

*CZECH REPUBLIC'S 2007 NATIONAL REPORT*  
*ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME*

**“EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010”**



MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,  
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORT  
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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# STRUCTURE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S 2007 NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME "EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010"

## CHAPTER 1: PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY

### 1.1. Current state of play:

- 1.1.1 establishment of a lifelong learning strategy,
- 1.1.2 plans for future adjustment, completion or modification of the strategy,
- 1.1.3 obstacles encountered in the establishment of the strategy.

### 1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance:

- 1.2.1 systems and levels of education and training covered,
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### 1.3. Main policy measures:

- 1.3.1 the main policy measures in the strategy and how these fit together,
- 1.3.2 the measures designed to address progress towards the EU benchmarks, including national targets in these areas,
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- 1.3.4 measures to change attitudes to learning,
- 1.3.5 strengthening evidence-based policy making, using a culture of evaluation, leading to innovation in education and training,
- 1.3.6 measures to target the needs of disadvantaged people (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled).

### 1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of the strategy:

- 1.4.1 coordination and consultation mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders,
- 1.4.2 implementation arrangements, including publicity and dissemination.

## CHAPTER 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSVERSAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 the establishment of national qualification systems and frameworks (in line with the European Qualifications Framework), and the elimination of obstacles between levels and systems,
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- 3.1.4 measures to address gender aspects in education and training,
- 3.1.5 the use of learning outcome based approaches for the definition and design of education and training objectives, standards and curricula, and their relevance to the needs of society and the economy,
- 3.1.6 quality assurance systems,
- 3.1.7 developing learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy-makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society).

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- 3.2.1 increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary education,
- 3.2.2 modernising school curricula and assessment arrangements (inter alia to address learning outcomes and the attainment of key competences),
- 3.2.3 addressing the specific learning / training needs of teachers (including pre-primary) to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society,
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- 3.4.1 measures to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and of adult education,
- 3.4.2 measures to reinforce the link between VET and labour market needs including early identification of skills needs, improving the relevance of curricula and qualifications,
- 3.4.3 opening up pathways to further and higher education,
- 3.4.4 addressing the specific learning / training needs of vocational and adult teachers and trainers to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society,
- 3.4.5 measures which reinforce social partner involvement in training, in particular sectoral approaches to skills and qualifications,
- 3.4.6 enhancing access and opportunities for learning among the disadvantaged, and alternative pathways, including for early school leavers,
- 3.4.7 measures to increase the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, and to reinforce key competences among adult learners and older people whether employed or not (EU benchmark).

# Chapter 1: The Lifelong Learning Strategy

## 1.1 Current state of play

**1.1.1** The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic represents a comprehensive concept for life-long learning and is the foundational document for other transversal and partial concepts and policies in this field. The ambition of the Strategy is to set gradually achievable objectives which could be supported by structural funds, amongst others, during the 2007 – 2013 programmatic period. Its task is not, however, to propose implementation procedures, as these must be the result of a consensus between the various parties active in public policy.

The final concept for the Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic (hereafter only the “Strategy”) was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006. The European Commission has been informed of this step. The concept underwent comments procedures at various levels, and this process has still not yet been completed.

The Strategy consists of the following: It is made up of four parts, with the first being an introduction to the interpretation of the subject, following the interpretation of Life-long Learning in existing national and EU documents. The second part is of an analytical nature, including a context analysis of social-economic and political developments in terms of macro-economic developments, demographic developments, employment levels and the situation on the labour market. It also describes the existing situation and includes a SWOT analysis. The third strategic part proposes seven strategic directions for developing lifelong learning. The separate strategy directions are then developed according to the existing categories of Lifelong Learning into proposals for possible measures which could help to improve the situations in the given areas. The last part of the Strategy concerns the linking of the proposed directions and measures with the Czech Republic’s operational programmes for the 2007-2013 period.

