the networks of schools providing adult education). The goal is to create CERCs in all 14 regions of the CR (for more information about the UNIV project, see Section 3).

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- Level of operation;

The CERC measure is designed for the national level that also provides the conceptual and methodological support, but is implemented at the regional level and differs from region to region. The project is usually carried out with support of the respective regional authority.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

The measure is a part of a broader strategy. It is connected to policies that try to solve the impact of demographic developments through optimisation of the education system while supporting the development of continuing education, in particular the provision of continuing education by secondary schools and tertiary professional schools.

- Key actors involved.

National level: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (conceptual guidance), the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (methodological cooperation); regional level: regional authorities (submission and realization of projects based on specific regional needs); schools: secondary vocational schools, secondary technical schools and tertiary professional schools or other education providers.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies);

No evaluation studies focusing on the development of regional centres are available. The activity of CERCs is monitored and eventually assessed by regional authorities. The UNIV project is monitored by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Annual reports of the offices of the Liberec Region and the Moravia-Silesia Region where the first two CERCs were created show that the activity of these centres is very successful and can serve as an example of good practice at the regional level: the number of courses and students are increasing and the centres are involved in many other projects.

- Indicators of success;

- The measurable indicator of success can be: the number of created CERCs, the number of schools that are a part of individual CERCs, the number of offered continuing education courses, the number of students in these courses, the number of students who complete these courses or the number of schools that provide continuing education courses.
- So far 8 regions and 118 schools (of these, 66 schools as part of the UNIV project) are involved in creating CERCs.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies.

The UNIV project focusing primarily on the development of continuing education results recognition took advantage of the experience with creating the first CERCs. Their functioning will have a positive impact on improving the quality of human resources in individual regions and thus on the active labour market policy.

E. Conclusions:

- **Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)**
The main problem of the project is the tendency of some schools and teachers to stay in the familiar IVET area and their low motivation to change. The willingness and thus participation of adults in continuing education in the CR is very low as compared to the EU. The CR does not have tools that would motivate and in some cases also allow participation of adults in education. We can also assume that some people who have bad experience (failure) with schools prefer training agencies to schools. However, there are no studies available to confirm this assumption.
- **What issues remain to be addressed?**
Although based on the measure, there are several examples of good practice of combining schools at the regional level, this type of expanded activities is still not a regular part of secondary schools and tertiary professional schools' functioning. Also, the number of people participating in continuing education is growing very slowly. This is why, a more intensive support in this area either through school networking or other programmes will be important in the future.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:
The National Programme of Computer Literacy (2003-2006)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale; The fast and mass expansion of ICT causes that people who are not used to working with ICT (in particular the older generation and low-skilled workforce) have a worse position on the labour market. With ICT penetrating in all areas of life, their chances to participate in the regular civic life are worsening and they are threatened by social exclusion. This is why the Ministry of Informatics launched the National Programme of Computer Literacy. • Objectives and/or measurable targets; The Program was aimed at providing an opportunity for the general public to learn basic computer and Internet skills, and help them overcome fear of new technologies. Its core consists in "hands-on" two-hour courses during which participants gradually learn to use a computer, get connected to the Internet, search for data and work with the electronic mail. • Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s) Primary target group was the general public, with special emphasis placed on older people who did not come across IT during their formal education and had very limited opportunities to work with it during their professional lives. Low price of courses (CZK 100, i.e. about EUR 3.5) also eliminated financial barriers for people from lower income categories and there were also special projects for disadvantaged groups. • Status of implementation The project was ended in 2006.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of operation; National, Regional (sub-national), Local (city or municipality). • Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach? It is rather an isolated comprehensive programme, the objectives of which are in compliance with the priorities of the national policy on support of ICT use and

digital divide prevention.

- Key actors involved.
 - The Ministry of Informatics (dissolved in 2007), selected course providers (private companies, schools).

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies);

The Ministry of Informatics assessed the project as highly successful. The partnership of computer literacy support country-wide training centres with schools and public libraries proved as very effective. Schools welcomed the chance to test life-long learning courses and make informal contact with their pupils' parents/grandparents, and public libraries can attract new people through hosting computer training courses

- Indicators of success;

The indicator of success is in particular the number of people who completed the course and the percentage of participants from the groups at the highest risk of social exclusion due to difficult access to ICT. A total of 101 856 people participated in the programme. Most of them completed two courses. In terms of age structure, 45.23 % of participants were over 51 and 24.38% came from the 51 – 60 age group.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies.

Unfortunately, the programme was terminated at the national level without any follow-up measures. The form of courses proved to be very good and it is assumed that similar initiatives will be supported as part of the operational programme Education for Competitiveness for the programming period 2007-2013.

E. Conclusions:

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

In the first years there were attempts of drawing multiple subsidies for a single participant and also people attending courses repeatedly. It was prevented by providing controls on funds drawn (subsidies for individual courses) by means of central electronic record keeping which individual trainers can use to keep records of participants.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Since the programme was cancelled, there is currently no nation-wide measure providing target groups with simple access to basic ICT education. For projects that will be supported as part of the operational programme, the main problem will be their sustainability after their co-funding from ESF ends. As regards courses' content, any potential follow-up programmes should prepare advanced e-learning study courses as a continuation after the basic courses as the subsidised training encourages increased interest in many participants in further improving their computer skills.

Sources:

Education Centre of the Liberec Region

<http://www.cvlk.cz>

World of Education – a network of local lifelong learning centres

<http://www.svetvzdelavani.cz/>

NPCL:

<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1042>

2. Improving access to and equity in VET

2.1. National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET

The participation of young people in initial VET in the Czech Republic is traditionally higher than average (in comparison with other European countries). A small number of people who leave the education early without acquiring any qualification is recorded as well (the average rate of early school leavings is around 6 %).

On the contrary, the participation of adults in continuing VET is lower than average rate in European Union. A wide range of strategies (which facilitated access to VET) were formulated and implemented lately in both the aforementioned areas.

There are still not very many formal continuing VET opportunities for adults interested in continuing education (distance or tutor classes), but many measures have been launched, which should gradually improve the situation, and new opportunities for recognizing former results of non-formal education and informal learning have been implemented (see further down, the National Qualifications Framework, the Further Education Results Recognition Act, etc.). For many decades, the CR had a good tradition of the training system and the secondary vocational education system with a baccalaureate examination. The social changes in 1989 lately made secondary general education and tertiary education more attractive, which, however, has negative consequences, such a lack of new skilled workers and handymen (e.g. masons, tinsmiths, carpenters, locksmiths).

2.2. Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET

2.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Within the curricular reform of elementary and secondary schooling, schools are able to develop their own school educational programmes (SEP) based on framework educational programmes. School educational programmes will correspond to the needs and philosophy of the particular school and will react to the needs of regional labour markets. Moreover, they will meet different needs of those who are interested in education as well as they will increase access of individuals to education.

The following policies belong to main strategies: the promotion of lifelong learning and counselling (e.g. VIP Kariera project - Education – Information – counselling), the introduction of the system of informal and non-formal learning recognition and the development of the National Qualifications Framework , NSK project - National Qualifications Framework and UNIV project - Recognition of Informal and Non-formal Learning Results are concerned with this issue)

In the area of equal access to education, it is very important to eliminate possible disadvantages and to promote equal opportunities. In the Czech education system, there are preparatory year of schooling before enrolling in Year 1 of elementary school for disadvantaged children. These preparatory classes should compensate impaired language and sociocultural development of these children. There are also programmes on the promotion of secondary school students coming from a socio-economically disadvantaged background (an example of such a project is the PROPOS project –the Prevention of Early Quitting School and Promotion of Secondary Education for Students from the Socio-cultural Disadvantaged Background. This project is implemented by the Institute of Pedagogical Psychological Counselling of the ČR (IPPP).

There still exist some obstacles both for young people and adults, e.g. the relative separation of educational and employability sectors. This fact, first of all has impact on the system lifelong counselling services as well as on mismatching (matching) educational opportunities

to the demand of labour forces at the labour market i.e. influence on labour market chances of graduates, retraining chances or completing qualification of adults. There are still limited possibilities for continuing education of adults both in the case of formal and non-formal learning. Recognition of non-formal learning results is still at the beginning but the legislation framework has already been set up and will be further developed. Generally, it can be said that adults are very low motivated for lifelong learning. It is necessary to increase awareness of lifelong learning necessity both for successful professional and personal life. Solution to the problem of long-lasting obstacles consists in further development of trends and strategies (e.g. the aforementioned National Qualifications Framework, recognition of non-formal and informal learning results, development of school educational programmes and career guidance and counselling services) and strengthening further cooperation among all social partners. In this area, projects following UNIV, NSK, VIP Kariera, etc. will be implemented. Schools will continue with school educational programme development.

The separation of educational and employability sectors and further development of cooperation among sectors at all levels (i.e. ministries, regions and self-administrations, schools and employers are to be addressed.

Measures focused on equalisation of disadvantaged people conditions (people with special educational needs, physically and mentally handicapped people, people from socioeconomically disadvantaged environment, etc.) and assuring equal access to education will also continue. In the future, an integrated approach to individuals from specific target groups will still be applied.

2.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Curricular reform (based on the School Act that came into effect in January 2005)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<p>The basic principle of the curricular reform is implementation of a two-level creation of curricula and education programmes where schools will create their own education programmes based on Framework Education Programmes. Framework Education Programmes (FEPs) now focus on education results, i.e. on competences that graduates in the given field will obtain for their further career and personal life. They will motivate students to more pro-activity and independency, to responsible decision-making and problem-solving and to searching for, and adequate assessment of, information. Framework Education Programmes and pilot School Education Programmes (SEPs) were also created and are being created in cooperation with social partners and thus more than ever reflect the needs and demands of employers. It is assumed that their participation will bring practical outcome in the form of better quality education programmes (e.g. by creating better conditions for vocational, mainly practical teaching), thus improving the employability of graduates, mainly in the regional scale.</p> <p>The target group are secondary students (a similar reform is going on at the primary education level) in the entire Czech Republic.</p> <p>Currently there are about first 60 Framework Education Programmes for secondary vocational schools (the fields of vocation and study) and another 80 FEPs are ready for approval as part of the next phase. First pilot SEPs were prepared at about 30 pilot schools.</p>
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The curricular reform is carried out at the national level. It includes both secondary education (secondary vocational education and general secondary schools – gymnasia) and primary education.

It is a part of the comprehensive system of measures and priorities of the education policy of the CR, the goal of which is to improve the employability of graduates and adults participating in continuing education since the dynamic changes on the labour market require skilled and flexible workforce that is able to respond to such changes. The key actors are public administration authorities and local governments, schools, social partners, employment offices and other.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

It is not possible to assess the results and impact of the curricular reform since the pilot teaching based on SEPs started at the first schools in this school year.

E. Conclusions:

This is an important process, the result of which should be such education programmes that would fit well the needs of the labour market and would ensure employability of graduates. Its implementation encountered initial scepticism of participating schools, teachers, parents and social partners. The future creation of SEPs will show how much this scepticism was overcome.

2.3. Improving equity for specific target groups

2.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

One of the main long-term objectives is to create equal opportunities in education for all and to develop an integrative education system which takes into account children with special learning needs, socially disadvantaged children and gifted children. Mainstream schools have begun to co-operate closely with special schools which are gradually being transformed into methodological centres. Measures and schemes are being implemented to support the education of Roma and immigrants and to eliminate pathological disorders.

The counselling system used in education and employment areas consists of many entities and therefore all specific target groups have access to counselling services that will help them to decide about their education and career at any point of their life. The group that is the most difficult to reach seems to be people who left the education system early without obtaining any qualification (and are thus excluded from the counselling system) and at the same time do not want to or cannot use for some reason the counselling system of employment offices.

The launching of the process of recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning and the creation of the National Qualifications System are important steps in increasing the chance to obtain education mainly for the target groups of people with low qualifications, older people, unemployed and others. They bring new ways of increasing qualifications of these disadvantaged groups and thus their better employability. The selection of different entities providing continuing education is also increasing. Adults have now a chance to have their skills and knowledge that they obtained at their work and not in the formal education process recognized, based on defined qualifications and evaluation standards (so-called partial qualifications). After they pass a prescribed examination, they will receive a formal certificate on their professional skills.

One of the persisting challenges is providing equal opportunity to people from socio-cultural disadvantaged backgrounds and to minorities (the Romas in the CR), even though we can say that many measures have been already implemented in this area, e.g. minorities integration centres whose goal is to provide counselling, educational, information and leisure services to these target groups; measures for drop-out prevention and support of studies of these people; school counselling offices with more personnel etc.

In general, there is still a rather big lack of statistical data in this area. One of the few sources is e.g. the project, Modern Society – Unequal Education Opportunity: Scope, Sources, Social and Economic Consequences, Solution Strategy, that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs realized during 2004-2009. As part of this project, many surveys were conducted in order to find out the depth and extent of this problem in the Czech Republic (e.g. a survey on the extent of and reasons for dropping out of secondary education and social aspects of long-term unemployment of young people with a low level of education).

2.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

<p>A. Title of policy/measure:</p> <p>UNIV project (Recognition of the results of informal learning and non-formal education by networks of schools providing the education service for adults) 2005-2008</p>
<p>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The project seeks to support continuing education in the Czech Republic. Two partial goals aimed at achieving a notable expansion of continuing education have been formulated within the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) encourage the secondary schools and higher professional schools in providing continuing education; b) extend the offer of continuing education by procedures enabling the recognition of results of informal learning and non-formal education, i.e. any type of previous learning. <p>Schools involved in the project created a network covering six regions of the country. Each network has a coordination centre performing a number of important activities (roles) for the smooth operation of the network. Important parts of the networks will be also lifelong guidance centres for adults.</p> <p>Target groups are low-skilled, older workers who lack the formal education, unemployed people and others.</p> <p>Currently, each of the six participating regions has a network of schools (always 11 schools that the Education Department of the Regional Authority. picked); pedagogical staff of these schools undergo many educational seminars to learn how to create continuing education programs and work with adults, how to take advantage of distance or e-learning study courses and to learn best practices and approaches in continuing education marketing.</p> <p>The pedagogical staff then use obtained knowledge in preparing continuing education programmes. There will be a total of 132 programmes in the project, most of them are almost finished, i.e. are being evaluated by social partners. Each continuing education programme is to respond to the needs of the local labour market and this is why it is prepared in cooperation with social partners who thus comment on whether it is up to date and needed and correct as to contents.</p>
<p>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>The project has been so far realized only at the regional level, however, continuing education centres should be gradually established across the entire CR. The project is a part of the policy, the goal of which is to increase participation of adults in continuing education (in the CR it is only about 5.9%, while the European average is 11%). The key actors are mainly schools providing continuing education programmes, social partners helping to formulate these programmes, regional administration authorities, etc.</p>

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The project will be finished during the year of 2008; it cannot be evaluated before it is finished. However, we can already see its clearly positive benefit – many created education programmes, pedagogues trained in the specifics of adult education, schools motivated to expand their education programmes for continuing education programmes.

E. Conclusions:

The critical point is currently a very low unemployment level (only 6.1% in the CR in January 2008), which means employers' high demand for the workforce resulting in adults' demotivation to further educate themselves and to increase their qualifications. There is a lack of workforce on the labour market and employers seeking new employees must often lower their expectations.

However, this project initiated an important process that will be further developed as part of the following project during the period up to 2013 and that will further support higher participation and attitude of adults to further education.

EXAMPLE 2**A. Title of policy/measure:****NSK project (National Qualifications Framework)**

Project NSK (National Qualifications Framework Project)

The National Qualifications Framework is very closely related to UNIV (it develops qualifications and assessment standards which constitute a framework for recognition of informal and non-formal education results. In addition, it contributes positively to an increase of education opportunities, first of all for people with low qualifications.

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

On August 1, 2007, Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on recognition of continuing education results came into force. It is conceived in such a way as to motivate adults in the Czech Republic for continuing education, extend chances of individuals to acquire a new qualification, improve chances for labour market success of individuals, and last but not least improve response of the education system to the needs of the labour market. Besides the fact that it embodies the National Qualifications Framework, the law stipulates and regulates especially the following fields:

- the system of verification and recognition of continuing education results;
- qualifications;
- qualification standards for partial qualifications;
- assessment standards for partial qualifications;
- rules concerning the authorisation of authorised persons;
- the rights and duties of participants in the system of recognition (verification) continuing education;
- responsibility for the system of recognition continuing education results.

To the date of February 2008, the first partial qualifications (number of 340) and completed qualifications (number of 110) have been approved and the first entities acquired the status of the authorised person which entitles him or her to examine applicants for acquiring these qualifications.

The National Qualifications System is being implemented simultaneously with the network of continuing education centres as part of the UNIV project and has the same target group, i.e. low-skilled adults, older employees who have many years of work experience but lack a formal certificate of education, unemployed people and others.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The National Qualifications System is valid nationwide and created in line with the European Qualifications Framework. It starts with lower qualifications (ISCED 3C) and continues with defining qualifications and assessment standards up to secondary education with a baccalaureate examination (ISCED 3A).

The key role in creating the National Qualifications System play employers (their sector councils), competent ministries that approve qualifications and assessment standards, so-called authorized entities that will issue certificates on obtaining partial qualifications and other social partners.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

In this case, no assessment or evaluation is possible since the National Qualifications System is just at its beginnings.

