

ET 2020 NATIONAL REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

CZECH REPUBLIC

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Assessment and key suggestions for improvement of the ET 2020 strategic objectives

1a. On the basis of your country's assessment of the overall relevance and added value of the four ET 2020 strategic objectives, please describe which changes you would like to introduce in these strategic objectives, or in their implementation, notably in light of the economic and jobs crisis and the evolution of the EU's overall growth and jobs strategy.

The CR is aware of the responsibility of individual EU policies for achieving the common objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and for strengthening cooperation among them. The education policy is certainly no exception even though it has its important specific features and belongs into another area than the economic policies and the employment policy within whose boundaries the Europe 2020 strategy is principally implemented, although its two main objectives highlight the need for education and vocational education and training in European integration. The CR has agreed to the strategy and its objectives and has also voiced its agreement with the method of work of the European Semester, including annual evaluation and publication of specific recommendations. That is why the CR wants to participate by all means in the contribution of the education policy to the European economic recovery and renewal of trust in European integration, seeing innovation and modernisation of the education systems and their opening up to new challenges and ways of learning (along the lines of the Commission's digital package and especially its Opening up Education communication) as an important prerequisite for the contribution of the education policy to coordinating European economic growth.

In spite of this background the CR is nevertheless convinced that the path, which was launched in 2006 by adopting a Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (which has already significantly affected national education policies of Member States including the CR), is the correct way forward and that European cooperation should principally continue along these lines in the spirit laid down in the ET 2020 strategic framework. Besides the concept of key competences for lifelong learning, the ET 2020 strategic framework follows up from a Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) from 2008, thus representing in the CR's view a solid platform and a stable foundation for European cooperation in education and vocational education and training, which should continue to aim at Europeans acquiring, updating and developing an optimal mix of specific professional skills and cross-cutting competences throughout their lives, which are necessary for their employability as well as for promoting further learning and development of active citizenship. The CR is convinced that continuous improvement of transferable/cross-cutting skills is the key to Europeans succeeding in both their working and civic lives because a focus on specialised skills required by the labour market makes sense only if the general competence foundation is strong enough and may be developed in lifelong learning. This

approach actually represents the backbone of the new Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020, which fully advocates the objectives of the ET 2020 strategic framework and the commitments that follow from it. In the upcoming years the CR shall strive to fulfil them.

1b. Building on the existing European agendas and mandates of the ET 2020 Working Groups, as well as on your analysis and proposals developed in response to the questions below, please specify the **two key priority areas** you would propose to focus European cooperation on during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of their expected added value for the Member States. Please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestions.

The CR believes it is important to keep pursuing and strengthening European cooperation in all priority areas of the ET 2020 framework. However, with view to certain time and process limitations the CR wishes to propose that we should primarily focus on two priority areas:

- 1) **Preschool education:** Promote a generally equitable access to preschool education and enhance the quality of provided education and teacher support (priority area of strategic objective 3 of ET 2020)

In general, European cooperation in the spirit of the ET 2020 framework should now focus in particular on significantly reducing inequalities in education. It should not centre only on formal equality in the access to education but also on the ability of the education systems to establish conditions and implement effective producers for efficient prevention and offsetting of health, social, cultural and other personal disadvantages in order to ensure that inequalities in achieved outcomes are as little as possible predetermined by factors that an individual cannot influence, and that all pupils and students achieve at least a basic common level of knowledge, skills and competences. According to the CR, promotion of preschool education is a fundamental way how to strive for reducing inequalities in the access to quality education and overcoming various types of disadvantage. The CR pays a lot of attention to this area in its new draft Research, Development and Education Operational Programme (RD&E OP).

- 2) **Teacher support:** Enhancing the quality of initial education of new teachers and enhancing the quality of further professional development of teachers, trainers and other teaching staff (priority area of strategic objective 2 of ET 2020)

Quality and respected teachers are an essential prerequisite for maximum possible development of children, pupils and students. The common denominator of those education systems regarded as successful is that great attention is paid to the selection, initial training and on-going professional support of teachers. Numerous studies have also shown that besides teachers' qualities, it is also their prestige and position in society that determines and forms their influence on pupils and students including their outcomes. In order to improve learning and everyday teaching and management practice in schools and classes it is therefore of utmost importance to strengthen cooperation in those areas that will result in modernisation of initial teacher training as well as on-going improvement of their teaching skills and promotion of further professional development in the course of their career.