**1.1.2** The Strategy was conceived as a document for the medium to long-term outlook. There are no fundamental interventions planned to its existing form. It does, however, focus mainly on directions for development and types of measures, and not the specific form of these measures, so that there remains room for flexible reaction to any new situations and for up-dating the measures within the framework of implementation mechanisms. The MEYS is preparing to set up an implementation plan for realising the objectives laid out in the Strategy. Approval of the Strategy by the Government of the Czech Republic should provide support from other ministries for implementing the plan.

**1.1.3** During the drafting of the Strategy the main difficulty was to find a compromise among the high number of partners involved in its development. Even though there is a consensus on the general Lisbon objectives for Lifelong Learning, it is more complicated to find agreement on the ways for achieving those objectives. On the other hand, the strength of the Czech Strategy lies in the very fact that in spite of various different opinions, the resulting text of the Strategy is acceptable to all the parties who were involved in drafting it. The social partners and the civic sector had vested interests on elaboration of the Strategy and generally supported the document; among other government bodies, the support has been negotiated. Furthermore, maintaining budgetary discipline in relation with the Czech Republic’s planned joining of the Eurozone makes the increase of funds available for education complicated and could consequently hinder the implementation of the Strategy. Although the role of education in current economic trends is recognized at both the national and the European level, the financial resources are still not available in the measure that would correspond to the political priorities.

## **1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance**

**1.2.1** The Strategy concerns all forms of education and vocational training. This means that it includes systems of formal and non-formal education and informal learning. The Strategy attempts to approach these various systems as a single, interconnected entity. All the various levels are taken into account in the formal education system. The Czech system of formal education includes initial education and further education. Initial education includes basic, secondary, tertiary and higher professional education. Further education takes place after a certain level of education is achieved or after a person's entry onto the labour market.

**1.2.2** The main challenges with regards to the fairness of education systems are low education mobility and regional differences in the education levels of the population. Inequalities in access to education could eventually lead to social exclusion of disadvantaged groups and thus they could also negatively affect social cohesion. The level of selection and the timing of its introduction during the course of the education process still remains an unresolved issue. It is difficult to join a concept of inclusive education with concurrent sufficient support for talent. Early and ill-considered selectivity, on the other hand, could possibly result in the second level of secondary schools and second level vocational training becoming a second class educational path in which disadvantaged population groups would become concentrated.

There is still a low percentage of the population with university education in the Czech Republic, particularly at the bachelor degree level, but there has been clear progress in this area. Nevertheless university education also has to confront other challenges. The social prestige of the bachelor degree level must be developed; distance learning must be supported (and also in higher vocational training); it must co-operate more with the business sector; link training with research, and it must increase the number of graduates in the natural science and technical disciplines.

The analyses of problem areas in Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic are mainly based on local surveys and international comparisons. They are based on available statistical data. Nearly one third of the Strategy text involves analyses of available data on the Czech education system, after which it moves on to identifying the various challenges.

**1.2.3** The Strategy emphasises both the economic and the social benefits of lifelong learning. It focuses on supporting employability, social cohesion and active citizenship and on personal development. In view of the challenges involved and in order to achieve progress in these areas it has set out 7 main strategic directions, i.e. priority areas for education and vocational training policy.

1. Recognition, permeability – with the objective of creating a clear space for lifelong learning, in which the results of non-formal education and informal learning will be recognised.

2. Equal access – with the objective of ensuring access to education and equal opportunities in education opportunities, during the entire life-cycle.

3. Functional literacy – with the objective of developing functional literacy and key competencies, including the ability to learn during the entire course of people's lives.

4. Social partnership – with the objective of achieving a balance between the supply of education opportunities and the requirements of economic and social development whilst working with social partners.