E. Conclusions:

The aforesaid low unemployment rate has a big impact on the interest in certificates proving partial qualifications. Thus it is crucial to keep informing people about the importance and usefulness of verifying skills and competences obtained outside the formal education system for increasing their employability.

3. Lifelong learning through VET

3.1. National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET

At the level of policy innovation a number of strategic and programme documents have been adopted the implementation of which should create necessary preconditions for setting up the area of LLL. Legislation gradually creates a framework for fostering LLL since 2005. The new School Act increased permeability within the initial education system, as it made the education pathways more transparent and introduced the possibility for school heads to recognise and make exemptions for acquired parts of education programmes. The measures taken in the context of the European concept of LLL include passing the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., developing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and elaborating its tools with pilots of their use in trial implementation of procedures for validation of prior learning. No crucial problems seem to stand in the way of the reform changes to be made in connection with the implementation of LLL in general and the NQF, especially since these reform changes are being introduced “top-down” in the national context (as a step following the ongoing curricular reform). Favourable synergies might be expected in the extended possibilities of (both geographical and structural) mobility for learners and/or job applicants, an increased involvement and importance of schools extending their supply to the full scope of VET, and an increased openness and flexibility of interrelations between / overlapping of carrying out work and preparing for it within LLL, along with maintaining a sufficient system rigidity of these interrelations, especially within IVET (through maintaining and actualising a set of full IVET qualifications, and a set of partial qualifications with defined relations to the full ones). Ministry of Education developed the strategic document *The Strategy of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic (2007)* where the needed arrangements for implementing the LLL area in the Czech Republic are defined.

3.2. Facilitating transfer between VET pathways

3.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The new School Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (effective from 1st January 2005) increased permeability within the initial education system, as it made the education pathways more transparent and introduced the possibility for school heads to recognise and make exemptions for acquired parts of education programmes. This Act provides an initial solution to the issues of increasing mobility both within and between VET and general and/or higher education. It contains certain provisions that facilitate transfers between all educational programmes and shorten ways to qualifications.

In admission and progression proceedings, school directors are enabled to recognise prior education and allow exceptions for the recognised parts of study programmes (see p. 70 Recognition of Acquired Education: school heads can recognise student’s partial education if it is substantiated with a certificate of this education or if it is supported by an other provable way. At the same time, it must not elapse more than 10 years from education acquisition. In addition, the student can also prove his or her knowledge by passing the examination which the school head determines.

Although recognising education acquired elsewhere is not based on objective criteria, a credit system, etc., it may be expected that these provisions will at least partially facilitate transfers within initial and between continuing and initial education. Another step was made

by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on the Recognition of Further Education Results (effective from 1 August, 2007). It stipulates the creation of a National Qualifications Framework and the system of recognition of prior learning regardless the ways of their acquirement. Provisions of the new School Act and the implementation of the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results improve opportunities for individuals to increase mobility within and between VET and general and/or higher education both during their initial formal schooling and their lifelong (and life-wide) learning. No further essential changes are foreseen in IVET as the structure of responsibilities and coordination of work at the national and provider levels are concerned. The situation as for the conception and implementation of initial and continuing education is in principle convenient, and if there is something to change, it is particularly in relation to the efforts for shortening and diversifying the learning pathways to qualifications and for increasing mobility of both workforce and persons preparing for an occupation in European extent (through its tools, i.e. EQF and NQF, ECVET and ECTS with national equivalents as well as Europass, Ploteus, etc.). For the time being, formal qualifications (certificates) that can be attained within both initial and further E&T are, in principle, bound to the respective educational programmes and their providers: For complete qualifications obtainable within IVET (incl. the "second chance"), VET providers (schools) are entitled to carry out exams and other summative assessment procedures and to deliver certificates as well. The same is true for formally recognised CVET programmes for maintenance, development and updating or modification of initial qualifications. Both of these VET qualifications are awarded by the particular school. Education provided by schools will be gradually modularised to allow for a more flexible combination of initial and continuing education programmes, e.g. the completion of a missing part of education as a prerequisite for admission to schools at more advanced levels, etc. Besides creating the NQF, implementation of ECVET as another tool which is important for creating the area of LLL is being prepared.

3.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Act No. 561/2004 Coll. of 24th September 2004, on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the School Act effective from 1st January 2005)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The Act provides an initial solution to the issues of increasing mobility both within and between VET and general and/or higher education. It contains certain provisions that facilitate transfers between all educational programmes and shorten ways to qualifications. The Act enables individuals (above 15 years of age) to acquire a certificate on having completed a part of an initial formal educational programme by passing a single examination as a part of the respective final examination, regardless of how they acquired the relevant knowledge and skills. School directors are enabled to recognise prior both formal and non-formal education as well as informal learning and make exemptions for the recognised parts of study. Target groups are esp. applicants for study and students of secondary vocational and technical as well as tertiary professional schools (80% of students at upper secondary level study at these types of schools). The Act is implemented at the national level.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The Act operates on the national level, it provides an initial solution to the issues of increasing mobility both within and between VET and general and/or higher education. Key actors are Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the school

headmasters.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
The pre-reform organisation and evaluation of initial E&T gave only limited flexibility for validation of prior learning within post-obligatory formal E&T (incl. IVET). Linear study programmes provided a limited opportunity for changing educational path or transferring to a different course during studies. Although the School Act stipulates possibility of both modular and subject-based organisation of studies at schools on equal footing, no large-scale introduction of a modular or another unit-based structure of curricula in formal E&T is foreseen for the next phase of the ongoing curricular reform (such changes are only prepared in connection with the implementation of the European concept of LLL with its tools and instruments).
E. Conclusions:
What will be valued within the validation procedures according to Sections 63 or 70 or 113 of the School Act depends on both the curricula of the respective parts of studies and decisions of the head teachers of the respective schools. The curricula of the Framework and/or school educational programmes in particular fields of study within IVET shall define knowledge, skills and key competences to be acquired by their students and graduates, but no detailed assessment standards have been prepared so far (this is one of the tasks of the next phase of the ongoing reforms).

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:
Act No. 179/2006 Coll. of 30 March 2006 on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results), effective from 1 August, 2007
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The Act foresees a possibility for adults to acquire partial vocational qualifications registered within the NQF, through an examination to compare an individual's prior learning results with qualification and assessment standards of respective partial vocational qualifications. It is not possible, however, to gain complete qualifications through these procedures of validation of prior learning (VPL); in addition, the same complex final examinations as in initial formal VET are required for their obtaining.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The Act operates on the national level, it was conceived to a large extent with the aim of supporting employability of inhabitants. The conditions for implementation of the Act are being created in close co-operation with employers, so as the qualification requirements are relevant and subsequently demanded by employers. As per the provisions of the Act, NÚOV is in charge of establishing and maintaining the NQF, the respective authorising bodies (Ministry of Education and/or other ministries) of establishing and maintaining the institutional framework for VPL (esp. authorisation of so-called authorised persons as providers of VPL procedures). Along with preparing the Act, system projects and other reform activities have been started or pursued that aim at its implementing. The system projects with this aim, i.e. esp. the NSK (NQF) and the UNIV project, are part of activities focused on implementation of the European concept of LLL in national conditions of the Czech Republic.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
There is a big benefit for individuals who will participate in the competence-based assessments of learning outcomes related to partial qualifications. They will be offered an opportunity to have their competences pertaining to some particular

partial qualification(s) certified. In case that they receive certificates of all partial qualifications a full one consists of, they will have the opportunity to pass the final examination and they will receive the official vocational certificate in the given particular branch and at the corresponding level of educational attainment. This is expected to help them find a new job or maintain their present one as well as enter into a subsequent education / learning leading to a higher level of qualification.

E. Conclusions:

Candidates which enter the process will have to pay fees and this could cause problem on equal opportunities. Roles of stakeholders at regional or local levels (regional council, municipality, other social partners or providers of education) have not been specified so far. Guiding and counselling is absolutely necessary part of VPL process but the Act does not stipulate the role of the advisor/counsellor. The role of the counsellor was piloted within the EPANIL project and is tested within the UNIV project.

3.3. Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures

3.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

At present, career counselling services are provided within two parallel systems. One falls within the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the other one is administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Besides the two systems guidance and counselling services are provided by employers and employer associations that come under the competency of Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. The extant guidance and counselling services are fragmented. The respective parts of the system are working well; however, the system as a whole is undersized. The school counselling system for children and adolescents is functional and geographically relatively accessible, but its capacity is inadequate and counselling and educational activities at schools are not interconnected. The guidance and counselling for pupils and students of upper secondary and tertiary education have been underestimated as well as the one for adults which is used mainly by unemployed and job seekers. The higher educational institutions have insufficient capacity and also do not provide complex guidance services. There are practically no counselling centres related to education for adults and thus the general public frequently utilizes the counselling systems of employment services. In the last few years, harmonisation and integration trends in providing counselling services have been gaining ground. In 2004 a proposal of a national policy for the development of career counselling has been accepted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The policy sees the role of career counselling in the context of LLL and considers it to be an important instrument in relation to the human resources development strategy and the prevention of unemployment. The policy sets out strategic goals and ways of implementing them – e.g. enhancing the efficiency and the scope of career services, providing for horizontal (between ministries and between central and regional levels) and vertical (all clients are guaranteed access to all parts of the system) links within the system of career counselling. Other objectives include the development of career counselling at school level, establishing links between education and counselling/guidance at schools, implementation of an information system on employment of school leavers, etc. Some objectives are being implemented with the support of the ESF. In the new School Act the career counselling is not dealt with. The Ministry of Education developed the strategic document *The Strategy of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic*. The Necessary measures for improving the system of guidance and counselling in the Czech Republic are defined in the part 3.2.7. They address, first of all the development of the complex information and the

counselling system which would be available for all population groups in the course of whole life, an increase of counselling services availability, connection of counselling and educational activities at schools, development of counselling and information services on education and employment for adults which would be available for all adults. System projects focused on counselling improvement in the Czech Republic are being implemented (VIP Kariéra and UNIV projects).

System projects are implemented to improve the guidance and counselling in the CR (the VIP Kariéra and the UNIV projects). For improving guidance and counselling at schools, teaching material related to entrance into the world of work and choice of an occupation has been integrated into framework educational programs for schools providing basic education at level ISCED 2 (lower-secondary grades of single structure and **general secondary school – gymnasium**).

3.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
VIP Kariéra (Education – Guidance – Information) http://www.vip.nuov.cz/
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
VIP is a three-year ESF-supported project launched by the Czech Ministry of Education in 2005 with the aim of developing a user-friendly system accessible on the Internet which links information on available education and training programmes (including subject areas or specialities) with employers' skill needs and labour-market prospects (ISA; www.infoabsolvent.cz). The system to be developed by NUOV includes target information for learners at risk of dropping out and a multimedia guide to education and career opportunities. ISA collects all information necessary for the choice of a career and the relevant educational routes and makes it available in a user-friendly form on the Internet. Its advantage is an unlimited access for pupils and their parents. The system contains a detailed list of schools' programmes and subject areas including contact information, admission requirements, chances of admission and part-time study opportunities; information resulting from labour market analyses such as regular analyses of the unemployment among school leavers, information about the employability of school leavers and possibilities of transferring to tertiary education, surveys among employers, etc.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
ISA system is the national system which is an important part of the guidance and counselling system of the Czech Republic. Key actors involved in the development of this system are Ministry of Education, NÚOV and Institut pedagogicko-psychologického poradenství ČR (Institute for the pedagogical-psychological counselling of the Czech Republic).
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
Assessment of the project is not possible now, because the new system was launched recently and it was impossible to get an output feedback yet. The visit rate seems to let suppose for the system to be very successful.
E. Conclusions:
The career counselling services are provided within two parallel systems. One falls within the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the other

one is administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This project deals only with C&G issues pertaining to the latter one. In the future it would be, of course, preferable to interconnect the two systems and create a complex system where – besides providing clients with information – also the tailored C&G work with individuals, both workers and students, would be more stressed.

3.4. Validating (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning

3.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

Legislation gradually creates a framework for validation of prior learning (VPL) in the Czech Republic since 2005. The new School Act enables individuals (above 15 years of age) to acquire a certificate on having completed a part of an initial formal educational programme by passing a single examination as a part of the respective final examination, regardless of how they acquired the relevant knowledge and skills. The measures taken in the context of the European concept of LLL (and especially LWL) include passing the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results, effective from 1st August 2007), developing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and elaborating its tools with pilots of their use in trial implementation of procedures for VPL. The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. foresees a possibility for adults to acquire partial vocational qualifications registered within the NQF, through an examination (practical or, if appropriate, oral or written as well) to compare an individual's prior learning results (his or her knowledge, skills and competences regardless the ways and settings of their acquirement) with qualification and assessment standards of respective partial vocational qualifications. It is not possible, however, to gain complete qualifications through these procedures of validation; in addition, the same complex final examinations as in initial formal VET are required for their obtaining. Otherwise, no essential changes are foreseen in IVET and in the structure of responsibilities and coordination of work at the national and provider levels. It is too soon, however, to anticipate possible further changes in this direction in connection with the process of making the European concept of LLL a reality. We are convinced that the Act will enable larger flexibility of workforce and quicker achievement of qualifications for the occupations that currently offer getting a job. Since the Act presumes recognition of knowledge and skills regardless the way of their achievement (courses, self-study, experience, etc.), participation in a preparing course is not prerequisite, which enables learners to spare both time and money (course fees). The above approach has been elaborated and piloted through ESF-funded projects with the objective to develop a relevant scheme and to gradually launch this on a national basis. No crucial problems seem to stand in the way of the reform changes to be made in connection with the implementation of LLL in general and the NQF, especially since these reform changes are being introduced “top-down” in the national context (as a step following the ongoing curricular reform). Main possible obstacles might be expected in insufficient motivation of both learners and VET providers for engaging in these reform changes without being sufficiently 'driven' to do it (through sufficiently clear and truly effective – both threatening and promising – incentives from the world of work) and possible lack of necessary balance of flexibility/rigidity of the overall VET system, esp. in direction of its over-structuring through creating a new set of partial qualifications (where no regulations have been yet and no lack of regulations has been felt as well).

3.4.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Project EPANIL (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning) www.epanil.net ; 10/2004 – 09/2006
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
It was a two-year pilot project which was being realised within the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Nine partners from six countries were involved in this project, NUOV, CR was co-ordinator. The aim of the EPANIL project was to develop and verify appropriate methodologies and tools with drawing from the best European practice within the frame of “Common European Principles for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning” derived from the Bruges/Copenhagen process. Target groups of the project were all groups usually described as vulnerable or being at risk of social exclusion (drop-outs and early school leavers, recent school leavers, unqualified and persons with lower qualification, unemployed or economically inactive persons, especially women (re)integrating into the labour market, ageing adults and seniors, ethnic and other minorities, including the Roma, disabled, individuals in custody and care, etc.) and monitored as to their situation in the countries concerned in general or within different regions. 67 clients were tested in the system of VPL, organisations involved in this process gained new experiences with this system, teachers and experts in the branch cook were educated in the system of VPL.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
This project was submitted at time when legal prerequisites for setting up the system for recognition had not been prepared yet in the CR, Poland and the Slovakia; in the CR, the recent Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Learning Results and subsequent changes in related Acts was not even prepared. Therefore the project had only the status of an experiment and for that reason the system of recognition could not have been adopted, because of this absence of a legal framework. Direct participation of social partners in developing the occupational and assessment standards for the branch chosen for purposes of the pilot study as well as in implementing the pilot VPL procedure and carrying out its relevant activities (practical exams).
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
Results of the EPANIL project have been used both for the development of standards and in the UNIV project. Within the UNIV project, a pilot testing of the VPL system is realised on a larger scale. As the strengths of this project can be seen the participation of both old a new EU countries in the pilot study, offering for the latter ones a possibility of using experience and examples of good practice from the former ones; direct participation of social partners (employers, employees) in developing the occupational and assessment standards for the branch chosen for purposes of the pilot study (the branch “cook”) as well as in implementing the pilot VPL procedure and carrying out its relevant activities (practical exams); taking the Common European Principles as a base to be reflected in the developed and implemented VPL procedure.
E. Conclusions:
As the pilot study preceded the VPL legislation, the certificates issued within this study could not be given a regular formal status.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:
UNIV Recognition of the results of non-formal education and informal learning by networks of schools providing the education service for adults; 2005 – 2008; http://www.univ.nuov.cz/
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
This project is a complementary empirical system project to the creation of both qualifications framework and particular qualifications within the NQF system project. It works as a feasibility study for creation of the Czech NQF and its use for purposes of both continuing education and RPL, at qualification level ISCED 3 (i.e. EQF 2 and 3), levels ISCED 3A and ISCED 5B (i.e. EQF 4 and 5) will follow later. In this project, standards and other system tools for VPL are developed, regional LLL centres and school networks are created, training of pedagogical staff including assessors and counsellors for VPL is organised. The focus is on the last issue because legally requested tools (assessment standards for particular qualifications, describing criteria for assessment of the respective competences and methods and procedures of the assessment itself) are being developed but persons expected to use these tools (assessors and counsellors) are not prepared to carry out their activities. The pilot verification of both the educational courses for assessors and counsellors and the assessment standards take place in networks of schools providing the training services to adults in 8 regions (NUTS 3) of the CR.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The project seeks to support continuing education in the CR. continuing education is a less developed part of the LLL which gives people the ability to cope with changes in the society and compete on the labour market even in the international context. The project operates at the national and regional levels and involves 6 of 10 regions and key actors of the respective policy field (Ministry of education, NÚOV, representatives of other stakeholders - schools, employers, labour offices, regional authorities of the six regions involved in the project, economic chamber of the CR).
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
Direct participation of social partners (employers, employees) in developing the assessment standards for the partial qualifications chosen for purposes of the pilot study as well as in the pilot implementation of the VPL procedure and carrying out its relevant activities (practical exams); Taking the Common European Principles for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning as a base to be reflected in the developed and implemented VPL procedure.
E. Conclusions:
Potential threat for the sustainability of the results can be seen in the provision of the Act No. 179/2006 (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results) that stipulates, besides the VPL procedure, moreover the final examination at school as a prerequisite for obtaining the full formal qualification (with apprenticeship certificate).