At the same time, both of these priorities are also the key priorities of the new Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020. The CR thus supports the call made by the

Commission that a Member State that proposes priorities should strive for an active role in strengthening them as part of European cooperation. If approved by the Government of the CR (envisaged to take place in July 2014), the Strategy will be an umbrella policy document, which not only aims at overcoming problems that stem from the fragmentation of strategic planning and management in the education policy, but which also defines the main priorities of development of the Czech education system, which the Government and other education policy-makers shall systematically strive to achieve. In line with the ET 2020 framework objectives, the Strategy is based on developing the concept of lifelong learning, with the aim to contribute to fulfilling all fundamental objectives of education, namely personality development that helps to improve the quality of human life, maintenance and development of culture as a set of shared values, development of citizenship that establishes the preconditions for socially cohesive society, and democratic governance and preparation for employment. Interventions are aimed primarily at supporting teachers and quality education, enhancing the throughput of the education system, finalising a comprehensive evaluation framework and modernising assessment procedures in education as well as establishing conditions for an accountable and efficient management of a decentralised education system.

2. Lifelong learning and mobility [ET 2020 strategic objective 1]

2a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed in the design and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, to support validation of non-formal and informal learning in line with Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01, and to improve transitions between the various education and training sectors and increase transparency and recognition of learning outcomes. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

In terms of implementation of the lifelong learning concept, the CR has focused in particular on pursuing relevant measures of the Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLS) of the CR. Before the Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020 was drafted, the Lifelong Learning Strategy (besides the Long-term Education System Development Plan and the Long-term Higher Education Development Plan) used to be a fundamental document for other cross-cutting and individual concepts and policies in the field of initial, general and vocational education as well as tertiary education and further education. The Lifelong Learning Strategy aims at achieving the broadest possible involvement of all age groups in the lifelong learning process and it is also in line with measures related to matching future skills with labour market needs. The LLS is in force until 2015 and its role should then be taken over by the new Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020, which for the first time since the CR's accession into the EU explicitly responds to common objectives of European cooperation in education (adopted as part of ET 2020) and builds mainly on the lifelong learning concept.

In this area the CR has also addressed the issue of improving the match between skills supply and labour market needs, capacity building to anticipate qualifications needs of the labour market, provision of a suitable set of skills to ensure success on the labour market and a more efficient matching of labour force qualifications and existing jobs (for more information see next para and section 7a). The CR emphasizes the development of lifelong learning and career counselling with a lifelong perspective. Besides, it highlights the role of counselling services in obtaining a job as well as of targeted educational and requalification programmes for the unemployed. Likewise, it emphasizes the introduction of work experience programmes. The CR believes in a targeted approach to specific

target groups such as the unqualified unemployed, persons with a health disability, the elderly and parents taking care of their child and then returning to the labour market.

The CR has already matched its educational and qualifications system with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. A national qualifications framework, whose common descriptors would describe all qualification levels, has not been drafted yet. The existing classification system of qualifications obtained in initial education and qualification levels contained in the National Qualifications System (NQS) register make it possible to match with EQF levels, in particular because both the curricula for initial education and the descriptors of qualifications levels and standards in the NQS are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes. The NQS is developed and implemented on the basis of Act No. 179/2006 Coll., which makes provision with respect to validation and recognition of further learning outcomes, as amended (the Further Learning Outcomes Recognition Act), which defines how knowledge and skills obtained in other than the formal way are validated. The NQS comprises individual qualifications, which are established in close cooperation with social partners (employers, representatives from a given sector, employer organisations, etc.) in sector councils. Sector councils are promoted within the Action Plan for the Support of Vocational Training and Education (VET). This ensures not only compliance between requirements posed on individual occupations in the National Occupations System and qualifications requirements in the NQS but also that these requirements are kept up to date.

2b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of validation and recognition of skills and qualifications, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of the validation and recognition of skills and qualifications during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In line with a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council from April 2008 the CR considers it important to finalise the continuity between all national qualifications systems and the European Qualifications Framework and to better support the application of an approach based on learning outcomes for standards and qualifications, assessment and validation procedures, credit transfers, teaching programmes and quality assurance.

3. Quality and efficiency in education and training [ET 2020 strategic objective 2]

3a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to promote equitable and efficient investment in education and training (with a possible reference to the methodology used). Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

The original reform of the system of regional education funding was suspended in 2012 and in 2013 a new draft was prepared. In comparison with the original system there are two fundamental changes. Firstly, the number of formulas will be significantly reduced and will be joined together according to the type of school. The outcome will be that schools teaching according to the same Framework Educational Programme (FEP) will receive a comparable volume of funding in the whole CR. Secondly, the funding formula

of “per capita of a pupil” will be complemented with another parameter, namely optimal fullness of the class. Specific optimal numbers of pupils in classes will differ according to the type of school. In schools with a few classes at the first stage of primary school it will be much fewer pupils than in an ordinary primary school. The ideal number of pupils at grammar schools and art schools will differ too. The potential form of the adjusted system of regional education funding is currently under discussion.

Since 2010 new rules governing higher education funding have been gradually introduced, representing one of the major strategic moves of the higher education policy in its transition from quantity to quality and the related higher education diversification. Besides funding according to the number of students and coefficients expressing how financially demanding individual study programmes are, new funding indicators have been introduced since 2010, namely qualitative indicators of scientific performance, staffing of study programmes and international orientation of higher education institutions. In 2014 a total of 22.5% of the formula budget will be allocated to educational activity according to these qualitative indicators. This mode of funding is used in other EU Member States too (e.g. in the Netherlands). At the same time, a set of performance indicators for the higher education system is currently under development, with the help of which it will be possible to monitor how each higher education institution is developing in comparison with the whole system. Further information can be found in section 8a.