5. Stimulating demand – with the objective of having demand for education coming from all population groups during the entire life-cycle

6. Quality- the objective here is to ensure the quality of the supply of available range of education opportunities

7. Guidance – with the objective of developing information and advisory services, particularly in terms of availability.

### **1.3. Main policy measures**

**1.3.1** The measures proposed in the Strategy are intended to fulfil and promote the individual strategic directions for lifelong learning. They are formulated in a way which allows them to be specified further and developed according to any implementation requirements. The measures are conceived for each separate level of education as these exist in the Czech Republic, with the structure and mutual interconnectivity of the measures corresponding with this mutual inter-linking of the education system. This involves both the field of initial education (general and vocational education, tertiary education, which is analysed separately in the Strategy) and the field of further education.

For initial education (both general and vocational), the measures are focused in particular on various aspects of curricular reforms which represent a significant opportunity for fundamental changes to the interpretation of education towards key competencies. The measures are also focused on restricting any factors which could represent specific threats. One of the most serious of these threats is high selectivity within the educational system and the existing inequality in access to education. The measures specifically intended for initial vocational education involve, in particular, its connection with the labour sector and co-operation with social partners.

For tertiary education the measures are intended to support accessibility and equal opportunities for access to tertiary education and to develop the key competencies of individuals for lifelong learning. They are also intended for developing the supply of educational opportunities in the field and the requirement that this supply includes quality and effective study during employment. Emphasis is placed on increasing the quality of tertiary education and its close relationship with actual practice and the requirements of employers. Emphasis is also placed on strengthening the ties between universities and research and development. The objective of these measures is to achieve a situation where each capable and motivated individual will be able to actually study and gain higher vocational level and university education irrespective of their age, gender, or physical or social handicaps, and any restrictions arising from their concurrent economic activity.

For further education the Strategy includes proposals for amending further education by introducing legislation on recognising the results of further education, introducing a system for assessing the quality of this type of education and developing a system of advisory services for its users. The proposed measures support development of the supply of further education through both information and methodological advisory services for students, and also financial support for establishing new education programmes in areas which are as yet un-developed or are situation in areas which are less attractive market-wise.

**1.3.2** The Czech Republic is achieving good results in terms of early school-leaving prevention. The good results for higher numbers of secondary education graduates are associated with these results. The Strategy recommends measures for maintaining this positive situation, particularly by developing advisory services and by transferring to a module system of educational programme organisation. Early school-leaving prevention should take place at both a social and educational level.

The Strategy attempts to improve results for literacy development mainly by placing emphasis on the necessity for curricula reforms, which are conceived as being a re-orientation towards key competencies development and the use of innovative training

strategies, which cannot be limited to only include Czech language teaching. The need to reform initial education and support further education for teachers and to monitor the quality of the new system is closely related to this point.

The above-mentioned reforms to the curriculum should also support the development of technical and mathematical thinking and also improve the attractiveness of these fields. This, in the long-term, should contribute to increasing the number of university graduates in the mathematics, science and technology disciplines. Increasing university capacities and supporting students from weaker social backgrounds should also contribute to achieving these criteria. A key measure should be the linking of universities with research and development in the business sector, with the objective of both supporting multi-source financing of the tertiary sector, and also increasing the attractiveness of the mathematics and technology disciplines.

The most important aspect is to increase the number of adults participating in further education, not least because this will lead in the short term to advances in all the benchmarks areas. The Strategy therefore recommends developing a system for financially stimulating individuals and employers. At the system level motivation for higher participation can also be achieved by ensuring that the results of education are recognised by the Further education Result Recognition Act (this Act becomes effective on 1.8.2007). Measures should be adopted for providing good quality education, providing advisory and information services, and conforming the supply of education with the needs of the labour market.

**1.3.3** The Strategy recommends that public expenditure on education, which as a percentage of GDP is below the EU-25 average, be increased. One source of funds for realising the strategy's directions should be funds being redistributed as part of the Czech Republic's operational programmes for the 2007–2013 period. Specifically this involves the Education for Competitiveness (headed by the MEYS) and the Human Resources and Employment programmes (headed by the MLSA). The Strategy covers the cohesion between these programmes and its own measures. The measures proposed by the Strategy should serve as an orientation viewpoint for conceiving projects or deciding on which projects to support. The Strategy objective however is to support co-operation and funding for education from the private sector, as well as for calling for an increase in public spending in this field.