4. Improving quality of VET

4.1. National policy context on improving quality of VET

The national policy in improving the quality of VET

In their declarations and strategies, policymakers keep stressing the principal role of improving the quality of VET and the support of professional development of VET teachers during the entire monitored period. In fact, all these declarations and strategies stem from the document, the National Programme for Education Development in the CR (the White Book), from the year of 2001. We can see the emphasis on the quality and role of VET teachers in key conceptual and strategic documents that are in line with the White Book: Long-Term Aims⁷ and lately also in the Lifelong Learning Strategy in the CR and the operational programme “Education for Competitiveness” for the programming period 2007-2013 funded from ESF.

The development of the quality of education (including VET) is regulated by the School Act⁸ and related notices. Based on the School Act, VET schools are to regularly realize their self-evaluation, to create their own curricular programme (school curriculum) based on the Framework Education Programme and to establish their school council (administration body). The School Act also defined a new role for the Czech Schools Inspection Authority (not only an inspection role but also an evaluation and analytical role). The Further Education Results Recognition Act also helped to improve the quality of VET.⁹ Thanks to the School Act, schools now provide continuing education in a bigger extent and as authorized entities are starting to verify and recognize results of prior learning. The Pedagogical Staff Act¹⁰ clearly defines the conditions for working as a pedagogue (including VET teachers), their further training and career system.

Individual elements of the School Act and the Further Education Act (e.g. the creation of own curriculum, recognition of non-formal and informal education), i.e. operationalisation of VET quality development, were designed during the period 2005-2008 with the help of ESF funds through system projects (e.g. PILOT S – the creation and verification of school education programmes at selected **secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools** NQS – the development of the National Qualifications System supporting the link of IVET and CVET; UNIV – the recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the network of schools providing adult education, Kvalita I- a new final examination for three-year vocations with a vocational certificate.).

4.2. Improving quality in VET provision

4.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

⁷ The Long-Term Aim of Education and Development of the Education System in 2002, the Long-Term Aim of Education and Development of the Education System of the CR in 2005, the Long-Term Aim of Education and the Development of the Education System of the CR in 2007.

⁸ Act No. 561/2004 of Col., on pre-school, elementary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (School Act).

⁹ Act No. 179/2006 of Col., on verification and recognition of results of further education and a change in some legislation (the Further Education Results Recognition Act).

¹⁰ Act No. 563/2004 of Col., on pedagogical staff and a change in some legislation.

All hitherto activities linked with VET quality improvement are based on the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper published in 2001).

The decentralization of the education system and provision of a rather high level of autonomy to schools is now balanced out by the fact that schools must be accountable for their work. Other trends are as follows: the emphasis on the quality of education provided by schools and the standardization and professionalisation of VET processes through implemented political measures (e.g. the curricular reform, self-evaluation legislation).

The reform in the contents of education mainly affects education programmes. Schools will create their own School Education Programmes (SEPs) based on the binding Framework Education Programmes (FEPs) that represent the national level. Since May 2005, the project "PILOT S" has been preparing selected schools for the creation of SEPs, has created methodological materials that are to help schools in putting together SEPs and has been provided with feedback that helps to complete and improve FEPs and to design education activities in support of the creation of SEPs. It is expected that all planned FEPs (currently about 220 FEPs) will be finished by the year of 2009 and gradually approved. However, we still do not know how VET teachers will be able to handle the high demands that stem from the curricular reform and whether they will change their approach and will learn to work as a team, to agree on an optimal education programme and to choose the best teaching methods and education strategies for the set teaching goals.

The creation of Framework Education Programmes is connected with the reform of the system of VET fields. The number of fields of study has been considerably reduced (from about 800 to about 220 fields of study); for each field of study, there will be one Framework Education Programme that will help the specialization of each school. This reduction takes into account the link of the fields of study to the labour market and the National Qualifications System. With decreasing number of educational fields an effort at taking into account requirements of employers and the labour market as much as possible was recorded. There remains the unsolved question if short time interests of employers (which are manifested in the development of qualification standards, if appropriate Framework Educational Programmes- RVP) will have a positive influence on society during the next 20-30 years.

The final examination in the fields of vocation with a vocational certificate is also being changed as part of the project, Kvalita I – A New Final Examination for the Fields of Vocation with a Vocational Certificate, funded from ESF. There will be 70 uniform final examinations for individual fields of vocation. Teachers, employers and experts must agree on the contents of these examinations. Currently the uniform final examinations are prepared based on assessment standards that define a set of criteria assessing whether students of a certain vocation have the competences required for a specific qualification, i.e. corresponding to the actual practice.

Education policymakers currently support a higher number of students in general secondary education (**general secondary schools – gymnasia** and lyceums), which, however, in combination with unfavourable demographic developments means many problems in VET, such as a lack of students and inability of VET schools to select students. In the near future, this can mean that there will not be enough qualified workers and handymen on the labour market.

As part of creating the system of school self-evaluation after the relevant legislation is passed,¹¹ education policymakers mostly discuss the following:

- How to utilize the current experience with individual elements of internal (self-evaluation) and external evaluation of schools?
- What would be the best methodology for schools' self-evaluation?
- How and who will create sets of indicators for evaluation of the quality of schools?
- How and who will create model policies for linking external and internal evaluation?
- How will the cooperation with organizations that are engaged in self-evaluation develop?
- How is the system of cooperation of schools in self-evaluation and development of schools created?

Similar issues will be discussed in the programming period 2008-2013 by solution-makers of the individual national project funded from ESF, Implementation of the Self-Evaluation System – SELF-EVALUATION I and II, as well as education policymakers when making changes in the Czech Schools Inspection Authority (CSIA).

4.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
System project PILOT S – the creation and verification of School Education Programmes at selected <i>secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools</i> ; 2005 – 2008
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
This system project of the Ministry of Education funded from ESF is carried out as part of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, as part of the priority Lifelong Learning Development – Measure 3.1 Improvement of Education at Schools and Educational Institutions and Development of Support Systems in Education. The general goal of the project is to help to improve education at schools through School Education Programmes (SEPs) and to verify the functioning of the two-level creation of curriculum. The goal of the Pilot S project is to prepare schools for creating their own School Education Programmes and to set policies and support tools for creating School Education Programmes. The project helps schools: a) to apply new approaches in creating education projects, b) to better incorporate own educational aims and conditions and c) to respond quickly to changes in the society, labour market, science and technology. The project includes 30 secondary technical and vocational schools (schools providing education at ISCED 3A and 3C levels) from all the CR participate in the project, with exception of Prague Capital. They developed 55 SVP (SEP) in the following fields of education: 23 Engineering and Engineering production, 26 Electrical Engineering, Telecommunication and Computer Technology, 28 Technical Chemistry and Chemistry of Silicates, 26 Food Industry and Food Chemistry, 31 Textile Production and Clothing, 33 Timber and Wood Processing and Production of Music Instruments, 36 Construction Industry, Geodesy and Cartography, 41 Agriculture and Forestry, 63 Economy and Administration, 65 Gastronomy, Hospitality and Tourism. 66 Trade, 68 Law, Legal and Public Administration Activities, 78 General Vocational Training, 82 Arts and Applied Arts.

¹¹ Notice No. 15/2005 of Col. of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports that sets the requirements for long-term aims, annual reports and self-evaluation of schools.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

This project is a part of a long-term strategy of policymakers (the state and self-administration unites) aiming at the transformation of VET schools into professional institutions providing high-quality education for students. Education will focus on results, i.e. competences which young people acquire at schools and use them in their real life. Students will have much more opportunities to be active and to learn how to seek information, solve problems and defend views.

The project is the activity of the VET curricular reform. Together with other system projects (NSK –Development of National Qualifications Framework supporting linkage between initial and continuing education, UNIV - Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Results in the Network of Schools Providing Adult Education, Kvalita I – New Final Examination for three-year apprenticeship fields completed by an apprenticeship certificate) it contributes to improving transparency of education and development of lifelong learning. The main target groups of the project are schools, their teachers and also students who will be educated according to newly developed school educational programmes. Social partners participate in project solution (2 for 1 SEP). Though social partners do not represent directly the project target group their participation is very important from the viewpoint the linkage between the educational sphere and the sphere of work.

The following activities were carried out in the project:

- SOŠ and SOU teacher training preparation for the development and verification of pilot SEP;
- cooperation with social partners in the region;
- evaluation of school activities – preparation for an intended change;
- development of pilot school educational programmes, verification of pilot SEP.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

Regular evaluations of the project show a considerable potential of VET schools in creating own education programmes. As part of the project, hundreds of VET teachers expanded their competences in pedagogical projection and didactics and thus partially changed their old approaches. This project is considered important in the in-progress curricular reform and therefore it will continue in the next ESF programming period 2007-2011.

E. Conclusions:

The implementation of the project shows that the transformation of a VET school into a place with modern way of teaching represents a deep and principal change in the approach of all participating parties (VET teachers, parents, social partners). It seems that this development could be hindered by the insufficient ability of some VET teachers to adjust their teaching to modern pedagogical trends and to focus not only on knowledge but also on skills and attitude of students, i.e. on competences, and by unwillingness of parents and social partners to understand these changes.

4.3. Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing the attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions

4.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

IVET teachers

In their declarations and strategies, policymakers keep stressing the major role of VET teachers in the quality of VET education during the entire monitored period. All these declarations and strategies stem from the document, the National Programme for Education Development in the CR (the White Book), from the year of 2001.

The qualification level of VET teachers was clearly defined in the Pedagogical Staff Act (2005). The qualifications of a teacher are determined by his/her education achieved in study programmes and does not thus define the position of teacher from the point of view of professional competences. The Further Education Results Recognition Act (2007) paved the way for a new definition of the position of teacher. This act defines any profession or occupation based on competences. Discussions on a professional standard for teachers in the CR in the monitored period also started thanks to the TTnet CR Partnership that was established in 2005 with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and Cedefop.

The initial education of VET teachers is provided by universities as well as other educational institutions where they will obtain their accreditation. The quality, contents and duration of these preparatory studies differ a lot. There is a lack of general consensus as to what competences a teacher should have.

The system of continuing education of VET teachers is established by the Pedagogical Staff Act (2005). As part of this system, schools have certain funds that they can spend on education of teachers in the programmes accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. However, this system is not able to stimulate the selection of specific education programmes for VET teachers and thus the selection of continuing education for VET teachers is very small.

Education of VET teachers was very positively affected by participation of many teachers in education events that were carried out during the monitored period as part of the projects funded from ESF and the Leonardo da Vinci programme. These education programmes focused mainly on the creation and implementation of curriculum, evaluation and career counselling.

The career and salary promotion of VET teachers is defined in the Pedagogical Staff Act. However, this career system is rather formal since it defines the career of a teacher based on his/her achieved formal education and years of working as a teacher and neglects the quality of work of a specific teacher.

The salary of VET teachers is at the average wage level; young teachers do not earn the average wage until many years of employment. The salary of VET teachers is considerably below the average salary of people with a university degree. Policymakers did not provide any significant measures that would increase the attractiveness of the position of VET teacher during the monitored period. The attractiveness of the position of a VET teacher is lately jeopardised also by high demands arising mainly from the very demanding curricular reform.

CVET trainers

In their declarations and strategies, policymakers keep stressing the major role of trainers in the quality of continuing VET education during the entire monitored period.

However, there are no relevant changes at the level of actual political measures. The conditions for working as a trainer are still very liberal, there are no system qualifications requirements and the profession is not defined based on a set of professional competences.

The Further Education Results Recognition Act (2007) paved the way to the definition of the profession through competences.

The education of CVET trainers is very positively affected by participation of many trainers in education events that were carried out as part of the projects funded from ESF and the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Policymakers do not help to increase the attractiveness of the profession of a further VET trainer by any planned measures.

4.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
System project UNIV - the recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the networks of schools providing education for adults; 2005 - 2008
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
This project of the Ministry of Education funded from ESF is carried out as part of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, as part of the priority Lifelong Learning Development – Measure 3.1 Improvement of Education at Schools and Educational Institutions and Development of Support Systems in Education. Project UNIV responds to the need to turn VET schools into local lifelong education centres that would provide quality vocational education not only to students but also to adults. The project includes systematic education of VET teachers in adult education – the creation of curriculum, teaching methods, marketing, career counselling and accompanying educational services. One of the goals of the project is to prepare VET teachers for their role of continuing education trainers in 6 regions of the CR and at a total of 66 schools. VET teachers are one of the key target groups.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
One of the key activities of the project UNIV is called the Development of Selected Competences of Pedagogical Staff. Different seminars, workshops and consultations regarding the creation of curriculum, teaching methods, marketing, career counselling and accompanying educational services for adults were a part of this activity.
The UNIV project is a part of the long-term strategy of policymakers (the state and local governments) to turn VET schools into professional institutions providing high quality education not only to students but also to adults.
In addition to VET teachers, there are also school managers, school founders and social partners (enterprises, offices, businessmen) participating in the project. The reason for involvement of social partners is to create such educational services and programmes that would respond to the current education needs in the region where schools are located.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
Regular evaluations of the UNIV project show a considerable potential of VET schools in continuing education. Hundreds of teachers expanded their competences in continuing professional education as part of the project. This project is considered crucial and this is why it will be expanded to all regions of the

CR in the next ESF programming period 2007-2013.

E. Conclusions:

During the implementation of the UNIV project it has become obvious that the transformation of VET schools into local lifelong education centres represents a deep and principal change in the approach of VET teachers. It seems that this development could be hindered by the insufficient ability of some VET teachers to adjust their teaching to teaching adults. Currently, adult education is a supplement to their main activity, i.e. teaching students. In the future, it will be necessary to put both these components on the same level and to interconnect them.

5. Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

5.1. National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market (LM)

The national policy context generally documents the preparation, discussions and approval of three key documents, based on which all partial activities related to the national policy on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market are performed.

The new School Act¹² that came into effect in 2005 is of key importance for IVET. This Act regulates the curricular reform in IVET, the basic feature of which is the two-level creation of curricula (schools will develop Framework Education Programmes for each field of study into their own School Education Programmes) and the emphasis on target competences and education results.

In principle, the two-level creation of curricula promotes the links between education programmes and the needs of the labour market mainly by having both Framework Education Programmes (the national level) and School Education Programmes (the regional and local level) reflect the needs of the labour market.

For continuing education, the Further Education Results Recognition Act¹³ that came into effect in 2007 is of key importance for continuing education. The Act is designed in such a way so that it would motivate the adult population of the Czech Republic to continuing education, expand the opportunities of individuals to obtain new qualifications, improve their employability and improve the response of the education system to the needs of the labour market.

The main tool of putting the new opportunities set in the Act into practice is the National Qualifications System that is created and partially fulfilled in such a way that allows to compare the qualifications in the system and has a clear link to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). At the same time, the system of recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning within the limits set by the Act is being created and pilot tested.

The system framework for the links between IVEC and CVEC is the National Qualifications System, the position of which is also confirmed by the third key and umbrella document, Lifelong Learning Strategy in the CR. The strategy, approved in 2007, is a comprehensive concept of lifelong learning and the basic document for other sectional and partial concepts and policies in this area. It gradually sets attainable objectives that can be also supported from European funds during the programming period 2007 – 2013.

5.2. Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsive to labour market needs

5.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Policy progress since 2002 is shown by the following activities:

¹² Act No. 561/2004 of Col., on pre-school, elementary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (School Act).

¹³ Act No. 179/2006 of Col., on verification and recognition of results of further education and a change in some legislation (the Further Education Results Recognition Act).

Activity of sectoral groups

The project of sectoral groups that has been realized with the permanent support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports since 1997 is the oldest project that develops mechanisms of involving social partners in setting VET objectives and contents. Their activity is described in detail in Section 5.2.2.

Integrated system of typical positions

The integrated system of typical positions has been created since 2000, sponsored by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and in considerable and diverse cooperation with social partners (employers), as a tool supporting counselling. However, from the beginning of its creation, the area of education participates on results. It was the main source of information about qualification requirements regarding different professions for IVET for many years and a direct source of inspiration for continuing education changing the emphasis of continuing education programmes. The link of the system with the continuing education programmes database (DAT) even accentuated this role. It has thus become one of the tools of social partners (employers) for having education programmes respond to the needs of the labour market.