3b. You are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of effective and efficient funding of education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR proposes to continue in implementing priority areas approved in ET 2020 Council Conclusions.

3c. Please indicate how your country is planning to give a follow-up to the new evidence in particular from OECD’s 2013 PIAAC and PISA surveys. Please indicate the aims and expected outcomes of the follow-up measures.

Besides specific success rate outcomes in the tested areas, there is a very serious finding for the CR, namely that in 2012 it was one of five OECD countries with the strongest impact of socioeconomic background on pupils’ learning outcomes, and that this impact has grown even stronger in comparison with 2003. Besides, according to the PISA survey results, the CR is one of the countries where pupils from a similar background tend to concentrate in the same schools and where the education system tends to be rather selective. Furthermore, in comparison with pupils from other OECD countries, Czech pupils have lower self-confidence in maths, which has a negative impact on their outcomes. Deterioration of the average maths outcome since 2003 has been accompanied in the CR by a statistically significant deterioration of the average index describing the pupil’s relation towards his/her school. Another index, which shows whether a pupil regards school as a friendly environment, has plummeted so dramatically since 2003 that in 2012 the rating given by Czech pupils was the lowest among OECD countries. This confirms some recent findings that affirm the need to strengthen the links between pupils, parents and the school. Among other things, the new Education Policy Strategy of the CR

for 2020 tries to respond to this issue, fully in line with the priorities of the ET 2020 framework (strategic objective 3).

4. Equity, social cohesion and active citizenship [ET 2020 strategic objective 3]

4a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to provide access to good quality mainstream education for all (including measures to prevent and combat segregation), to provide widespread and equitable access to quality early childhood education and care, particularly for children from a disadvantaged background (incl. from low income households, migrants, marginalised groups), and to implement inclusive educational approaches for an increasingly diverse society adapted to the needs of learners from various backgrounds. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

The CR believes that strengthening cooperation and speeding up of the implementation efforts in this particular priority area of the ET 2020 strategic framework are among the most important items on the agenda of the upcoming work cycle. Among other things, in response to recommendations of the Commission and of the Council, the CR has focused its attention on this area already in this current period. This area is also highlighted in the new Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020. More detailed information about the priorities and proposals of the CR for reducing inequalities by promoting preschool education can be found in section 1b.

As for strengthening the inclusiveness of the education system, in particular as concerns the education of children from low-income families including children of Roma origin, the CR has prepared an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Judgment of the European Court for Human Rights in the case of Denisa Holubová and Others v. the CR (known as Judgment in the Case of D. H.). Through this Action Plan the Czech Republic implements measures that efficiently prevent any potential discrimination and allow for a stricter methodological guidance related to all stages of counselling, decision-making and executive processes including a pupil's placement into the education system. Measures contained in this Action Plan are linked to the effort to ensure equal access to education for all children, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the CR and by the Education Act. Fulfilment of this Action Plan shall be submitted to the Government of the CR by the end of June 2014.

Furthermore, the CR actively supports education in the area of active citizenship. The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education now contains a cross-curricular topic of education aimed at democratic citizenship, emphasizing the development of pupils' participation and social cohesion skills as inseparable parts of civic awareness. Such education strives to change the attitude of individuals from a mere "position" when people usually do not feel the immediate need to take on a part of responsibility for the community, which they see as distant, to a permanent attitude when people have ample opportunities to constructively influence social affairs through their active and engaged approach.

Equal opportunities and active citizenship are significantly supported in the area of non-formal education and work with the youth as well. This area represents one of the priorities of the new Youth Support Policy for 2014 – 2020, approved by the Government of the CR in May 2014. The 2020 Policy guarantees the right of each young person to respect, assistance from the Government and equal treatment. It therefore

makes full integration of young people into society easier and provides support both to the youth and to those who work with them on the basis of the equal opportunities principle so that everybody has the same chances in everyday life regardless of gender, health disability, race, minority or nationality, religious belief and other distinctive factors.

Further information can be found in section 6b.

4b. You are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of equity and social cohesion in education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR proposes to focus on supporting **preschool education** as a fundamental instrument aimed at reducing inequalities in the access to quality education and overcoming various types of disadvantage. More detailed information can be found in section 1b.

5. Creativity and innovation [ET 2020 strategic objective 4]

5a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, how your country contributes to

- embed entrepreneurship education at all levels of education and training and to implement the knowledge triangle;
- advance digital skills of teachers and learners;
- improve the openness of education, by fostering the use and development of Open Educational Resources including MOOCs and other new modes of delivery of education, as well as enhancing ICT infrastructure and connectivity in educational institutions; and
- enhance language teaching and learning across all levels of education and training.