**1.3.4** The change of the approach towards learning arises from the curricular reforms, in which the ability to learn becomes an important skill. In the Czech Republic's case however it is important to achieve progress mainly in further education and adult education. This should be assisted by proposals which are based on the experiences of EU countries of comprehensive systems of financial instruments aimed at individuals active in efforts to increase participation in overall education, and specifically in stimulating disadvantaged groups. It is also important to improve the positive and negative stimulation of unemployed people to increase their involvement in re-qualification and on increasing their efficiency. These paths should contribute towards the population as a whole taking on board the idea of life-long learning.

**1.3.5** The Strategy proposes to provide material and methodology assistance to schools and teachers during the creation and implementation of new school education programmes which are aimed, in particular, at spreading innovative teaching strategies (e.g. project teaching, fictive companies, student companies etc.), which would develop motivation for life-long learning and which would enable pupils to develop their key competencies (communication, teamwork, problem solving). This then enables individuals to act adequately and effectively in various life situations.

**1.3.6** With regards to the needs of disadvantaged people, the Strategy's objective is to support

participation in pre-school education in a motivational environment, particularly for children from socially and ethnically disadvantaged backgrounds (with emphasis placed on socialising, language teaching and providing opportunities to choose from activities which the children do not have available to them in their home environment, etc.). Suitable instruments here appear to be the concept of inclusive schools and improving the preparation of schools for the scope of the heterogeneous population, which they will be capable of teaching efficiently in joint classes. The reference level of Czech as a foreign language (A1, A2, B1, B2) project also serves to help integration. This project fundamentally influences the drafting of teaching and study materials and the development of the systems for evaluating and certifying Czech language skills.

#### **1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of the strategy**

**1.4.1** The co-ordination work for the Strategy has been entrusted to the MEYS department for EU affairs and international relations. This department delegated the task of actually writing up the Strategy to the National Institute for Vocational Education, which provided a team of experts in the various areas of education and learning for this purpose. This team regularly consulted its progress on the drafting with the MEYS.

In November 2006 the MEYS set up an internal control group from within the Ministry and also an external control group made up of experts. This external group was broadly conceived so that it would include members from the political sphere, social partners and members from the non-government sector. The output from the drafting team was regularly submitted for evaluation by the internal and external groups, whose comments were then passed back to the drafting team. The standard comments procedure pursuant to the MEYS internal regulations also took place in addition to this special consultation mechanism.

**1.4.2** The MEYS is the first level at which the Strategy will be implemented. The concepts set out in the Strategy will be organically included in future MEYS policies, once they have been approved, and in particular in areas which will be central to reform efforts in the next period (curricula reform, further education initiatives etc.). Any projects proposed relating to structural funds and Community programmes will take into consideration their link with the Strategy. In a similar way, the provisions of the national priorities for the Lifelong Learning Programme should lead on from the recommendations set out in the Strategy.

The second level of implementation of the Strategy will involve information activities and spreading awareness of its content. The target groups in this regard are the general public, the professionals in this field and politicians. The basic format for spreading information on the Strategy will be the MEYS website ([www.msmt.cz](http://www.msmt.cz)) and Czech web pages of the Education and Training 2010 work programme ([www.et2010.cz](http://www.et2010.cz)). The Strategy will also be promoted as part of the projects derived from this programme. In 2007 there will be discussions at three seminars focused on areas which are covered under the thematic sections of the Strategy: advisory services for lifelong learning, education of pedagogical staff, and entrepreneurship development. The Czech Republic will be looking to realise the Education and Implementation of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy – Education and Training 2010 project. Awareness of the Strategy amongst key specialists in the field can be stimulated by articles written by specialists and by working seminars.