The School Act

The School Act that was passed in 2004 regulates the curricular reform in IVET at the secondary level, which e.g. states that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports must discuss the proposals of Framework Education Programmes (the national curriculum) for VET with relevant representatives of employers at the national level.

Another way of giving social partners an influence over the objectives and contents of programmes is letting them help with the creation and implementation of School Education Programmes.

The Further Education Act

The Further Education Results Recognition Act came into effect in 2007. In this respect, there are more and more mechanisms of involving social partners in defining and describing qualifications and qualification requirements of different professions. Thanks to the developing concept of sector councils, we can expect that this partnership will be also used in predicting qualification needs in individual sectors. More information about the concept of sector councils is in Section 6.4.2.

Preparation of system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports funded from the CR state budget and ESF

The following system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports were approved in 2005:

The project ***Development of the National Qualifications System Supporting the Link between IVET and CVET*** is described in Section 7.2.2.

Other system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports stem from the development of the National Qualifications System. It is in particular the ***UNIV*** project (besides others, it describes how to verify results of non-formal education and informal learning) – it is described in detail in Section 5.2.2.

The system project ***Pilot S*** that focuses on pilot testing of the creation of School Education Programmes and the project ***Kvalita I*** that focuses on use of assessment standards in designing the uniform (national) final examination for vocations also help to improve the response of education programmes to the needs of the labour market.

Based on described activities, social partners can thus influence the entire logical chain: career – qualifications – education programmes – examinations and recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning.

Preparation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR designed as an umbrella document for lifelong

education/learning and approved in 2007 is described in detail in Section 7.2.

5.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

<p>A. Title of policy/measure:</p> <p>Sectoral groups - a project supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports since 1997 exists in the modified structure from 2005.</p>
<p>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The Sectoral Groups Project is a response of the education system to the need to define required knowledge, skills and competences that must be reflected in VET programmes created at the national level (Framework Education Programmes since the year of 2005). The Sectoral Groups Project is mentioned as a measure related to the need to identify and predict competences and qualifications. In respect to the need to predict the development of competences and qualifications, sectoral groups prepare forecasts for each sector describing anticipated developments of qualification requirements for different professions for which students in education programmes are trained (e.g. electrical engineering, agriculture,...).</p> <p>We can assume that this special task will be later on assumed by sector councils that are described in detail in Section 6.4.</p> <p>The objective of the Sectoral Groups Project is to make sure that education programmes (in particular) those for IVET at the secondary level (valid nationwide) correspond in their “professionalisation function” to the needs of the labour market. The activity of sectoral groups is regularly assessed through indirect indicators, such as the number of approved Framework Education Programmes in which sectoral groups participated.</p> <p>The target group are secondary schools in the Czech Republic that have the obligation to prepare School Education Programmes based on Framework Education Programmes that are created with the help of sectoral groups. The activity of sectoral groups covers all sectors and mainly focuses on the following typical and most important education levels: ISCED 3C and ISCED 3A.</p> <p>The project has been in existence since 1997 (with some modifications in 2005) and is fully implemented.</p>
<p>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>Sectoral groups operate at the national level (the so-called conceptual group of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and professional groups), the sectoral level (23 sectoral groups covering all types of jobs of secondary VET graduates) and the local level (work groups cooperating at the local level with the authorized member of the sectoral group). International activities of sectoral groups have become more and more important – a part of the project is e.g. <i>the National Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</i> that is a part of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQUA-VET).</p> <p>The activity of sectoral groups and its support by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports shows that it is a part of a broader approach.</p> <p>Key actors are definitely involved; the problem of some sectoral groups is an insufficient representation of relevant representatives of employers.</p>
<p>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The activity of sectoral groups follows the annual plan that is regularly assessed. Specific indicators of success are set only in respect to some tasks that are solved with the help of sectoral groups.</p>

The activity of sectoral groups corresponds with the basic strategic objective: the curricular reform – a tool of education modernization emphasizing the development of key competences that is a part of the Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the Czech Republic (the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; 2007).

E. Conclusions:

There are permanent problems with having all relevant representatives of the world of work in sectoral groups.
The representation of relevant representatives of the world of work will be possible to ensure in cooperation with sector councils – for more information, see Section 6.4.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:

The system project UNIV of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – the recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the network of schools providing adult education.

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

The project was prepared as a response to the following three basic needs:

- To support continuing education at schools (in particular secondary schools) in the Czech Republic,
- To pilot test the process of recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning while respecting general European principles and requirements set by the Further Education Results Recognition Act,
- To add useable mechanisms focusing on the recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning to the created National Qualifications System (NQS).

The goal of the project is to create partner networks of secondary and tertiary professional schools in 6 regions of the Czech Republic, to expand the courses of these schools for adult education courses, to develop professional skills of teachers who will be teaching adults and to verify the system of recognizing results of non-formal education and informal learning in the network of schools in respect to the National Qualifications System and the Further Education Results Recognition Act.

The project does not a priori focus on some sectors or levels of education. In compliance with set indicators, it focuses on qualifications that correspond with the education level ISCED 3C and lower.

Project indicators are monitored and assessed. The proposed method of assessment of results of non-formal education and informal learning was tested in practice and verified on 123 partial qualifications.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The results of the UNIV project regarding the recognition and verification of results of education and learning complement the creation and fulfilment of the National Qualifications System that is created in compliance with the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR and the Further Education Results Recognition Act.

The recognition of results of education and learning is an organic part of the national policy expressed in the document, the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR.

System projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports focused on the creation and fulfilment of the National Qualifications System count on participation of key actors and establishment of social partnerships at different levels. For the

UNIV project, it is typical to establish partnerships at the regional and local level.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
Policies and achieved results are assessed using standard mechanisms, in particular monitoring assessment reports discussed with the contractor. A part of internal assessments is regular feedback provided by a large number of participating partners – individual schools and associated social partners; external assessments are carried out e.g. through discussions at conferences held in individual regions. Indicators of success are set and regularly assessed. Project outcomes are in compliance with the requirements of the document, Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR, which is the basic document for other sectional and partial concepts and policies in this area.
E. Conclusions:
We are not able to expand the development of practical policies and tools for the identification and recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning because it is a problem to find suitable partners for a dialog in this area of higher qualification levels. The project that will end in 2008 could not focus on achieving the same results in all regions of the Czech Republic due to time and capacity reasons.

5.3 Integrating learning with working

5.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

The process of integrating learning with working in the Czech Republic has undergone some changes since 2002, the crucial points of which are described further. This area is still the most discussed especially in IVET because after the political changes in 1989, it was necessary to make some system changes in integrating learning with working (schools and enterprises) that were necessary for the functioning of schools but brought many problems to practical education, in particular to education and training in the real work environment. The principal challenge is thus to find a suitable system solution in new conditions.

The policy progress in IVET culminated when the new School Act¹⁴ was passed. The Act regulates the curricular reform in IVET at the secondary level that emphasizes education results, which promotes complementation and equality of all education results regardless of how they were obtained. Thanks to this, the curricular reform puts pressure on schools to achieve all set and often activity-oriented objectives and assumed education results when creating and in particular fulfilling their education programmes (so far, up until 2009 the future ones).

The Act also sets the obligation to regularly prepare the document, the Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the Czech Republic. One of the 6 strategic directions in the valid version of this document is the curricular reform – the curricular reform – a tool of education modernization emphasizing the development of key competences. From this point of view, the aim focusing on support of schools (funded from ESF) in the creation and implementation of School Education Programmes is of crucial importance.

The currently discussed document of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, *The Proposal of Potential Solutions for Problems with a Lower Number of Students Admitted to Secondary Schools in Respect to Cover the Needs of the Labour Market*, contains - in the section on cooperation of schools with social partners - measures to improve cooperation as

¹⁴ Act No. 561/2004 of Col., on pre-school, elementary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (School Act).

well as the following tax measures:

- deduction of the necessary cost of practical teaching of students at an enterprise or company,
- tax allowance for an enterprise that is willing to pay for the pedagogic activity of its employees,
- support of employers providing equipment for schools.

Secondary vocational schools are usually founded by the region. The situation in regions is demonstrated by the following citation from the documents for a meeting of the management of one of the regions in the Czech Republic:

Lately we have noticed considerably higher participation of employers (in particular from the business sphere) in VET. Students of primary schools and their parents are better informed, VET seems to have better prestige, there are interesting VET conditions, VET graduates are offered good work conditions and salary, there are good chances for their employability and further professional growth, etc....All this leads to changes that cannot but bring success. Schools sign partnership agreements with firms and prepare graduates for these firms based on their needs. Students often undergo professional training or work for their future employers. Schools then provide their students with new opportunities that increase their employability. The partnership between schools and the business sphere is developing as to the preparation of people for specific work positions where a school trains potential employees for a specific work in a firm. All this of course in cooperation with the employment office.

The policy progress in continuing education could be described in a similar manner – in line with the Further Education Results Recognition Act and the *Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR*.

5.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Partnership and Quality – a project aim (2008) supporting the development of partnership of schools and enterprises that is to improve the quality of VET in the Czech Republic.
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The in-progress project responds to the following needs of schools and other education providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– the need to develop partnership with businesses and firms in respect to implementation of the curricular reform ,– the need to develop partnership with businesses and firms in exploiting new opportunities of educators related to gradual fulfilment of the National Qualifications System,– need to develop partnership with business and firms in respect to incentives from the European environment, in particular in line with the practical implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). The goal of the project, Partnership and Quality, is to reflect and clearly describe current developments, outcomes of system projects and the expected development in the Czech Republic and Europe and to provide schools and other educators with aims for their own projects and good practice examples. All this linked to a selected segment that is in general defined by the key words “partnership“ (in particular

<p>partnership of schools and businesses) and “quality” (selected aspects of the quality of VET).</p> <p>The target group are secondary vocational schools, their management and teachers, other professional employees in the education system, organizations of social partners, local government authorities. The project is not sector-oriented or sector-limited and does not specialize in a selected level of education.</p> <p>The partnerships of schools and businesses really exist. The project should promote the creation of more partnerships and offer meaningful use of support funds in individual specific projects of schools and other educators.</p>
<p>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>The draft project is ready and is in the phase of approval proceedings.</p> <p>If the project is approved and implemented, it will become of the measures that are a part of a broader approach.</p> <p>The project expects to include key actors.</p>
<p>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The project has elements for assessing its impact.</p> <p>The project contains standard and assessable indicators of success.</p> <p>Integration of outcomes into other policies is not relevant.</p>
<p>E. Conclusions:</p> <p>Obstacles encountered and overcome are not relevant – the project is going through approval proceedings and is ready for implementation.</p> <p>Issues remain to be addressed: to resolve and propose an effective way of communication between potential partners and an effective way of getting project outcomes to their potential users.</p>

5.4. Integrating skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision

5.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

Conditions for identifying skill needs are formulated and transferred to VET gradually, but with more intensity since about the new millennium. The first initiatives reflecting the need to identify the future need of skilled labour on time came mainly from the bottom - experts and research scholars – starting to create a professional problem-solving background, in particular on the projection basis. The necessity to predict skill needs started to appear in political documents around the year of 2002. This issue was expressed the most urgently in the Human Resources Development Strategy adopted by the government in 2003. It was also in many other governmental documents prepared mainly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (The Long-term Objectives of Education and Development of the Educational System of the Czech Republic from 2003, the National Action Employment Plans from 2002 and 2003, the Economic Growth Strategy from 2005, the National Lisbon Programme for 2005-2008). In this area, there is an obvious impact of the EU’s policy that pays a lot of attention to early identification of skill needs. This topic is also in operational programmes funded from ESF in the past and in the new programming period. This should create the basis for a comprehensive institutional system of permanent forecasting of the need of skilled labour and transferring of forecasting outcomes to education programmes of vocational schools.

This system does not work yet, but some of its parts have been already created. The development of new qualifications and work profiles that is based in particular on **current** demands of the world of labour has been worked on for 10 years now through so-called field

groups permanently supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Education experts and specialists in creating VET programmes work in 23 groups. Currently, the methods used to develop new qualifications are changing. So-called sector councils comprising of representatives of employers are being gradually established. In the future, sector councils should gradually update and verify current job descriptions and participate in developing and creating new qualification standards. This process will be based on the consensus of employers and not on the opinion of individual experts. The National Qualifications Framework will be created based on the prepared (since 2007) National Occupations Framework. The National Occupations Framework is based on data about existing job positions classified in the so-called Integrated System of Type Positions that has been created since 1998 with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Concurrently with the preparation of the National Qualifications Framework, the existing fields of study will be reviewed and new ones will be defined so that there would be education standards for all corresponding qualifications. The in-progress system is very time-consuming and expensive. The positive thing is that more employers are involved in creating qualification standards.

Besides this, **future** skill needs of the labour market are being defined, based on several methodological approaches developed and applied by different institutions as part of projects contracted mostly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. However, no comprehensive concept of permanent forecasting from the institutional and financial point of view has been yet adopted.

Since the year of 2000, a **quantitative forecasting model** that measures, at the **national** level, the friction on the labour market between demand for, and supply of, skilled labour for defined education groups in the next five years has been developed and gradually improved. This type of forecasting results is not designed for implementing changes in education programmes. They are for information only, showing expected trends on the labour market. They are good for strategic decision-making at the governmental level and information for employment services and career counselling.

Note:

The report (ReferNet), the Development of Competences and Innovative Teaching, from August 2007 describes a macroeconomic mathematical model used in the project supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The quantitative model focusing on the national level was adopted by the Centre for Economic Research and Doctorate Studies of Charles University (CERGE – EI) in Prague from the model of the Dutch Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA). This model called ROA-Cerge forecasts separately demand and supply of the labour market for defined educational and professional groups, compares them and shows the future friction on the labour market.

Another way of forecasting is regular **sector studies** of qualification needs for next five years at least. These studies are qualitative and will thus allow drawing conclusions and making adjustments in education programmes to adapt them to future demands of the labour market. The task has been solved since 2007 as part of the project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (see Example 3). In addition to the development of the methodology of studies and its verification based on two pilot studies, an institutional and financial framework/system is proposed so that the studies would be regularly made as a permanent source of information. It is assumed that in the future information obtained through qualitative and quantitative methods will complement each other.

Some parts of the developed system described above are set in legislation. Professional standards, so-called qualification standards, are regulated by Act No. 179/2006 of Col., on the Validation and Recognition of the Outcomes of CVET, and education standards, in the form of so-called Framework Education Programmes in the School Act (561/2004 of Col.). Labour market forecasts prepared as part of the national employment policy are set by the

Employment Act. However, the latter is fulfilled very loosely using funds from the National Research Programme (model ROA-Cerge – quantitative forecasting) or from ESF (sector studies system) based on tenders, which does not guarantee the sustainability of the activity in the future. Furthermore, the incorporation of qualification standards in the act relating to continuing education only is not sufficient. Qualification standards should be supported by IVET legislation (the School Act and the Universities Act) as well; school legislation should be more interlinked.

5.4.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Information system: www.infoabsolvent.cz (since 2007)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<p>The information system was created as a platform for transfer of information obtained based on labour market analyses to target groups; it includes e.g. information about what employers expect from graduates, what is the employability in the given field of study, including unemployment of graduates and wages. It is possible to download detailed analytical studies.</p> <p>To provide information about the employability of VET graduates at the ISCED 3 level and about qualification demands of employers for these graduates.</p> <p>Target groups/education levels/sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET applicants at the ISCED 3 level (basic school students, adults applying for non-day attendance education) • job seekers • pedagogical staff and counsellors • public administration and local government employees who affect the vocation orientation of schools in regions • employers • labour office employees. <p>The pilot project is funded from ESF.</p>
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
<p>The information system was created at the national level; regional information systems are pilot-created based on initiative of regions.</p> <p>The information system is a part of the comprehensive education and labour market policy that is to reinforce the link between VET and the labour market.</p> <p>Key actors involved: the National Institute for Vocational Education, the Institute of Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling.</p>
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
<p>The pilot operation of the entire system was launched on 17 September 2007. Based on the survey of the agency STEM/MARK, over 70% of education counsellors at primary and secondary schools know about it and 95% of them consider it very useful. Based on the statistics conducted as of 15 January 2008, users from 26,848 computers or servers (IP addresses) have so far visited www.infoabsolvent.cz. In the case that a computer is connected to a local server as it is often at schools, the statistics show only one IP address even though it may concern 30 computers from which different groups of students and teachers visited the website. Therefore the total number of users is considerably higher than the mentioned statistics. It shows that the website is visited by many new users and more and more people know about the website.</p>

Choosing VET taking into account the employability, there are less graduates who are unemployed or do not work in their field of vocation.
The information system is a part of the national policy in career counselling.

E. Conclusions:

Many people interested in this information (e.g. some students from basic schools) are not able to independently work with the information system and seek help from counsellors. This is why the next phase of the project includes training of these counsellors in working with the system and further development of school counselling offices.

The follow-up project should pay attention to the training of career and guidance counsellors in the field of information systems and further development of school counselling and guidance centres.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:

Key competences in Framework and School Education Programmes for VET (since 2007)

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

The analyses of employers' requirements regarding graduates show their higher demands on so-called soft – key skills in addition to professional skills. Employers demand that graduates are willing to further learn, work as team players, accept responsibility, etc. This is why these key competences are gradually becoming a part of Framework Education Programmes, based on which individual schools create their own School Education Programmes.