The CR supports the concept of knowledge alliances as a community connecting companies with education institutions in order to develop new teaching programmes that respond to a lack of skills and reflect labour market needs. In this context, it is nevertheless essential to emphasize the need to ensure flexibility and transparency and in particular the quality of partnership without which it is not possible build trust between employers (companies) and education systems.

In line with the implementation of the Long-term Plan for Education and Education System Development of the CR for 2011 – 2015 regarding the system of regional education, the amended Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education came into effect starting from the 2013/2014 school year, with a primary focus on amending the fields of study of maths, foreign language and another foreign language. Financial literacy will become mandatory part of the programme and several other topical and important themes will also be finalised or amended (such as transport safety education, personal protection under common risks, extraordinary events or corruption). The education area of foreign languages has been amended on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Incorporation of another foreign language as a mandatory field of study from the 8th grade at the latest is a fundamental change (until now, another foreign language used to have the position of a subject only

complementing a field of study). Thus, the CR is gradually getting closer to fulfilling the EU Barcelona objectives in education.

When it comes to new open modes of education, many important educational processes (in particular obtaining information and forming attitudes) currently do not take place only at school but more and more intensively in the public media space through new information and communication technologies in parallel to formal education. European education systems have to respond to these challenges. According to the CR, schools have to open up to the world outside school, which has an ever greater influence on children and the youth. Otherwise, the role of schools in education will stagnate, the relevance of school education will deteriorate and the prestige of the education system in the eyes of the public and politicians will decline. This would naturally have implications for its funding. Education institutions (in particular higher education institutions) as we know them today will not be able to satisfy the growing demand for education and that is why they will have to start using innovative ways and means and of providing education.

Nevertheless, demand for such modes of education is not yet widespread in the CR and therefore not comparable to some other countries both in Europe and outside of Europe. However, the CR has experience with a fairly fast opening up of the tertiary education system that has become massified. If transition to very open modes of providing education (such as OERs or MOOCs) was to take place, we would have to watch closely how quality is ensured and maintained as well as how it is evaluated in this way of teaching. The CR sees a Commission's communication *Opening up Education* from 2013 as a document that follows up on key activities of the Europe 2020 strategy, on Commission's communication *Rethinking Education* and also on a vital update of the ET 2020 framework priorities. Further cooperation at EU level at this stage of development of the MOOC-type instruments should be based primarily on supporting experiments, diversity, discussions and best practice sharing. The situation in this area is developing so fast and to a certain extent unclearly that it would be unrealistic to expect a wide-scale common policy action to yield any results.

5b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of transversal skills and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of transversal skills during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR believes that when the concept of key competences (being a fundamental concept for the CR that greatly influences the whole education reform) is developed and implemented, we have to take an integrated approach and proceed in line with a Council Recommendation from 2006. Nevertheless, so as to improve chances for the youth to find employment that reflects their education and so as to tap opportunities offered by the European education mobility, the CR proposes to focus in particular on the **teaching of foreign languages** and fulfilment of the pertinent strategic objective of the ET 2020 framework, including a proposal of a common European reference level for foreign language teaching and full utilisation of the European Framework of Reference for Languages.

B. SECTORIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

6. School Policy

6a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to reduce early school leaving including a follow up on the 2011 Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving (ESL), in particular to create and implement comprehensive strategies on ESL that balance prevention, intervention and compensation, to enhance teacher competences and professional development, and to strengthen the quality of school education. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

The CR traditionally belongs among 4 EU Member States with the lowest share of early school leavers (together with Slovakia, Poland and Slovenia) and the 5.5% ESL share (data from 2012) is well below the EU target for 2020 (in 2012 the EU average stood at 12.8%). Although the share of early school leavers in the CR is even slightly decreasing, available data show some warning trends. In the case of girls, there has been a constant decrease in the number of early school leavers in recent years (from 5.4% to 4.4% between 2008 and 2011) and there was a slight upward development only in 2012 (to 4.9%); however, in the case of boys there was a step increase between 2010 and 2012 from 4.9% to 6.1% after years of moderate decrease. Besides, the CR has recently seen an increasing share of children from a socially disadvantaged background in the overall number of early school leavers, mainly from Roma families. There are up to 80,000 inhabitants living in socially excluded areas in the CR, who traditionally have a very low educational attainment (basic education or uncompleted basic education) of whom up to 80% are Roma. As regards specific procedures and instruments, the CR believes it is essential to diagnose this failure. The CR focuses on enhancing the efficiency of the counselling system, on the role of school psychologists and remedial teachers as well as on teacher education aimed at diagnosing this issue. It is vital for the CR to collect the broadest possible specific information about pupils, both boys and girls (e.g. through various forms of questionnaire surveys and other thematic surveys), in order to be able to correctly target specific policies.