At the third level of informative and implementation activities the MEYS will make efforts to spread awareness of the Strategy amongst other ministries and social partners and the civic society. By gaining the interest of key interest groups, the MEYS should achieve comprehensive changes to access to lifelong learning beyond its own sphere of

activity.

An implementation level which should not be overlooked is international co-operation at the European and regional level. Discussions on implementing the Strategy with partner countries and exchange of opinions and examples of good practice will all serve as a yardstick for evaluating our own progress. It will also be important to take into consideration the specifics of the Czech lifelong learning system and the priorities set out in the Strategy based on these specifics.

## **Chapter 2: Implementation of Transversal Policy Objectives**

### **2.1 The establishment of national qualification systems and frameworks**

The basic system framework for lifelong learning in the Czech Republic will be the National Qualification Framework (hereafter the “NQF”). This has been set up since 2005 as a publicly accessible register of all complete and partial qualifications which are confirmed, differentiated and recognised in the Czech Republic. The registry is managed by the National Institute for Vocational Education (hereafter the “NÚOV”). The NQF principles are based on the European strategy for a learning society, on lifelong learning principles recognised in Europe and on the National Programme for Education Development in the Czech Republic.

Each qualification is described in a uniform way, taking into consideration the capability required to perform certain work or professions, irrespective of where or how the qualification was obtained.

Part of the system of recognising qualifications by a given law involves both qualifications which are connected to the system of initial education and also qualifications which are directed towards application on the labour market. Each qualification is defined in the NQF using qualification requirements, which define the various capabilities or skills. The evaluation standard is a list of criteria and procedures for verifying requirements for qualifications. Each qualification will have a certain qualification level with a defined relationship to the level of initial education and the level of the European framework for qualifications.

The content and structure of the NQF, the procedures for its establishment and the procedures for recognising various qualifications are set out in Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on verifying and recognising the results of further education and amendments to certain other acts (the Further Education Result Recognition Act).

An important aspect of individual qualifications must be that they are acceptable to employers and therefore employers are important co-authors of qualification standards. The strategic aim is to set up so-called sector councils, which will include a selection of representatives of employers in the various sectors who will act as assessors, controllers and initiators in the process of creating and approving standards for qualifications.

In view of social considerations, the NQF is set up starting from the lower qualifications up to higher qualifications. The completion of the ISCED 2 and ISCED 3c qualification groups is the objective of the “National Qualification Framework Development Supporting the Inter-connection of Initial and Further Education” system project. This project is supported by ESF, which will end in March 2008. After it is completed, work will continue on completing higher level qualifications in the NQF.

### **2.2 Identification and validation on non-formal and informal learning**

Recognising the results of non-formal and informal learning (hereafter “previous learning”) is part of the realisation of the MEYS system project: Recognising the Results of Non-formal Education and Informal Learning in School Networks Which Provide Education Services to Adults (hereafter “UNIV”), which is carried out by the NÚOV. The processes of recognising previous learning as mechanisms which fulfil the concept of lifelong learning in both its forms, LLL and LWL (Life-Wide and Life-Long Learning) are relatively new to the Czech Republic. They were realised on a pilot basis for one qualification as part of the Leonardo da Vinci EPANIL project (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong

Learning).

The UNIV project, therefore, focuses mainly on the methodological processes of identifying, assessing and recognising the results of previous learning for qualifications which correspond to the ISCED 3C or ISCED 2 education standards. The project is also focused on supplementing education services for adults with processes which allow for the recognition of non-formal education and informal learning.