Objectives and/or measurable targets: To systematically develop key competences (i.e. the ability to learn, to solve problems and to communicate, personal and social skills, civic competences and cultural awareness, work and business activities skills, mathematical applications, ICT skills and ability to work with information) in the education process, in particular through projection teaching.

Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s): Creators of School Education Programmes and all VET students at the ISCED 3 level.

The measure is being gradually implemented at the national level, supported by the pilot project funded from ESF.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

Level of operation: the national level (Framework Education Programmes) and the local level (School Education Programmes).

The integration of key competences to VEP Framework Education Programmes and School Education Programmes is a part of the comprehensive curricular reform carried out at primary and secondary schools that focuses on overcoming the encyclopaedic concept of teaching and supporting such teaching strategies that help to develop key competences.

Key actors involved: the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, the National Institute for Continuing Education (of teachers), all schools.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

Key competences are an integral part of 61 VET Framework Education Programmes (29 for ISCED 3C and 32 for ISCED 3A) approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 2007; additional 82 VET Framework Education Programmes will be approved this year. The integration of key competences to School Education Programmes is pilot tested as part of the project Pilot S funded from ESF in 30 pilot schools where more than 50 School Education Programmes

with key competences have been so far prepared. These schools will teach based on these School Education Programmes from 1 September 2006 to 2010 (School Education Programmes for ISCED 3C) or to 2011 (School Education Programmes for ISCED 3A). The process is regularly assessed.

The expected outcome is an increasing level of key competences of VET graduates that will improve their employability since they will match the demands of employers; so far, there are no measurable outcomes available.

Key competences are a part of the curricular reform realized at the national level; however, the outcomes will show up at the local level, at every school and in every student.

E. Conclusions:

Many teachers have not understood the reason for developing key competences mainly because it means different teaching strategies. There is risk of formal integration of key competences in School Education Programmes without actually changing the concept of teaching. Due to this fact, a lot of attention is paid to educating teachers; however, these changes are slow and will take a long time.

Teachers play a fundamental role in the development of key competences.

Teachers often absorb slowly teaching according to the new curricula; changes are very slow and have a long-term character. When organising teacher's training it is necessary to take into account these facts.

EXAMPLE 3

A. Title of policy/measure:

Creation of a system for regular analyses and forecasts of skill needs in the labour market and their use by employment services

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

Public employment services lack information about future changes in employment and demands for qualifications based on the needs of the labour market and employers.

The objective is to prepare a system of regular sector studies as a tool for identifying future changes in employment and skill needs in economic sectors/industries and using this information by employment services and in other areas focusing on future developments in employment and qualifications.

Currently, there are two pilot sector studies that verify the functioning of the proposed approach and quality of requested information about future skill needs.

Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s):

- public administration and local government employees
- labour office employees / counsellors
- education system / education programmes creators
- VET applicants and re-qualification applicants
- job seekers
- employers and stakeholders.

The pilot project is for 2007-2008 and funded from ESF.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

Level of operation: The national, sectoral and regional level.

The solution will be a part of the overall concept of creating a multi-area system for early identification of future demand for skilled labour and education, which in the future should cover the need for this information at the national, sectoral and regional level.

Key actors involved: The National Training Fund, the Ministry of Labour and Social

Affairs.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The information about future qualification demands of the labour market and individual sectors have been requested by target groups for some time now.

Indicators of success: Lower structural unemployment, better satisfaction of demand of employers (including foreign stakeholders) for skilled the labour, number of information products, the number of users.

The solution is a part of the policy of adjusting education to the demands of the labour market (in particular future demands), it is linked to the Lifelong Learning Strategy, the curricular reform policy and the development of counselling.

E. Conclusions:

It is currently in a pilot phase; it depends on political authorities whether the outcomes, i.e. the functioning of the proposed system, will be sustainable in the future as well.

Issues remain to be addressed: the adoption and implementation of the project outcomes as a permanent system generating information about future demands of sectors for skilled labour.

6. Governance and funding

6.1. National policy context on VET governance and funding

The organization of the education system has undergone many and major changes since 2000, resulting mainly in decentralization and diversification of the system.

A considerable part of discussions on organization and administration of the education system is determined by an extremely fast demographic drop and the resulting need to reduce the number of schools.

During 2001-2003, the public administration was reformed. During a short time period, the education system was decentralized and competences delegated. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports retained mainly conceptual competences, while founding and regular governance competences in VET are the competency of regions (founding and governance of ***secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools***).

The national policy context on VET governance and funding was fundamentally changed in 2004 by the new School Act¹⁵:

- The School Act specifies the process of governance of the decentralized system through long-term aims of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports¹⁶ and regions in order to maintain its cohesion.
- In response to the decentralization, the School Act implements, in addition to the register of schools (the information system of institutions), a school register as an information system about students.
- The School Act defines and reinforces the role of social partners in particular in final and baccalaureate examinations, the preparation of Framework Education Systems and the preparation of the system of fields of study.
- The School Act sets public administration authorities in the education system, i.e. school principals and principals of educational institutions, municipal offices with expanded competencies regional authorities., the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (in some cases also other central public administration authorities) and the Czech Schools Inspection Authority.
- The School Act also sets local government authorities, i.e. cities, regions and school councils. It sets competences for individual public administration and local government authorities that allow the creation and functioning of schools.
- The School Act regulates the legal status of schools and, in addition to current legal forms of school, implements an optional new legal form of school – a school legal entity emphasizing its non-profit nature as a response to the fact that legal forms of private and religious schools are identical with business entities.
- The School Act reinforces participation management at all levels.

The School Act regulates funding of public and religious schools. The funding of private schools is also regulated by a separate act on funding of private schools, pre-schools and

¹⁵ Act No. 561/2004 of Col., on pre-school, elementary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (School Act) – effective starting on 1 January 2005.

¹⁶ The Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the CR in 2002, the Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the CR in 2005, the Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the CR in 2007

educational institutions.¹⁷ The funding of VET schools during the programming period 2007-2013 was partially provided through the ESF operational programme, The Human Resources Development, and in the programming period 2007/2013, it will be more than before the ESF operational programme, Education for Competitiveness.

6.2. Changes made to administrative/institutional structures

6.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The general task of governance in the education system (including VET) is to ensure sufficient and good opportunities for education, to which the law refers as a service provided in the public interest.

The development of education organization and governance policies since 2002 has been determined by the following several factors: decentralization, the public administration reform (transfer of founding competences) an extremely fast demographic drop, the implementation of the new School Act (passed in 2004): a change in the legal form of schools and the Czech Schools Inspection Authority as an independent governance authority of the public administration of the education system without a direct superiority status in respect to schools.

The public administration of the education system is **highly decentralized**, each level of administration and each school has a high level of autonomy. After the reform that decentralized the public administration of the education system, property rights and partially also funding, the Long-Term Education Objectives and Education System Development became the tool for maintaining a uniform national education policy. The first Long-Term Education Objective was formulated the first time in 2002 and based on the new School Act in 2005 and 2007. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports prepares the Long-term Education Objectives and Education System Development of the CR every odd year. After having discussed it with competent central trade unions, organizations of employers and regions, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports submits it to the Government of the CR for approval. The Government submits it to the House of Deputies and the Senate for discussions. Based on this, individual regions prepare their own Long-Term Aims. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports exercises methodological governance and coordination over their preparation. It discusses the Long-Term Aims with regions every even year. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports submits an annual report about the status and development of the education system, including the tertiary level, to the Government each year based on annual reports prepared by regions.

Since the year of 2005, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has been in charge of the education system, its functioning, efficiency and cohesion. It sets the requirements for founding schools and educational institutions and the conditions for their merging, dividing and closing. The institutions that are a part of the education system are listed in the register of schools, which is a public list consisting of two parts: a register of schools and educational institutions and a register of school legal entities.

In addition to issuing generally binding legal regulations and exercising governance over the legality in providing education, public administration authorities of the education system formally decide only about a very limited area of conditions that ensure basic functions and

¹⁷ Act No. 306/1999 of Col., on funding of private schools, pre-schools and educational institutions, as amended by Act No. 132/2000 of Col., No. 255/2001 of Col., No. 16/2002 of Col., No. 284/2002 of Col., No. 562/2004 of Col., No. 383/2005 of Col. and No. 179/2006 of Col.

cohesion of the education system. It would thus seem that the division of competences and responsibilities between the centre, regional public administration authorities, schools and citizens is correct. However, the situation is not that optimal in reality. A school represented by its school principal is responsible for correct, suitable and quality education and related decisions. However, we do not see any actual responsibility (e.g. exchange of persons in authority, change in competences of bodies) for the consequences (positive and negative) of the decisions related to governance of the education system by public administration authorities of the education system (e.g. the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, respective regional authorities., the Czech Schools Inspection Authority). This problem could be later on resolved by a change in the education legislation.

A considerable part of discussions on organization and governance of the education system is determined by an extremely fast **demographic drop** (after the year of 2000) and the resulting need to reduce the number of schools¹⁸. It is a difficult task from the factual point of view: it is necessary to ensure that the network of schools be arranged rationally, which in the Czech education system is more difficult than in other systems. The problem at the higher secondary level is the prevalence of vocational schools with a big variety of education programmes, which creates an obstacle in expanding and merging schools. It also a difficult task from the political point of view: keeping a dense network of schools and thus their easy accessibility is very important in elections to local and regional governments that are founders of schools. So far, the current problems are mostly solved by merging schools and sometimes by closing schools.

6.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
The obligation to establish school councils set in the School Act (2004)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The school council is a body that allows parents, students of age, school employees, citizens and other persons to participate in school governance. It is set up by the founder of a primary, secondary and higher vocational school; the founder also decides about the number of members of the school council and issues election rules of the school council. In religious and private schools, this role is fulfilled by the school principal. In the case that an educational institution consists of several types of schools, it is possible to set up only one school council; however, for a higher vocational school, the school council must be always set up separately.
The school council

¹⁸ Between 2008 and 2009, a drastic decrease in the number of “i.e. applicants for education (theoretically 15- year- old children) will occur in initial secondary education – about 14 thousand pupils during one year. By 2010 the number will be reduced by about 11 thousand pupils. The estimated number of 15- year-old pupils in 2008 amounts to 120 thousand and will be reduced to 96.5 thousand in 2010 (i.e. by one fifth during 2 years). Another decrease is awaited up to 20014/15 but its pace is slow. The above mention drop in the population of 15-year-old pupils will be gradually reflected in the decrease of age groups corresponding secondary school students (15-18 years of age) which will be reduced and reach its minimum in 2015/16. In comparison with 2005, it will decrease by 31%. Participation in secondary education (the number of students related to corresponding generation of 15-18 years old young people) is about 90%. 30% of graduates of secondary schools completed by an apprenticeship certificate aspire to acquire the Maturita in extension courses.

- approves the annual report of the school, discusses its budget proposal, comments on the management report and submits proposals for its improvement; it thus fulfils the role of public governance of the school;
- comments on proposed School Education Programmes and their implementation;
- approves the rules for evaluating results of education of primary and secondary students;
- approves the school rules and approves the scholarship rules in secondary and tertiary professional schools and proposes their changes;
- helps to prepare conceptual aims of the development of the school;
- discusses inspection reports of the Czech Schools Inspection Authority;
- files initiatives and submits notices to the school principal, the founder or public administration authorities, including e.g. a proposal for removal of the school principal.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

Since the year of 2005, it has become mandatory for every school to set up its school council.

School councils represent the basic forum for accountability of schools in the decentralized environment just by their position (between the school and the external environment), their members (people from the school and from outside the school) and their agenda (school governance, i.e. governance over the basic direction of the school and over how the school is managed and superintended).

One-third of the members of the school council are appointed by the founder, one-third is elected by pedagogical staff and one-third is elected by students and their parents. Their office term is three years. The school principal is not a member of the council, but must attend the school council's meetings if invited and must submit requested documentations. The school council meets at least twice a year.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The Institute for Information in Education conducted a quick research with the following results: in 2005 the most representatives of schools thought that statutory representatives of under full age pupils and adult students will be minimal interested in participation in school councils (61%), if appropriate will not be interested (21%). 14% of schools were not able to answer to this question in the above mentioned period.

In the year of 2007, this situation was in fact confirmed in the Annual Report of the Czech Schools Inspection Authority (CSIA, Prague, 2007): *“At the time of inspection, school councils were set up in 98% of the schools. At the secondary level, school councils do not exercise their full scope of competences provided to them by the School Act. They mostly participate in preparing conceptual aims of the school; as to their self-evaluation and annual reports, there is rather a formal approach, limited to their approval.”*

E. Conclusions:

For the large majority of schools, founders and parents, school councils are a so-far misunderstood element of school self-government. With further development of the civic society in the CR, we can expect positive changes in the development of school councils, in exercising their competences and in watching over the quality of education provided by schools.

6.3. Changes made to funding arrangements for VET

6.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

The education system is mostly funded from public budgets: the national budget and the regional budgets – i.e. in the case of secondary and tertiary professional schools from regional budgets and in the case of private and religious schools from the budgets of private or religious founders.

Schools generate a part of their funds by their own economic activities, projection activities (e.g. from ESF) and participation in international programmes. On the other hand, the funding by enterprises that represented about 20% of the national budget funds before 1989 is insignificant.

The principle of funding considerably changed in 1992: the funding per institution was changed to funding per capita; unit non-investment expenses were set, the so-called normative of non-investment expenses per pupil/student that is set by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The majority of activity of schools is funded this way. A smaller part of non-investment expenses is funded for a specific purpose.

Investment and non-investment expenses that are not educational costs are funded from the budgets of founders. This establishes equal conditions for all founders.

Cash flows from the national budget are determined based on legal competences of individual public administration and local government authorities in education and the structure of founders and are adjusted based on a change in these competences and structure. Since the year of 2003, cash flows from the national budget have been regulated as follows:

All schools and educational institutions are reimbursed from the education national budget for direct educational costs, i.e. the cost of wages and related payments, teaching aids, continuing education of pedagogical staff and activities that relate to the development of schools. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports divides and provides these funds to regional authorities. through so-called republic normatives set at the national level for four basic levels of provided education based on age (e.g. secondary schools: 15-18 years, tertiary professional schools: 19-21 years). Each regional authority then sets and discloses its own system of normatives of non-investment expenses per pupil/student for each field of education, type and form of studies at schools and educational institutions in its regional competency, based on the policies and indicators of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and using the long-term aim of the region as the basis. The funds allocated to each school are the multiple of the number of students and the relevant normative of the region.

Conceptual changes in the regional education system are considerably supported by funds from the European Social Fund (ESF). In the programming period 2004-2006, the preparation and use of the operational program *Human Resources Development* was of principal importance. As part of this programme, national projects, system projects and support programmes were implemented as part of a grant scheme. As to support and changes in the system, so-called system projects (see the relevant sections of the report) are of the biggest importance.

Thanks to the grant scheme, schools obtained a sufficient amount of funds through projects that mostly helped the development of schools. However, these projects sometimes meant: purposeless work with grants (“projects for the sake of projects”), activities parallel to regular school work or marginal activities in respect to the mission of the school, beneficial activities that ended when the funds were exhausted and were not thus sustainable, chasing projects (funds) without emphasizing the quality of projects, complicated and sometimes even absurd

paperwork.

In respect to funds for the programming period 2007-2013, it is also true that if obtaining non-budget funds by schools is to be a natural part of their autonomous development, it is necessary to integrate to the decentralization policy such strategies that would help schools and all other relevant entities to succeed in working with grant schemes so that schools would mainly work on their main activity – provision of education.

6.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Operational programme Education for Competitiveness. It is a basic operational programme of the Czech Republic supporting lifelong education for the time period 2007-2013.
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<p>The operational programme was prepared by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for drawing funds from ESF. It defines the focus and depth of interventions in human resources development through education in all its different forms, emphasizing a comprehensive system of lifelong education and the creation of a suitable environment for research, development, innovations and stimulation of cooperation among educational institutions, the research sphere and the production spheres.</p> <p>The objective of the programme is to improve and modernize the system of education and to support the development of human resources in order to reinforce the competitiveness of the Czech economy.</p> <p>As to contents, the operational programme is divided into priority areas – the first one for IVET, the second one for tertiary education, research and development and the third one for continuing education. Thus it interferes in all education levels. It does not have any a priori limitation at the sector level either. Target groups are, for example pupils in schools and school facilities, including pupils with special education needs and also those pupils who are threatened by early quitting schools, children and pupils extraordinary talented, children with special education needs from kindergartens and preparatory classes of elementary schools, tertiary professional school (VOS) and university (VS) students, school and education facility staff, research and scientific institution staff, pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff of VOŠ and VS, education institution staff, management of schools and school facilities, lecturers, Czech School Inspection staff, staff of organisations dealing with education and assistance services and leisure time activities of children and youth, institution providing continuing education, institution providing counselling services in the field of continuing education, parents of social disadvantaged children and pupils, participants in continuing education, citizens having permanent residence in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>The operational programme has been prepared, widely discussed and approved. It will become a support tool for implementing the governmental document Lifelong Learning Strategy. The main strategic directions described in this document are linked to the priority areas of the operational programme (and the operational programme Human Resources and Employment).</p>
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The programme regulated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is divided into four priority areas and 14 support areas. The first call for submission should be

during the year of 2008 – the implementation of the programmes funded from the national budget should be then funded from EU funds and in 2009 education should be funded in all cases (co-funded) from ESF.