When it comes to strengthening the quality of preschool education, which the CR considers to be a fundamental way of reducing inequalities in the access to quality education and overcoming all types of disadvantage (please refer to sections 1b and 4a), the CR has focused on reviewing the content of preschool education. In 2012 the Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education was amended and supplemented with specific expected outputs, which better reflect current trends in education (however, neither language teaching nor polytechnics education were incorporated). In general, emphasis on the care and education of two-year olds in nursery school has been strengthened together with a greater interconnection with the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education and hence the preparedness of children for basic education.

In response to recommendations of the Commission and of the Council, the CR has prepared the concept of a “child group”, a new legal form of preschool education and care establishments, aimed at strengthening the accessibility of preschool education and care. In June 2014 a Government bill was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the CR. Child groups will be designated for children from one year of age until they commence mandatory school attendance. Employers (private, public and state entities) will be able to establish these groups for their employees’ children. So as to

guarantee quality of this type of preschool care, it is important that the establishing entity prepares an education and care plan that includes the development of the children's skills and habits and focuses on their personality formation and both physical and mental development. From the viewpoint of content and form, these groups will not represent a full-fledged alternative to preschool education provided in kindergartens on the basis of the Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education but they are none the less a very important measure that significantly supports the provision of preschool preparation to the broadest possible number of children in those cases when there are no places available in a kindergarten for capacity reasons. As a result of the baby boomers generation having children, the CR has been struggling with major capacity issues. Participation rate in preschool education in the last grade stands at more than 88% of children in a population year; however, in recent years it has been moderately decreasing (in 2005 it stood at over 96%). Participation of four-year olds is similar and has been stable long-term. However, participation of smaller children is dramatically lower, namely 77% of three-year olds and 27% of children under three years of age.

As concerns teacher support, a career system for teachers is currently under preparation with the help of ESF funding, which would enable professional growth and lifelong enhancing of the quality of work, interconnected with postgraduate specialisation and linked to a motivating remuneration system. The career system should help to increase the prestige of the teaching profession in society, stimulate interest in this profession among young people and give both starting and experienced teachers an outlook of professional growth during their career. The career system will be based on the principle of matching professional development with the career system and remuneration, on the teachers' right and duty to develop their professional competences and on the right to choose a possible career path (namely development of professional competences, development of specialised posts or development of managerial posts). If the path of professional competences development is selected, four stages are proposed. The individual stages are linked to teachers' standards in which competences are described together with their level required for each career stage. It is envisaged that it will be mandatory to complete an adaptation period concluded with an evaluation before a teacher can move into the second career stage. From the second career stage onwards participation in the career system should be voluntary. From 2015 onwards, legislative work will start in order to make it possible to introduce the career system into practice.

Work on amendment to Act No. 561/2004 Coll., which makes provision with respect to preschool, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act), started already in 2013 and has continued in 2014. The amendment changes the organisation of the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and of talented children, pupils and students by cancelling their division into the categories of children with a health disadvantage, children with a health disability and children with a social disadvantage. These categories will be replaced by the principle of individual support of each and every pupil who needs supporting measures, and by prioritising individual integration in mainstream education. However, entry of the amendment into force is dependent on the implementation of a planned funding reform of the regional education system.

*As part of the European Social Fund project **NIQES (National Inspection Evaluation System for the Education System)**, the CR is currently validating the possibility of introducing nation-wide evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes in key phases of mandatory school attendance (grades 5 and 9 of primary school or corresponding grades of six- and eight-year grammar schools). The survey was done by means of pilot electronic testing on a sample of 104 schools in December 2011, followed by test rounds of nation-wide testing in 2012 and 2013. Among other*

things, the aim of the testing was to use the obtained results to evaluate those aspects that enable validation of individual components of the evaluation framework if possible, namely self-assessment, curriculum amendments and feedback for schools, pupils and their parents. Approximately CZK 92 million was earmarked for a three-year development and piloting of the system of electronic validation of pupil outcomes (2011 – 2014), of which approximately CZK 50 million was allocated for nation-wide testing. Testing will continue to take the form of selective surveys carried out by the Czech School Inspectorate and the testing instrument is currently available for schools and pupils as well as for home testing needs. The Czech School Inspectorate will use this instrument for evaluating the quality of education at individual schools and for preparing recommendations both for schools and for pertinent authorities.

6b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of school policy and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the school policy area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR proposes that attention should be aimed at supporting **preschool education** as a fundamental instrument for reducing inequalities in the access to quality education and overcoming various types of disadvantage. For more detailed information please see section 1b.