The operational programme was designed and approved as a tool of improving and modernizing the education system and supporting the development of human resources in order to reinforce the competitiveness of the Czech Republic's economy.

The operational program will be fulfilled through many types of projects. Their common denominator will be the attempt/obligation of its submitters to include all relevant partners, for example central bodies of the state administration, regions, towns and municipalities, organisations run directly by central bodies, tertiary education institutions, research and science institutions, all types of higher education institutions, development and innovative centres, school associations, schools and school facilities, tertiary professional schools, other organisations caring out activities in the field of leisure time of children and youth, non-profit nongovernmental organisations, professional trade unions, employer, employee and sector organisations, employers, professional organisations of employers, employees and entrepreneurs, institutions providing counselling in continuing education, organisations caring out their activities in education and career counselling and guidance, health care establishments.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The operational programme has not yet been implemented.

The operational programme will be fulfilled through partial projects. All of them will also contain indicators of success set in such a way so that it would be possible to evaluate the overall impact of the operational programme *Education for Competitiveness*.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will be an important partner in building the system of continuing education and implementation of continuing education programmes. In this area, the operational programme will be accompanied with the operational programme *Human Resources and Employment*.

Tertiary education, research and development as well as the second priority area of the operational programme will be development with investments from the European Research and Development Fund through the operational programme *Research and Development for Innovations*. This operational programme was prepared by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with the goal to reinforce the research, development and innovation potential of the CR that promotes growth, competitiveness and creation of jobs in regions through universities, research institutions and other relevant entities.

E. Conclusions:

The current obstacle in implementation and use of the operational programme is its time-consuming paperwork and organizational preparation.

To prepare and submit to the Government of the CR the implementation plan *Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR* whose main strategic aims are connected with the priority areas of the operational programme. Organisational provision of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (staffing with qualified officials, the determination of management and administration mechanisms).

6.4. Promoting partnerships in VET policy making

6.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

The policy progress in involving social partners is briefly and generally described as to the current status from several complementing points of view.

At the national (all-state) level, social partners participate mainly in formulating and commenting on legal standards, governmental documents and developmental concepts and financing of education through the Council of Economic and Social Agreement. This issue is handled in the Council by a work team for education and human resources.

At the regional level, social partners are involved in regional Councils of Economic and Social Agreement and Councils for Human Resources Development. In practice, they mainly participate in assessing proposals regarding optimisation of the network of schools and changes in the structure of vocations as part of provided VET. The situation is different in every region.

At the sector level, there are many cases of good cooperation of social partners with VET schools. They are often initiated by professional societies (e.g. economic chambers). Cooperation depends on importance of a certain industry in the region. Professional societies check the quality of future experts.

At the business level, there are also some cases of good cooperation with schools, especially where an enterprise takes graduates directly and is interested in their good practical training. The business sphere has the latest technologies while some schools may have problems with buying the latest technologies to ensure quality teaching.

Positive system changes in this area stem from the preparation and passing of the governmental document Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR.¹⁹ One of the 7 main strategic aims that this document mentions in respect to elimination of analysed shortcomings is *Social Partnership*. This document formulates the following goal or aim: *to promote compliance of provided education opportunities with the needs of the economic, environmental and social development through cooperation with social partners*.

There are more specific examples, through which the goals of this strategic aim are fulfilled. There are existing and functioning sectoral groups mentioned in Section 5.2.2 or newly established sector councils described in detail in Section 6.4.2.

6.4.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Sector councils
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
Sector councils are newly created, sector-oriented structures comprising of experts nominated by employers and their organizations in cooperation with “central administration authorities” within the meaning of authorizing authorities pursuant to the Further Education Results Recognition Act. The model of sector councils as representatives of employer organizations promoting professional as well as economic and political demands for human resources development is inspired by the practical experience from Great Britain. The impulse to try a modified model of sector councils in the Czech Republic came from the National Qualifications System (as described in Section 7.2.2) and the National Professions

¹⁹ Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR, Prague, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2007.

System.

Sector councils in the CR can have many other roles and can interfere in many areas.

The main strategic objectives of sector councils are as follows:

- To become a respected source of information about trends in the development of sectors, workforce and the needs of employers in different sectors;
- To become an important partner of public administration authorities for the area of continuing education;
- To set the rules of functioning and mutual communication of the systems providing basic information for the area of continuing education and to ensure currency and optimal functioning of these systems;
- To become a key actor in creating the environment for the development of workforce in individual sectors and to promote innovations in the contents of qualifications and cooperation with schools and other educational institutions.

The activity of each sector council focuses on all educational levels in the relevant sector.

The model of sector councils currently works based on a public contract realized in the sponsorship of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Carried out analyses show that the proposed and implemented model works very well. It is positively perceived by relevant partners and experts (including public administration authorities – ministries). There is an obvious willingness to participate in the activity of sector councils and to respect their work results.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The way sector councils work depends on complicated negotiations with many different partners who have a different opinion on issues, different interests and a different way of communication. The key importance is that the created mechanism of sector councils may function even after the termination of the public contract. System support for sustainability and further expansion of the model of sector councils represents its integration to the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR and it will be most likely supported as part of the prepared and approved operational programme *Education for Competitiveness*.

The development of the concept of sector councils is a part of implementation of *the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR*.

The project of sector councils is designed in such a way so that it could pave the way for including key actors, in particular employers.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The activity of sector councils as part of the public contract is managed by the Coordination Council, comprising of managers from umbrella organizations of employers (the Union of Industry and Transportation of the Czech Republic, the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic), and a representative of the National Institute for Vocational Education. The Coordination Council regularly monitors and evaluates fulfilment of tasks of the public contract and reviews and assesses activity outcomes of sector councils (repeated discussions of a proposed activity methodology, evaluations of proposals for changing the structure of each sector council, etc.). It also helped to organize the meeting of chairmen of 19 work sector councils, the task of which was to review the activity of the entire concept. Indicators of success are set in the implementing project and are regularly assessed (e.g. the number of approved typical positions for the particular sector which is in charge of the Sector Council, the number of proposed /approved qualification/assessment standards for a partial qualification, the number of Sector Council meetings).

The project of sector councils is also closely related to the labour market policy.

E. Conclusions:

To expand the activity of sector councils for other necessary areas, e.g. the description of the expected development in qualifications demands in the given sector. The reason is that the support project is time-limited.

Issues remain to be addressed: to create sector councils in the remaining suitable and necessary areas.

7. EU tools and geographic mobility within VET

7.1. National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and the promotion of geographical mobility within VET

The Further Education Results Recognition Act²⁰ was prepared, passed and came into effect in August 2007. The Act is designed in such a way so that it would motivate adults in the Czech Republic to continuing education, provide more opportunities for obtaining new qualifications, improve the employability of such adults and improve the response of the education system to the demands of the labour market.

The process of creating the National Qualifications Framework for the Czech Republic – the National Qualifications System – was launched and is successfully in progress. It will be possible to compare qualifications in the system and the NQS will be connected to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). At the same time, the system of recognition of non-formal education and informal learning results within the limits set by law is being created and pilot tested.

The School Act was prepared, passed and came into effect in January 2005. This Act regulates the curricular reform in IVET. Its basic features are the two-level creation of curricula (schools develop Framework Education Programmes approved by the government for each field of study into their own School Education Programmes) and the focus on target competences and education results.

In the Czech Republic, the conditions for implementation and use of the European Qualifications Framework are regularly created. Besides others, it participates in two international projects (LdV, LLP-LdV) focusing on testing of the mutual status of National Qualifications Frameworks and EQF through the National Institute for Vocational Education.

As part of the consultation process initiated by the EC, there was a big discussion of participating partners on ECVET in the Czech Republic in 2007.

The document Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR was prepared, widely discussed and in 2007 passed by the Government of the CR.

The National Europass Centre (NEC) in the Czech Republic was established by delegation of the ministries of education in March 2005 and it is available to public from April 2005. This centre is a part of the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV), the organisation run directly by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT), whose objective is to provide all-round assistance to vocational education and training development.

The general public is informed about Europass continuously and public interest in this European tool is constantly increasing.

7.2. Promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF

²⁰ Act No. 179/2006 of Col., on verification and recognition of results of further education and a change in some legislation (the Further Education Results Recognition Act).

7.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Many important activities directly related to the description, definition or facilitation of obtaining qualifications have been carried out in the Czech Republic for some time now. We can briefly mention some of them.

(since 2000) Integrated System of Typal Positions

The creation and further development of the Integrated System of Typal Positions realized with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is of significant importance not only for counselling and employment support, for which it is primarily designated, but also as a very extensive, easily accessible (www.istp.cz) and regularly updated source of information about qualifications required for different professions. It is regularly used by creators of all types of education programmes.

(2003-2005) Participation of the National Institute for Vocational Education (supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) in the OECD project

The OECD activity, *the Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*, was carried out during 2000-2005. The chance to compare different solutions of similar problems in different countries thanks to the participation in the project since 2003 was very inspirational and helped to accelerate the processes that in the CR resulted in the preparation of system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – see e.g. Section 7.2.2.

(2003) Participation of the National Institute for Vocational Education (supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) in the project, The Development of the National Qualifications System

The National Institute for Vocational Education started participating in the national project in 2003 through its partial task called The Development of the National Qualifications System. The major outcome was the so-called strategic-operational document promoting the development of the qualifications system in the Czech Republic. The interest of the participants (representatives of organizations of employers and employees, ministries, regions, enterprises and schools) to continue with the started communication about qualifications and the first outlines of the concept of partial qualifications was probably the most important for its further development.

(2004) Preparation of the Further Education Act²¹

The reason for preparing the Act (a subject aim was created in 2004) was the missing overall legislation of continuing education, low and stagnating participation of citizens on this type of education, low motivation to continuing education by both employees and employers and thus low contribution to the overall level of education of the population.

(2005) Preparation of system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports using funds from the national budget and from ESF.

The project, The Development of the National Qualifications System Promoting the Integration of IVET and CVET (NQS) – is described in Section 7.2.2.

The Development of the National Qualifications System is directly connected with other system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in particular the system project UNIV (it focuses, besides others, on describing the way how to verify results of non-formal education and informal learning) and the system project *Kvalita I* (it focuses, besides others, on using evaluation standards in designing a uniform (all-state) format of the final examination in the fields of vocation).

(2005-2006) Preparation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR

²¹ This act was prepared in 2005 as the Further Education Results Recognition Act.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is described in detail in Section 7.2.

(2006-2007) Passing of the Further Education Results Recognition Act

The Act sets a universal system of evaluation of education achieved outside the education system and implements a uniform, transparent and objective way of testing knowledge and skills of individuals. It allows obtaining a certificate on recognition of the so-called partial qualification, i.e. such skills that were acquired by non-formal education or informal learning and that will help employability of an individual on the labour market. The Act came into effect on 1 August 2007.

(2007) Practical use of mechanisms of the National Qualifications System

This helped to prepare qualification and evaluation standards for 92 complete qualifications and 320 partial qualifications in the system project NQS and to pilot test the process of recognizing more than 100 partial qualifications in the UNIV project.

7.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
The system project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, <i>The Development of the National Qualifications System Promoting the Integration of IVET and CVET (NQS)</i> . The system project was approved in 2005 and was implemented from April 2005 to March 2008.
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The described measure represents the implementation of the system project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports that complements another system project. The project solves, in cooperation with representatives of the world of labour, in particular the concept and overall architecture of the National Qualifications System and its fulfilment for lower qualifications – up to the level of secondary education with a vocational certificate, ISCED 3C. <i>It is complemented with another project (UNIV) focusing on the development of recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the networks of schools providing education for adults.</i> The reasons for creating the National Qualifications System is the need to transparently describe and integrate qualifications created based on effective legal regulations and to create a system framework for IVET and CVET and recognition of education results. The need to develop the qualifications systems is also closely connected with the need to ensure a permanent dialog between the creators of education programmes and the sphere of labour. The general objective of the project is to improve education and access to information. The specific objective is to integrate IVET and CVET through developing the National Qualifications System that will allow to describe mutual links between qualifications in a uniform, transparent and understandable environment available to all actors of lifelong learning (the Internet). The project is neither sector-oriented nor sector-limited. It concerns all sectors and industries. However, in compliance with set indicators, it focuses on lower qualifications that correspond with the education levels ISCED 3C and lower. At the end of the project – in March 2008 – all planned indicators were fulfilled. The created information system of the National Qualifications System is easy to access and has been functioning since the effective day of the Further Education Results Recognition Act in August 2007.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The National Qualifications System has been created and gradually fulfilled in compliance with *the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic* and the Further Education Results Recognition Act.

The created information system is easy to access and has been functioning since the effective day of the Further Education Results Recognition Act in August 2007. In the system project NQS were created (besides others) qualification and assessment standards for 110 complete qualifications and 340 partial qualifications (for 39 partial qualifications there are already so-called authorized entities), and in the complementing UNIV project, the process of recognition of education results for more than 100 partial qualifications was pilot tested.

All the principles, i.e. quality assurance; recognition and mobility; creating equivalences across different education and training pathways, learning outcomes approach, are applied as part of both complementing projects (NQS and UNIV). The system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports focusing on the creation and fulfilment of the NQS expect to establish partnerships at different levels (not only the all-state level). Besides this, "permanent" partnerships are created that are expected to work even after the projects are finished, e.g. sector councils. They are newly created and sector-oriented structures comprising of experts nominated by employers and their organizations in close cooperation with "central administration authorities" within the meaning of future authorizing authorities pursuant to the Further Education Results Recognition Act.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The policy and achieved results are assessed using standard mechanisms, in particular monitoring assessment reports discussed with the contractor. Internal assessments are complemented with external assessments through discussions at national conferences.

Indicators of success are set by the project and are regularly assessed.

The creation of the National Qualifications System is a part of the adopted and approved Lifelong Learning Strategy in the Czech Republic.

E. Conclusions:

Problems are regularly analysed and solved if possible. Currently, the biggest problem is to set the price of the examination pursuant to law at such a (balanced) amount that would satisfy all participating parties and would not limit a priori regular use of opportunities provided by the National Qualifications System.

The issues that remain to be addressed are the current limited participation of universities in creation and use of the National Qualifications System.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR.

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

The basic reason for preparing the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is to support the ability of the population of the Czech Republic to compete on the global, quickly changing labour market. Its preparation represents the attention that needs to be paid to new challenges of sustainable growth and opportunities in particular in lifelong learning. The Strategy is also a response to EU bodies' call to prepare such a document.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR represents a comprehensive concept of lifelong learning. Its ambition is to gradually set attainable objectives that can be also funded from European funds during the programming period 2007-2013.

However, its role is not to propose implementation policies since they must be a result of consensus of participating public policy actors.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is comprehensive and is neither sector-oriented nor sector-limited. It concerns all sectors and industries and all types of learning and education at all levels.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR was prepared, discussed and approved as a governmental document. The follow-up implementation plan was approved by the management of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR was approved by the Government of the Czech Republic in 2007. The development of its implementation phase started afterwards. As already mentioned, its ambition is to gradually set attainable objectives that could be also funded from European funds during the programming period 2007-2013.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is a comprehensive document that reflects all the principles (quality assurance; recognition and mobility; creating equivalences across different education and training pathways, learning outcomes approach).

Due to the achieved wide consensus regarding the contents of each priority area, the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR was discussed with economic and social partners and then with the Government of the Czech Republic.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

The assessment of the impact of the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR as a whole is a part of its implementation phase. The policy and achieved results in each project that will help to fulfil the strategy will be assessed using standard mechanisms.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR sets specific proposed measures supporting the development of individual segments of lifelong learning. The measures also contain the responsibilities for implementation and are formulated in such a way so that they could be further specified and developed for implementation. Indicators of success will be set as part of this process.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is a basic document for other cross-sectional and partial concepts and policies in this area.

E. Conclusions:

A part of the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is a SWOT analysis of the current status of the development of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic. The Section "Threats" contains a total of 8 threats, e.g.

incompliance between the supply of qualifications and the demand of the economic sphere (quantitative and qualitative);

insufficient focus on talents, orientation on average.

The accompanied text explains weaknesses and mentions how to rectify them.

The most important current issue that must be addressed is the development of the implementation strategy and purposeful use of opportunities of support projects.

7.3. Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET

7.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

IVET in the Czech Republic has a good social status and is based on comprehensive education programmes that provide graduates with efficient general education and help them develop key competences and obtain initial vocational qualifications.

Continuing education has some weaknesses that are further specified in *the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR*. However, these weaknesses are partially compensated by the fact that only about 6% of the economically active population do not have any initial vocational qualifications. This means that continuing education does not have to be necessarily connected with the “primarily qualifying” role that in other countries can be the basic drive for continuing education. Continuing education thus rather plays the role of education that is to change original qualifications, to provide a second chance or – and this is probably the most important – to add or improve original qualifications.

The recognition of results of education and learning in the current situation works. There are no obstacles in recognizing results of prior learning both in education and on the labour market. All this is very flexible, and official mechanisms (within the meaning of “direct certifying of balanced competences”) have been so far used only as part of search for suitable mechanisms.

The National Qualifications System created in the Czech Republic will be important as the National Qualifications Framework. However, this Framework is not primarily created as a tool for changing vocational education and qualifications. It will become a tool that will set new ways of obtaining qualifications mainly for those who need it the most, focusing on lower levels of qualifications. Partial qualifications are designed and described in close cooperation with representatives of employers and should be usable mainly “by themselves,” i.e. they will allow people without relevant complete qualifications to perform skilled work. The fact that a certain partial qualification can be under suitable circumstances the first step to obtain complete qualifications is, from this point of view, a less important fact that, however, complements the overall framework of new opportunities related to using the National Qualifications System.

With respect to the said facts, it is not surprising that the result of the consultation process to ECVET in the Czech Republic did not contain any instruction to quickly implement the system of credits, but rather a request for a reliable analysis that would provide an answer to the question whether ECVET is not – in particular in respect to the created National Qualifications Framework – a somewhat unnecessary tool.

On the other hand, the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR is much more open to ECVET, saying in the description of one of its main strategic objectives “Recognition, Permeability” the following: “In respect to the National Qualifications System, it is necessary to think about the development of modularisation and the credit system that will allow give credits and recognize partial units of studies (qualifications). A switch to the credit system in IVET would allow better integration and horizontal permeability of different types of schools at the same level of the education system (e.g. between general and vocational education at the secondary level or between universities and tertiary professional schools in tertiary education) as well as vertical permeability (e.g. between vocational education at the secondary and tertiary level, in particular tertiary professional schools). This assumes intensive negotiations about the ways and rules of transfer of credits between individual types of educational institutions and transfer of credits obtained from these institutions based on prior learning.”

7.3.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Credit transfer system in respect to the National Qualifications System <i>(This title is not the title of a political measure. It is the title of a study on transfer of credits taking into consideration the proposed ECVET and potential policies and solutions in respect to the further development of the NQS. It was prepared in 2007 as part of the solution of the system project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports focusing on the creation of the National Qualifications System).</i>
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The reason for preparing the study was the need to continue in searching for the attitude of the Czech Republic that would reflect the obvious efforts of the European Commission to quickly implement ECVET while respecting the tasks contained in the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR. The original objectives of the study are formulated in the system project NQS from 2005 as follows: to complement the NQS in respect to the requirements of the Lisbon process in the EU and to propose initial limits and solution of the credit transfer at the secondary level. In respect to the developments, the result of which is <i>the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR</i> , the objective of the study is to consider the credit system in respect to the National Qualifications System. This is not relevant since the education levels and industries, to which the study relates, depend on to which education level and industry ECVET pertain. This is not relevant since the subject of description is not a measure but a study that can be considered one of the requirements for formulating the policy or measure.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
The European tool ECVET is not implemented; the described study is one of the steps that will allow its future functioning in the Czech Republic. All mentioned principles are applied in the created Czech environment (e.g. the National Qualifications System, the curricular reform in VET) and can be used without any problem if ECVET is implemented. The consultation process to ECVET in the Czech Republic is characterized by the effort to create conditions for involving all key actors. They were chosen in respect to the specification prepared by the European Commission and contacted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports that was responsible for the consultation process. The fact that the described study was prepared as part of the system process means that all key actors can read it and comment on it.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
The subject of description is not a measure but a study searching for starting points. Indicators of success could be set in respect to the general (European) acceptability of the proposal that is contained in the text and relates to the National Qualifications System: "If credits are considered to be qualitative units, i.e. unique irreplaceable elements that when combined create a specific qualifications potential, we will get a dynamic unit system the use of which will be important in every qualifications system. And the National Qualifications System has such a system. It is the so-called competence model that is applied in the NQS and the in-progress National Professions System." The study is a part of the tasks of the system project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It is thus a part of the policy set by <i>the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR</i> .
E. Conclusions:
The proposed European system ECVET is not sufficiently defined and the Czech Republic is not able to initiate activities that would overcome this obstacle, e.g.

- to propose institutional definition, i.e. to propose competent authorities at the national level and to discuss the proposal;
- to propose generally acceptable criteria for assigning the number of credits to autonomous units and units that constitute an integral part of higher units or units that stem from obtained credits.

It is not possible to determine advantages of implementation of ECVET at the national level without a comprehensive analysis; conditions for such an analysis are currently created.

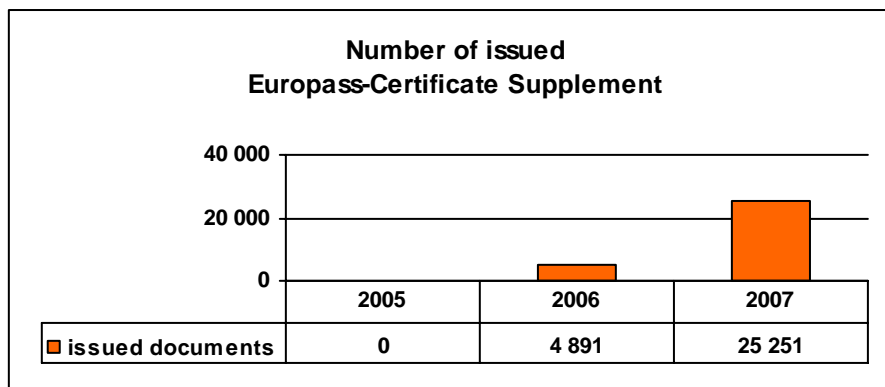
7.4. Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET

7.4.1. Policy progress since 2005 to introduce and promote Europass

NEC coordinates issuing and providing all of five documents of the Europass portfolio - it is not quite current in other European countries. Using of these documents is common for almost 180 000 citizens of the Czech Republic.

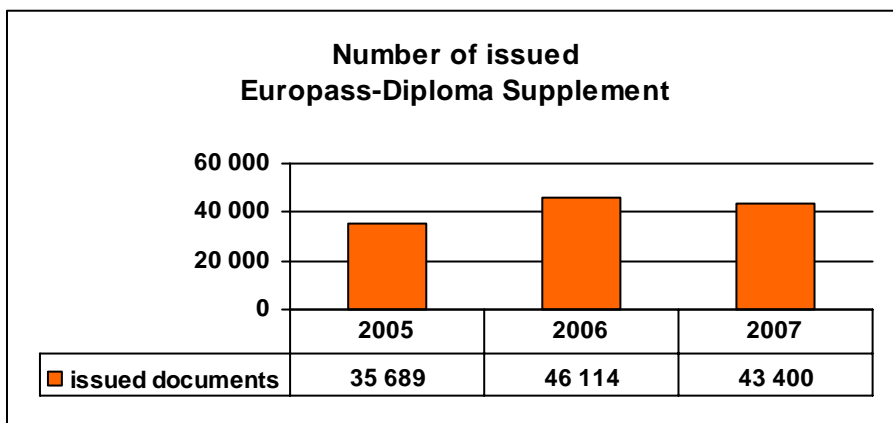
These documents were expended by the 2007 year end in the Czech Republic:

- Europass - Certificate Supplement : 30 142 documents (graph 1)



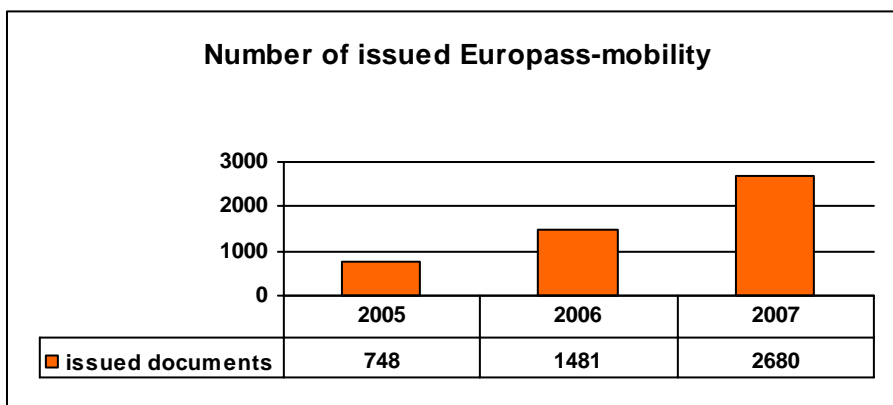
Graph 1

- Europass - Diploma Supplement: 125 307 documents (graph 2)



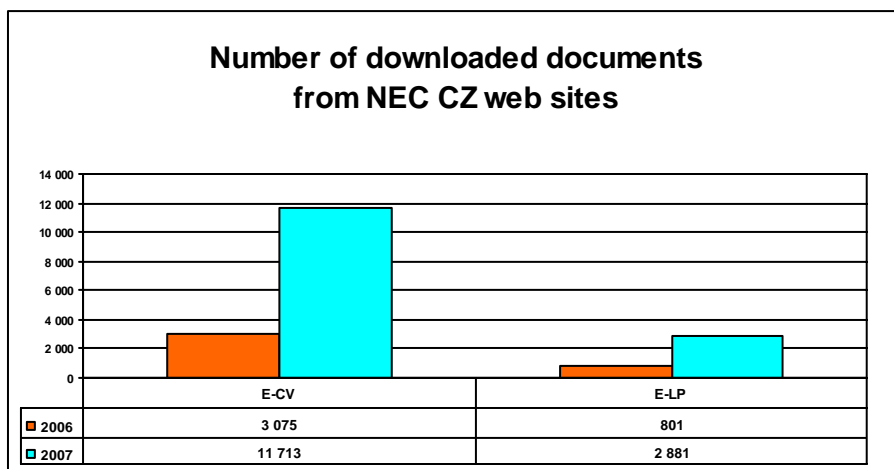
Graph 2

- Europass - Mobility: 4 909 documents (graph 3)



Graph 3

There were 18 470 documents downloaded from the NEC CZ web sites (graph 4).



Graph 4

There were 63 331 network access to these web sites from August 2006 to the 2007 year end.

NEC staff presented Europass on the 104 seminars within the whole Czech Republic from 2005 year to the 2007 year end and there were more than 143 articles about Europass published on this space of time. Advertising campaign was proceeding in 2007.

Europass could made use to ECVET and EQF as a tolls of the transparency of qualifications.

The EQF will act as a translation device between the Member States' qualifications systems. This will help employers and educational establishments across Europe compare and better understand the qualifications presented by individuals. The core of the EQF system is its eight reference levels, covering the span of basic to the highest level qualifications. The EQF will make different qualifications more easily readable between different European countries, and so promote increased mobility for learning or working.

ECVET is to create an European device which will facilitate the transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired by individuals moving from one learning context to another or from one qualification system to another, in particular during a mobility period, and who wish to obtain a qualification.

Both tools can be used in Europass, especially in Europass-Certificate Supplement and Europass-Diploma Supplement.

Common projects would help to clarification of the terminology and aims and cooperation would be the biggest contribution.

Interworking between networks of EQF, ECVET and Europass would improve public awareness of the recognition of qualifications, credit systems and Europass through the Europe.

The biggest potential difficulty for creating synergy between Europass, EQF and ECVET is no cohesion of these tools on the European level, their separation and the extemporaneousness. These tools and their aims must be linked and they must cooperate very closely and intensive on the Europaen level and on the national level too.

First must be prepared cooperation of these three tools on the European level and only then to implement it to the national level. The Commission should consulting all the countries participating in these programs, the European Social Partners, the relevant European associations, NGOs and networks, European sectoral bodies etc.

7.4.2. Examples of policy measures and practice

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Europass implementation in the CR
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The National Europass Centre (NEC) in the Czech Republic was established by delegation of the ministress of education JUDr. Petra Buzkova from 8 th March 2005 and it is available to public from April 2005. This centre is a part of the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV), the organisation run directly by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT), whose objective is to provide all-round assistance to vocational education and training development. Key actors are MSMT and NUOV. NUOV is responsible to MSMT for operating the NEC and regularly (each half a year) submits implementation report to MSMT.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

Forms of Europass CV (E-CV) and Europass Language Passport (E-LP) can be easily downloaded from the national Europass web site www.europass.cz in Czech, English, French and German languages. There is a clear link to the section of the Europass portal as well to the section with templates in all languages.

NEC provides citizens with the tutorial related to these documents in Czech, and presents Czech specific information on the web site www.europass.cz.

NEC promotes links of the national Europass web site to the relevant organizations. They are linked to the national web site.

NEC sends paper version of E-CV and E-LP to individual citizens who did not have any access to internet. NEC uses the net of Career Guidance Centre, which is a part of NUOV, as well. NEC helps individuals to fill in their E-CV and E-LP in Information Centre which was founded in NUOV for the public.

NEC concentrates on providing information about Europass to specific networks – EURES, Youth Information Centres, NIDV and NIDM centres. It concentrates on the cooperation with actors on labour market – employers, employment services, personal agencies and Chamber of Commerce, on contacts with higher education authorities and institutions too. Other cooperation institutes:

- employment agencies – Manpower, Student Agency, Robert Half International and others;
- employment services and their EURES offices;
- VET schools – cooperation with prepare of their training programs of the career planning;
- social partners or other bodies, including business;
- Czech Eurocentres and other information organisations;
- general public.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

Up-to-date information about Europass is placed on the web sites of national authorities (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, employment services, EURES portal) and regional institutions, as well as the non-governmental organisations working with the youth. On their web sites there is a link to www.europass.cz that provides a clear link to the Europass portal.

NEC sends up-to-date information via email to all key players on our labour market (employment services, training guidance services and related bodies).

E. Conclusions:

Obstacle making harder NEC activities is the reluctance of higher education institutions (university and non-university types) against cooperation with NEC concerned issuing Europass-Diploma Supplement and Europass-Mobility.

7.5. Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET

7.5.1. Policy progress since 2002

Mobility, as a tool allowing to transfer experience and skills and to obtain new knowledge for apprentices, students, teachers, trainers and other participants of VET, is considered in the Czech Republic an important way that supports better quality of VET.

The mobility support is stressed in many strategic documents that have been declared by the Czech Republic at the national or regional level since 2002. Even though there are no comprehensive implementation documents (plans, etc.), there is a lot of activity in this area. – e.g. participation of students and job seekers in international programmes. One of the most important programmes that are accepted and supported by the national authority in education is **the Lifelong Learning Programme**. This concept, sponsored in the Czech Republic by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, stems from the programmes SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI and combines thus key international activities in education, vocational training and research into one compact unit.

Due to many years of experience from previous two programme phases and the follow-up effect in practice, active co-participation in these European programmes became of the principal priorities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Since their very beginning, education programmes of the European Union work both as indirect tools of the national policy supporting international mobility in VET and as a direct tool for practical integration of education and the labour market.

One of the most important programmes is the program Leonardo da Vinci and its mobility projects offering individual participants to gain professional experience, to obtain practical and theoretical knowledge in their field of study, to improve their foreign language skills, to improve their social competences and to develop their personality when staying abroad. During 2002-2007, the number of participants exceeded 10 thousand and the numbers went up each year. As an example, in 2002, there were 1,064 participants, while four year later, there were already 2,982 participants. These were mostly students and pupils from **secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools**; foreign language teachers and trainers were represented the least. The most frequent destination of international mobility was Germany and Great Britain and lately also Slovakia.

The program of the European Union called **Comenius** was also invaluable for international mobility. Mobility through participation in continuing education courses helped to improve the knowledge of teachers teaching vocational subjects. Between 2002-2006, foreign study placements of over 800 pedagogues were funded in order to obtain professional and language skills, including other important pedagogic skills.

Mobility of people who directly participate or have an impact on creating the education policy and education system in the Czech Republic (decision-makers) is in the Czech Republic also supported by the programme of lifelong learning. The original title **Arion** was changed in the new programming period to the **Study Placement for Education Specialists**. Since 2002, 10 one-week foreign mobilities were funded every year; however, this number went up to 34 funded foreign mobilities during 2004 -2005.

At the tertiary education level, mobility is very positively affected through international agreements. As part of the programme **Erasmus**, mobility of students and teachers was supported every year through the National Action Plan that declared national priorities for the current academic year and set the rules for, and amounts of, the funding. Since 2002, the number of out-going and in-coming students has been increasing each year. Statistical data show that between 2002 and 2007, there was an absolute increase in the number of out-going students - from 2,533 to 5,080, i.e. a 100% increase. There was also a 122% increase in the number of out-going teachers - from 782 to 1,737.

Mobility in the Czech Republic is still hindered with some obstacles, among the most serious ones are the language barrier or insufficient experience with obtaining professional experience abroad. However, there are also financial barriers, which is obvious from small participation in foreign mobility that is not supported by European programmes. There is also an imbalance in mobility as to out-going and in-coming students. We must say again that the main obstacle for accepting foreigners e.g. in companies or educational institutions is the language barrier and low awareness about provided opportunities and organization of such

events. The problems are registered and solved in long-term aims of regions and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

7.5.2. Examples of policy measures

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Measure of Regional Development Programme 2.4.3 – The Development of International Activities (No. 08/07 from 21 and 22 August 2007).
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
<p>This measure sets the rules of the Council of the Vysočina Region for allocating funds for additional funding of European projects.</p> <p>Schools and non-profit organizations in the Vysočina Region²² can thus obtain additional funds for mobility from the regional budget providing that, in the current calendar year when the application was sent, they have a valid contract with the relevant national agency and draw funds from the European Union. Additional funding is usually provided to the activities of the programme Leonardo da Vinci, i.e. international mobility, Comenius projects, mobility of students and pedagogical staff as part of the Erasmus programme, actions under the Youth programme, eTwinning projects or the programs of the Cross-Border Cooperation of Austria – the Czech Republic.</p> <p>The funds provided to one applicant can be 200,000 CZK (8,000 EUR) per calendar year at maximum. It cannot exceed 40% of the total project budget, and the applicant must prove co-funding.</p>
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
These funds in support of international mobility have been provided since 2002, and the amount set aside each year doubled in 2007 as compared to 2002. In 2007, the amount represented 1,445,384 CZK (58,000 EUR).
E. Conclusions:

²² Regions in the Czech Republic are the superior authority and mostly also founders of secondary schools.