7. Vocational Education and Training

7a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to support the objectives of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, to implement the educational dimension of the Youth Guarantee, and to ensure that VET provision is in tune with labour market/skills needs and in support of innovation policies. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

Since 2014 an increased tax credit for the promotion of vocational education and training has been in effect. Namely, tax-deductible thresholds of a motivational allowance have been increased. With the aim of providing more support to technical and vocational fields of study, the CR wishes to amend the system of regional education funding so as to better reflect the long-term employability of graduates on the labour market. The CR will also amend its Framework Educational Programmes for Secondary Education so as to better target an increase in the quality of vocational education and training and long-term employability of graduates of secondary technical schools. There will be a foreman's examination for graduates of vocational fields of study as a new element of lifelong learning. Efforts also focus on strengthening the role of employers in career counselling, the aim of which will be to increase pupils' motivation to study and apply their professional skills in practice, whilst raising awareness of both pupils and teachers about requirements related to employment, work environment and employment prospects.

In 2013 the CR approved an implementation programme of the Youth Guarantee initiative. In this programme the CR guarantees that each young person up to 25 years of age will get a quality employment offer, further education, vocational education and training or study stay within four months from becoming unemployed, completing formal education or leaving the formal education system. The further education offer also

includes quality vocational education and training programmes that lead to obtaining a recognised professional qualification. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) will be the key ministries to cooperate at national level in pursuing the Youth Guarantee programme. The Youth Guarantee implementation programme will make use of existing projects and programmes aimed at young people aged 15 to 24, funded both from national funds and from Operational Programmes Human Resources for Employment and Education for Competitiveness.

*The CR is currently validating the possibility of introducing elements of dual education in the CR through a project entitled **Promoting Cooperation between Schools and Companies – POSPOLU (TOGETHER)**. The project should take place between 2012 and 2015 and is funded from the European Social Fund and the CR's state budget. Estimated project costs stand at CZK 106.5 million. The project aims at direct promotion of cooperation between schools and companies in the education of secondary vocational school pupils as regards practical tuition provided by employers. Models of cooperation for fields of study with a school-leaving examination and for fields of study with an apprenticeship certificate are under preparation. These models should be gradually broadened to cover all groups of fields of study. The project follows up on the principles of the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and should among other things result in drafting legislative and systemic measures for future cooperation between schools and companies.*

7b. Building on the experience with the Copenhagen process and the Bruges Communiqué and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of vocational education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) under the Bruges communiqué in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

There will be a debate at national level in the CR about proposed priorities for strengthening the Copenhagen process/Bruges Communiqué in vocational education and training. However, the CR believes it is important to support Member States in exchanging experience when it comes to **matching education with practical study stays** and as efficient utilisation of opportunities offered by the new **Erasmus+** programme as possible.

8. Higher Education

8a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to increase tertiary education attainment and quality, and to support higher education institutions pursuing comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation that include internationalisation of curricula and strengthened strategic partnerships within and outside Europe. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

Besides emphasizing the need to enhance the quality, relevance and added value of mobility (e.g. in the form of interconnection with working stays), the CR has a long-term priority of involving the highest possible number of higher education students in (foreign) mobility programmes. The CR supports student and academic staff in particular by promoting the participation of higher education institutions in European, regional and

other educational programmes (both in the EU and outside of the EU). The fact that mobility programmes are co-financed within the Erasmus programme (the Lifelong Learning Programme to date) from the CR's budget shows the significance attached to European mobility.

It is undoubtedly challenging for the CR how the internationalisation of higher education institutions, which has already been well established at most of these institutions to a certain extent, can be enriched with a clear added value (greater emphasis on quality, e.g. when it comes to the qualitative structure of the common objective of the Europe 2020 strategy for tertiary education). The CR has started to prepare an internationalisation strategy, which will have an impact not only on the higher education institutions as such but which will also take into account the whole innovation ecosystem, e.g. in relation to the conclusions and recommendations of an international audit of research, development and innovations in the CR. In accordance with objectives of the updated National Research, Development and Innovations Policy of the CR for 2009 – 2015 with an outlook until 2020 and together with pertinent public administration bodies, the CR will prepare a comprehensive interdepartmental strategy of the internationalisation of research, development and innovations in the CR, including cooperation of the CR in research and development, higher education and entrepreneurship.

An amendment to Act No. 111/1998 Coll., which makes provision with respect to higher education institutions, as amended (the Higher Education Act), represents an essential step towards modernisation of fundamental regulations governing the administration and management of higher education. The main areas it will pertain to are accreditations and quality evaluation, contract financing, organisational and staffing autonomy of higher education institutions and possibilities of higher education institutions to establish a public research institution. As part of the amendment to the Act, the accreditation process should be based on evaluating the institution's activity according to set standards that take into account three different study programme profiles. The aim is to increase transparency of the system, professionalise evaluation and reduce the administrative burden of the accreditation process. Institutional accreditations should also be introduced together with accreditation of an education area for a specific type of studies at a higher education institution. It is envisaged that the above should be submitted to the Government in September 2014.

*Each year, the CR takes into consideration the area of quality as one of the key priorities of updating the Long-term Plan for Higher Education. Besides, quality continues to be one of the funding indicators. Therefore, results of the **QUALITY** project will be introduced in 2014, focusing on the development, evaluation, provision and management of quality at higher education institutions. It is clear from the strategic plans of higher education institutions for 2014 that a number of them already implement activities in this field and plan to establish Quality Departments as independent workplaces. Another project, **CREDO**, addresses the issue of quality and funding.*

8b. Building on the experience with the agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the higher education area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR proposes to continue in implementing priority areas approved in ET 2020 Council Conclusions.