8. Development of VET statistics

8.1. Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002

In the monitored period starting in 2002, the following three basic sources were used for VET statistics:

The Czech Statistical Office

- data regarding education of the population (from LFS) or data about the structure of the population by highest achieved education (in the case of ISCED 3 and higher levels classified by the fields of education allows to distinguish if general and vocational education is in questions). For more detailed VET analyses this selective sample is too small.
- data regarding continuing education – in particular from CVTS, i.e. data about continuing education of adults that relates to their work
- data from statistics of family accounts (in particular information about households' education expenses)
- In 2008 the Czech Statistical Office conducts the AES research (Adult Education Survey); this selective survey of individuals focuses on continuing education. The results will be available after central processing by the EUROSTAT. This survey will also provide information on continuing VET of citizens.

The Institute of Information in Education

- data from standard statistical surveys regarding the total number of pupils and students in the education process, by grade and field of study (in the international classification ISCED, it is level 2C, 3 and 4), at secondary and tertiary professional schools; data are available by field of education and can be thus classified by general and vocations
- data from the registers of university students
- data regarding re-qualification courses in fields of education
- data regarding students who applied and were accepted to secondary schools by type of education and field of study (it is the level ISCED 2C and 3), data about students who applied and were accepted to tertiary professional schools (ISCED 5B) and to universities (ISCED 5A)
- data from standard statistical surveys regarding the number of pedagogical staff, i.e. teachers, by type of school, including data about their salary.

The State Ending Balance

- in particular expenses of budget chapters 333-the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 700- cities, DSO and KÚ, or information about other departments by valid budget structure

Other sources:

- data on continuing VET, especially on retraining and other courses are available from other sources, but only partial information are here at stake. At this moment, the central information system, which would classify and methodically unify information, is not available

Since 2002, there have been efforts to expand the monitoring of VET data so that this area could be well identified from the statistical and education policy point of view.

Statistics regarding the education process were considerably affected by the new School Act that came into effect on 1 January 2005. Based on this Act, there were changes made in the education system, which is now based on education levels and not on institutions as before. At the same time, there is more room now for transferring most of the standard statistical surveys under this Act (up until the year of 2005, data was collected based on the State Statistical Service Act). The School Act also created room for gradual implementation of collecting individual data from registers of pupils from primary schools and students from

secondary and tertiary professional schools, which should replace some standard statistical surveys (this gradual switch started in 2005 and will be finished in 2010). These changes of course concern VET statistics – after the switch to the new system of data collection through individual data, it will be possible to process statistical reports (including those regarding VET) in the classification that was not possible before.

At the beginning of 2008, a very important step in education statistics was adopted when ISCED97 was implemented as a national classification (as of 1 January 2008), including the classification of vocations. The implementation of ISCED97 as a national classification will help to improve statistics sent abroad and to compare the Czech education system with the education systems of other countries.

The involvement of the Czech Statistical Office in CVTS surveys, which will provide data on CVET, was also helpful.

However, there are still certain “weaknesses” in VET statistics, i.e. there are areas for which there are no or only partial data and it is necessary to make qualified estimates. This concerns in particular continuing education and the funding of VET (mainly data regarding private funding) and certain gaps in data about pedagogical staff, i.e. teachers and their wages.

In continuing education, there are data from different sources that, however, are not often available in the required structure or only partial data. Moreover, data are handled by several workplaces of different departments, there are different competences and there are frequent competence, administrative and technical problems in obtaining such data. In the future, it will be necessary to utilize more administrative sources of data and data from survey sampling and to expand and improve the communication and cooperation with individual ministries.

Data about VET funding are available mainly for the area of public funds, i.e. expenses of the national and local budgets. These data are monitored based on the budget structure that in principal points (especially in secondary education) respects the classification by vocational and general education. The problems begin with data about special education schools that are reported collectively, and data for vocational education must be obtained based on qualified estimates. In the future, data in the necessary classification could be obtained mainly by providing access to administrative sources of data or from survey sampling.

Another area of problems with financial VET statistics are data about private expenses for education. Only partial data are available and it is very problematic to calculate total private VET expenses. It will be probably very difficult to obtain data about private funds provided for education in the future as well and it will be necessary to keep making qualified estimates.

In statistics regarding the number of pedagogical staff and their wages, there are mainly problems with special education schools where it is again necessary make qualified estimates for VET. In this type of statistics, there is also a problem with insufficient comparable data as to gender and age structure of pedagogical staff, i.e. teachers. This situation could improve by taking such data from other agendas (other ministries have some of the data); another way is survey sampling.

The implementation of new statistical surveys indicating problem areas would be very expensive and time-consuming for respondents. For broader use of current sources of data, it is important that lower administrative demands on respondents and better use of administrative sources of data is one of the basic objectives of European statistics for the future.

8.2. Examples of policies/measures/projects for improving national VET statistics

EXAMPLE 1

A. Title of policy/measure:
Act No. 561/2004 of Col., on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher educational and other education (School Act), in its latest amendments (effective starting on 1 January 2005)
B. Outline of the policy/measure:
The Act concerns the so-called regional education system, i.e. pre-school though higher vocational education (categories ISCED 0-5B), and of course concerns VET. As mentioned in Section 8.1, the Act defined a new structure of the education system in the Czech Republic, i.e. the switch from the institutional structure to the structure by education level.
C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:
From the statistical point of view, the Act affected several areas – in particular the basic school register – the register of schools and educational institutions and the system and structure of collecting statistical data. In statistics, the Act also concerned the implementation of Framework and School Education Programmes (the curricular reform is still in progress), which means re-coding the fields of education. The basic change in the register of schools and school facilities is that schools are no longer classified by institution as before (i.e. general secondary schools – gymnasia, secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools, special education schools, etc.) but by level, i.e. field, of education. Thus one secondary school can teach different secondary fields of education - either vocational or general. From the statistical point of view, it is necessary to follow the education field structure of secondary schools. The education field structure is also based on the gradually implemented curricular reform.
D. Assessment of the policy/measure:
A change in the system of collecting statistical data concerns the collection of statistical data from the register of schools and educational institutions based on the School Act (before, data was collected based on the State Statistical Service Act). There is also a gradual switch from standard collection of data from primary, secondary and tertiary professional schools to collection of individual data about pupils from school registers (this is still in progress, the switch will be finished in 2010).
E. Conclusions:
All these changes are to improve the entire statistical information system of the education system. It will be possible to obtain reliable information about pupils and students' going through the education system and estimates on the efficiency of individual education programmes. It will be possible to obtain other data as well, e.g. detailed information about dropping-out, switching from one vocation to another, etc. It is one of the most important legislative changes that affected VET as well and created a new framework for improving education in the Czech Republic.

EXAMPLE 2

A. Title of policy/measure:
The Czech Statistical Office's Notice No. 358/2007 of Col., on implementation of the International Education Classification - ISCED 97 from 13 December 2007 (effective on 1 January 2008)

B. Outline of the policy/measure:

Statistical information about education of the population monitored by the Czech Statistical Office was in the past based on the education programme that the respondent completed. Such data was then transferred to the current national education classification and to the ISCED classification providing that such data were submitted to international organizations. Due to non-compatibility of classification, problems connected with an ambiguous conversion occurred. In some cases, this fact led to the loss of information.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

For these reasons, the Czech Statistical Office started implementing the ISCED 97 classification as the national education classification. The implementation of the classification will show up mainly in statistical surveys whose guarantor is the Czech Statistical Office – it has an impact mainly on the statistics regarding the knowledge and education of the population (including LFS, CVTS,...).

Since it is not a classification by education level but a classification of field of education, it will be possible to classify data by general or vocational education. The advantage of the classification is that it concerns not only all the levels of formal education (preschool through tertiary education) but it is also applicable to non-formal education.

This classification will also function as a national achieved education classification (NEAC). It will help to collect better quality and more reliable data to foreign statistics without using classification converters.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

This Notice came into effect at the beginning of this year, and thus it is yet not possible to assess its implementation.

E. Conclusions:

This is a step that will help to fulfil the obligations toward Eurostat and other international organizations that request data about education of the population or other statistics classified by the highest achieved education.

Other legislative standards and projects of the education policy with an impact on VET statistics during the monitored period:

- Act No. 89/1995 of Col., on state statistical service, from 20 April 1995;
- Long-Term Aim in Education and Development of the Education System (the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2007);
- Long-Term Aim in Education, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities for Universities in 2006 - 2010.

9. VET beyond 2010

9.1. What VET issues do you believe should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010 and why?

- **QUALITY** - In the context of LLL, VET will face the ageing of the European population and therefore the special target group of adults. VET system should be able to make VET attractive accessible and useful for continuing education, especially for older people. The education of adults at schools leading to acquisition of a formal level of education is mostly considered to constitute a continuation of initial education. Although this education has a very long tradition in the school system, its forms are not sufficiently flexible towards the requirements of adults and, consequently, it is not sufficiently utilized to supplement qualifications during the working life.
- **RECOGNITION, PERMEABILITY** - In connection with EQF, the existence of NQFs should promote transparency and recognition of qualifications acquired in any European country at a European level, including international recognition. A big task for European countries is to implement the EQF and NQFs, so that to prepare an open area for lifelong learning, including recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning. The manner of recognizing previous learning²³, i.e. procedures, in which the results of previous learning are identified, evaluated, recognized and certified, has so far been implemented only under pilot conditions and is limited to qualifications terminated by an apprentice certificate, as the relevant law has not yet come into effect.
- **SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP** - Social partnership is important for harmonizing education and the requirements of the labour market; it helps with transition from school to work and is an internal part of every NQF. In the Czech Republic VET faces the question how to motivate social partners for close cooperation with education sector in times of fast trends and changes in European economy. Several forms of cooperation work at regional level (Councils for human resources development) and field level (sector councils). The interconnection of higher educational institutions with research and development in the economic sphere is of fundamental importance but still weak. The only direct support is required particularly by various forms of partnership of schools and enterprises and partnerships of schools and NGO and NPO (practice of students and teachers, teaching by experts from practice at schools, formulating and directing diploma theses and other professional practice) and also for targeted elimination of barriers preventing these partnerships (e.g. the legal position of a student during practice, fears of companies related to theft of know-how, etc.).
- **COUNSELLING** - In the information era, there are many information sources for all occasions in life. Information concerning career are of different quality and relevance for different target groups. A basic task is to adjust counselling and information systems to the needs of individual clients and also to employers. Counselling services remain fragmented and it is thus necessary to promote their interconnection so that clients receive the relevant information and counselling and/or pedagogical-psychological services. The individual components of the information and counselling system fulfil their tasks; however, the capacity of the counselling system as a whole is far too small. Especially the importance of counselling for the students of the secondary and tertiary levels of education

²³ The results of previous learning include both the individual results of previous formal education at schools and also the results of non-formal education in courses, as well as the results of informal learning (self-education) and acquisition of experience.

is underestimated, as is counselling for adults, which is basically provided for the general public but is utilized mainly by job seekers and people interested in employment.

9.2. How could these issues be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets?

- **QUALITY** – VET after 2010 should promote provision of a good range of educational opportunities, especially for older people (50+). The range of educational programmes should be oriented towards specific needs of world of work and transfer of the results of science and research to the innovation process.
- **RECOGNITION, PERMEABILITY** - For the future, it would be important to gradually develop a comprehensive system of practical procedures and instruments for identification and recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning for all levels of qualifications. In the creation of methods and instruments for verification of the results of non-formal and informal learning, it is important to cooperate with the representatives of social partners. It is also possible to employ foreign experience and, in addition, some methods of working and balance diagnostics, which are currently being developed in the framework of employment services, can also be used.
- **SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP** - Support for various mechanisms and forms of cooperation between the sphere of education and social partners at all levels are also important for harmonizing education and the requirements of the labour market. At a national level, policies should primarily be coordinated in the areas of education, employment, qualifications and support for enterprises, where it would be useful to reconsider the need for a coordination body extending over the sectors.
- **COUNSELLING** - Development of reliable information and counselling services in Lifelong guidance systems: Support for greater individualization of counselling according to the needs of individual clients; support well prepared counsellors as well as effective instruments, innovative procedures and new forms of cooperation with clients, firms, organizations and regional authorities.

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<http://www.czso.cz>

10.3. List of Acronyms

Acronym	Czech denotation	English denotation / explanation
AES	Šetření vzdělávání dospělých	Adult Education Survey
Cedefop	Evropské středisko pro rozvoj odborné přípravy	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CQAF	Společný rámec zajišťování kvality odborného vzdělávání a přípravy v Evropě	Common Quality Assurance Framework
C & G	poradenství	counselling and guidance
CVET	další odborné vzdělávání	continuing vocational education and training
CVLK	Centrum vzdělanosti Libereckého kraje	Centre of Education and Culture of Liberec Region
CVTS	Statistické šetření o další profesní přípravě	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
ČR	Česká republika	Czech Republic
ČŠI	Česká školní inspekce	Czech School Inspection Authority, CSIA
DAT	Mezinárodní databáze dalšího vzdělávání	Database Advanced Training
ECVET	Evropský systém přenosu kreditů ve středním odborném vzdělávání	European credit transfer system in VET

EK	Evropská komise	European Commission
EPANIL	Společné evropské principy pro identifikaci, hodnocení a uznávání výsledků neformálního vzdělávání a informálního učení v rámci celoživotního učení	European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
EQF	Evropský kvalifikační rámec	European Qualification Framework
ESF	Evropský sociální fond	European Social Fund
E& T	Vzdělávání a odborná příprava	Education and Training
EU	Evropská unie	European Union
EURES	Evropské služby zaměstnanosti	European Employment Services
ENQA-VET network	Evropská síť pro zajišťování kvality v odborném vzdělávání	European Network on Quality Assurance in VET
E-CV	Europass- životopis	Europass CV
E-LP	Europass- jazykový pas	Europass Language Passport
GYM	gymnázium	general upper secondary school (ISCED 3A)
HE	vysokoškolské vzdělávání	higher education
ICT	informační a komunikační technologie	information and communication technology
IPPP	Institut pedagogicko psychologického poradenství	Institute of Pedagogical Psychological Counselling of the ČR
ISA	Informační systém o uplatnění absolventů škol na trhu práce	Information System on the Labour Market Success of School-Leavers
ISCED	Mezinárodní standardní klasifikace vzdělávání	International Standard Classification of Education
ISTP	Integrovaný systém typových pozic	Integrated system of typal positions
IVET	Počáteční odborné vzdělávání	Initial vocational education and training
LEONARDO DA VINCI - LdV	Evropský program pro profesní přípravu	European Programme for Vocational Training
LLL	Celoživotní učení	Life Long Learning
LFS	Výběrové šetření pracovních sil	Labour force sample
LWD	vzdělávání v celé šíři života	life-wide learning
MPSV	Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NACE	Statistická klasifikace ekonomických činností	Classification of economic activities in the European Community
NEC	Národní centrum Europass	National Europass Centre
NEAC	národní klasifikace dosaženého vzdělání	National Education Attainment Classification
NGOs	nevládní organizace	non governmental organizations
NIDM	Národní institut dětí a mládeže	National Institute of Children and Youth
NIDV	Národní institut pro další vzdělávání	National Institute for Further Education
NPCL	Národní program počítačové gramotnosti	National Program of Computer Literacy
NPO	neziskové organizace	non profit organizations

NSK	Národní soustava kvalifikací	national qualification framework
NUOV	Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání	National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education
NUTS	Klasifikace územních statistických jednotek	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
NVF	Národní vzdělávací fond	National Training Fundation
OECD	Organizace pro hospodářskou spolupráci a rozvoj	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development
OVP	odborné vzdělávání a příprava	vocational education and training
RCDV	Regionální centrum dalšího vzdělávání	Continuing education regional centre (CERC)
RPL	Uznávání předchozího učení	Recognition of prior learning
RVP	Rámcový vzdělávací program	Frame educational program (FEP)
SOŠ	střední odborné školy	secondary technical schools
SOU	střední odborná učiliště	secondary vocational schools
SWOT	metoda analýzy	method of analysis
ŠVP	Školní vzdělávací program	School educational program (SEP)
TTnet	Síť vzdělavatelů učitelů	Training of Trainers Network
ÚIV	Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání	Institute for Information on Education
UNIV	Uznávání výsledků neformálního vzdělávání a informálního učení v sítích škol poskytujících vzdělávací služby pro dospělé	Recognition of the results of informal learning and non-formal education by networks of schools providing the education service for adults
VET	Odborné vzdělávání a příprava	Vocational education and training
VPL	Validace předchozího učení	Validation of prior learning
VOŠ	vyšší odborné školy	tertiary professional schools
VŠPS	výběrové šetření pracovních sil	Labour Force Sample survey