9. Adult Learning

9a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to improve the quality, participation and efficiency of adult learning and to provide basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills) and outreach to low-skilled adults (e.g. national targets, specific funding programmes etc.). Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

In adult education the CR actively pursues the lifelong learning concept, the aim of which is to develop further education schemes not only as a personality development instrument but in particular as an instrument that promotes employability of individuals and their chances of finding a job on the labour market. Work is currently underway on developing instruments for the validation and recognition of prior learning outcomes (Act No. 179/2006 Coll., which makes provision with respect to the recognition of further learning outcomes). In 2013 and 2014 the National Occupations System (NOS) and the National Qualifications System (NQS) have continued to be developed under the management of the MoLSA and the MEYS, respectively, including methodological guidance for cooperation among educators, employers and Labour Offices. The efforts will focus on completing a database of all occupations on the labour market and creation of instruments using the NOS and NQS in practice. Further information can also be found in section 2a.

In 2013 measures were adopted to introduce evaluation of quality of educational programmes on offer with the use of quality evaluation elements, namely rating of education institutions in public procurements funded from public budgets. Specific measures were proposed for the introduction of new forms of further education funding before the end of 2014. A methodology for accreditation and control of educational programmes to support the recognition of further learning outcomes was also under preparation.

*In relation to the Lifelong Learning Promotion Action Plan from 2008 the CR prepared a project **Transformation of Secondary Schools into Lifelong Learning Centres** (“UNIV 2 – REGIONS”), which took place from 2009 to August 2013 and followed up on the UNIV project. The project took place within the Education for Competitiveness Operational Programme and its aim was to increase the involvement of secondary vocational schools in the provision of further education (establishment of lifelong learning centres). A total of 325 further education centres were built within the project. In cooperation with employers the centres then prepared further education programmes. In the course of project implementation, 13 networks were established, comprising schools that got involved in the project and also an IT system that provides integrated information about further education at schools in the whole of the CR.*

9b. Building on the experience with the European Agenda for Adult Learning and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the adult learning area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The CR proposes to continue in implementing priority areas approved in ET 2020 Council Conclusions.

C. ET 2020 GOVERNANCE AND EUROPE 2020

10a. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of how your country has integrated education-related elements in other national policy areas and actions aiming to stimulate growth and jobs.

The main cross-cutting strategic document of the CR in force is the International Competitiveness Strategy of the CR for 2012 – 2020. The part dedicated to education discusses mainly the higher education reform and changes in basic and secondary education. Specific objectives of education development include 1) enhancing of quality and accessibility of preschool education; 2) changes in basic and secondary education; 3) higher education reform; and 4) changes of the content of education. Related to the International Competitiveness Strategy are other governmental and departmental documents. To a large extent, the National Reform Programme, which is the CR's contribution to fulfilling the objectives of Europe 2020, and the Partnership Agreement, which is a fundamental document for Operational Programmes and absorption of funds from the European Structural Funds in the upcoming programming period of 2014 – 2020, both play the role of national strategic documents in the CR as well.

Almost all strategic documents at departmental level address the issue of education at least to a certain extent. Usually, requirements that would lead to curriculum amendments at primary and secondary schools are limited. Recent strategic documents, which provide a more comprehensive analysis of the field of education, include the Social Inclusion Strategy (education of children from an excluded area or from low-income families), the Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development or the Employment Policy Strategy for 2020 (further education, requalification, etc.). If approved by the Government of the CR, the Education Policy Strategy for 2020 will provide strategic management of the education system (for more details please refer to section 1b).

Another key instrument for modernisation of the CR's education system is the draft Research, Development and Education Operational Programme (RD□E OP), which focuses on increasing inclusiveness, accessibility and overall quality of education. If the proposed Operational Programme is approved by the European Commission and the CR fulfils the preliminary conditions for its operation, it will be possible to utilise the EU Structural Funds within its scope by 2020. Individual projects are co-financed from the state budget. Acting in its capacity as administrator of the RD□E OP, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has declared human resources development to be its main objective so that the CR's economy would be based on educated labour force. The programme includes four priority axes, namely capacity building for quality research; development of higher education institutions and human resources for research and development; equal access to quality preschool and primary and secondary education; and technical assistance. The above priority axes are further developed into individual specific objectives.

These umbrella documents are elaborated in lower-level documents in the education sector. Primarily, these include long-term plans, individual action plans and strategic

documents for individual areas or segments of the education system, e.g. the Strategy for Enhancing Digital Literacy or the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Judgment in the Case of Denisa Holubová and Others v. the CR (referred to as judgment in the Case of D. H. and Others).

10b. Please provide your country's assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the ET 2020 governance, working methods and tools. Would you have suggestions for the introduction of alternative governance, working methods and tools to increase ET 2020's effectiveness and efficiency? (This question must be seen in a broad perspective, going beyond the functioning of the new generation of ET 2020 Working Groups, and including any aspect to which your country would like to raise attention related to ET 2020 governance, working methods and tools).

The CR believes that the true potential of the open method of coordination has to be still thoroughly analysed and utilised in the field of education and vocational education and training. The new generation of European cooperation working groups under the ET 2020 framework has to better define its role on the borderland between expert structures, which will closely follow up on the results of work done by the previous generation, as well as structures linked directly to policy-making, which is closely connected to the implementation of the European Semester and objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. This applies also to working/policy groupings such as High Level Group meetings or DG meetings. Since these groupings will take the results over directly from ET 2020 working groups, it is necessary that Member States resume their truly active participation in these groups and that policy-makers in charge participate in their operation so as to be able to strengthen the implementation of European cooperation outputs in individual Member States.

As for the most recently tested instruments such as peer learning activities that are organised by the Commission, their potential still remains largely unused. However, if an optimal working mode is found (a sufficient timeframe for a better structured and less pre-planned discussion), the CR believes they can rank among fundamental instruments of European cooperation in education and become an important tool for feedback and exchange of experience for policy-makers and implementers. Similar partial reservations apply e.g. also to the annual Education, Training and Youth Forum, which the Commission has so far used as a main instrument for taking into consideration the inputs and opinions of a broader range of players and entities involved in implementing priorities of the ET 2020 framework (national authorities, expert public, non-profit and non-governmental organisations). The CR therefore proposes to the Commission that it consider the possibility of introducing some form of structured dialogue with the public, similarly as is the area of youth and volunteering.

10c. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has taken to promote partnerships with stakeholders, civil society, social partners and business to stimulate the modernisation of national education and training systems?

The CR is aware of the importance of supporting all stakeholders in education, which is one of the most complex systems regulated and managed by the state. In January 2013 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, acting in its capacity as the pertinent national authority for education, launched a public consultation together with the non-profit sector about the Education Policy Strategy of the CR for 2020, which was under preparation back then and which is to become a new umbrella framework for education

policies. Several events followed the public consultation, and cooperation with stakeholders has continued in many ways, be it one-to-one meetings or public roundtables. At the beginning of 2014 national roundtables were launched about individual issues of the education system and individual departments hold their own events and public consultations related to their specific themes. The CR aims at discussing each fundamental change with as many stakeholders as possible, be it amendment to the Education Act, reform of the education of children with special educational needs or the new educational framework itself. Going forward, the plan is to establish a National Council for Education whose members would be appointed from among experts, politicians, employers, establishing/funding bodies and others.

10d. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of the contribution of the 2007-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme and ESF to the ET 2020 objectives in your country, and of your country's approach to link funding from Erasmus+ and the European Structural and Investment Funds in the 2014-20 period with policy priorities (ET2020 objectives).

The CR believes that the Lifelong Learning Programme has significantly helped to implement priorities and objectives of the ET 2020 framework in the CR, in particular as regards its strategic objective 1 – making lifelong learning and mobility a reality. The CR considers educational mobility to be a flagship of European integration, which naturally strengthens joint responsibility of young Europeans for the whole EU and which helps to remove barriers inside the European community. At the same time, the CR is one of a group of Member States that have for long been highlighting that for a number of Member States (including the EU at large) mobility has been changing from an instrument into an objective in itself, and if the concept of European educational mobility is not to become void, it has to be revived and moved on, either through interconnecting it with the acquisition of relevant work experience that is so much needed at this time of frightening youth unemployment rates in some Member States or by using it as a helpful instrument for higher education internationalisation. The CR therefore greatly welcomes that the new Erasmus+ programme emphasizes this aspect and expands the possibilities of gaining work experience within the programme schemes.

Besides the emphasis on enhancing the quality, relevance and added value of mobility, the CR is convinced that especially the third key activity of the new programme needs to be significantly developed, which focuses on promoting exchange of experience and an education policy reform. The CR was active in making use of the opportunities offered already by the Lifelong Learning Programme in this field and believes that it is vital to efficiently promote new policy-making based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data in the new programme, including support for elaborating qualitative analyses about individual projects of this key activity. In this report (namely in section 10b), the CR proposes to strengthen communication with the public by means of a suitable form of structured dialogue. From the viewpoint of the CR, it is the key activity no. 3 of the programme that is an appropriate instrument for the development of a suitable form of greater public involvement in the implementation of priorities and objectives of European cooperation in education. Programme support should therefore aim in particular at these forms of dialogue rather than its often implemented form of dissemination activities (often marketing-devised). The CR believes that a synergy with support from ESF funds is more than desirable and that the Commission should take all the effort it can to remove the barriers that holds back such synergy.