As part of the project, education was provided for guides (advisors) and assessors (people requesting authorisation pursuant to Act No. 179/2006 Coll.). Vocational exercises or actual vocational subjects taken from the schools involved in realising the projects have been prepared for these roles to be performed. Pilot verification processes have been prepared for recognising roughly 16 qualifications (complete and partial). The Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic and the Association of Industry and Transport have shared in the realisation of the project as umbrella organisations for a number of social partners. Part of the project also involves the preparation of a module conception of further education programmes which, if they relate to the above-mentioned education standards, take into account the requirements set out in the NQF (see 2.1). The further education programmes are a complementary supplement to the recognition processes. Unsuccessful candidates in processes will be offered the chance of adding the necessary skills in modules in corresponding programmes.

### **2.3 Widely accessible lifelong guidance policies and systems**

Life-long learning consists of two basic fields, which we denote in the Czech Republic as being initial education and further education. The task of further education is to systematically provide education opportunities for those people who have already left the initial education system. A crucial factor in this regard is the joining up of these two education areas so that the basic requirement for lifelong learning can be provided, i.e. the possibility of obtaining education and qualifications during the whole course of a person's life via various paths. This approach is set out in the Further education Results Recognition Act (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.), which enables the results of non-formal and informal learning to be verified and recognised.

The Education Ministry of the Czech Republic has recognised the concept of “lifelong learning” in 2001, by way of the Decree of the Government of the Czech Republic which adopted the National Programme for Education Development (the so-called White Paper). This White Paper set out the “realisation of life-long learning for all” as being one of the foundation strategic lines of education as a whole. The realisation of this objective urgently calls for changes within the education system and also for urgent closer relations between the existing education system and the further education sector, employment policy and with social policy. In this regard it was necessary to re-evaluate the objectives, content, methods, and procedures applied in the education and professional training system. It is also necessary to adopt measures with a legislative or organisational nature and to set the respective shares of the separate levels of the education system and other levels outside this system.

In the Czech Republic the formalised education system is just one part of the broader entity of life-long learning, but it represents its essential foundations. The legislation for this formalised system – the so-called initial education – is set out in Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the Education Act), as amended.

The new education act includes, to the utmost possible extent, measures and solutions for supporting lifelong learning in schools and education facilities. In accordance with European trends the proposed education act will react to a number of aspects related to life-

long learning, for example, it will

- create the essential foundations for lifelong learning,
- provide fair access to education opportunities in that it will enable entry to all levels of education within the education system without any discrimination, i.e. it will provide freedom to choose the education path and the education institution,
- support changes to the content of education, methods and forms of training with opportunities for profiling schools and pupils according to the requirements of regions, or opportunities to create ranges of available education taking account of the requirements of the labour market,
- support emphasis on key skills which are, or will be, set out in framework education programmes, etc.

#### **2.4 Measures to reinforce transnational mobility in all sectors, including through the removal of administrative and legal obstacles, the implementation of Europass, or by the provision of financial or other support**

The Europass-Mobility certificate is a document which records experience and skills obtained after graduating from European study placements. This document is part of the Europass portfolio which is an instrument for making the mobility of students and workers throughout Europe easier. All activities related to Europass in the Czech Republic are co-ordinated by the Europass National Centre, which was set up by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in 2005 with the National Institute for Vocational Education in Prague. The Europass-Mobility works by the providing the origin organisation a coded form together with instructions for filling it out. The document is then issued by the home and the host organisations, which organise mobility projects (as a rule, as part of any of the community programmes). All these organisations are included in an internal national database, via which the Europass National Centre provides statistical data to the European Commission. In 2005-2006 there was a total of 1630 Europass-Mobility documents issued, of which 1180 were part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, 324 for the Socrates programme and the rest for other community or non-community programmes.

Conditions for the establishment of the Europass National Centre in the Czech Republic (the ENC CR) were created in the NÚOV in October 2004 as part of the Europass-Training event of the European Community. Based on the Decision of the European Parliament and EU Council No. 2241/2004/ES of 15.12.2004 on a single framework within the Community for skills and qualifications transparency (Europass), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport entrusted The National Institute for Vocational Education with setting up the Europass National Centre in the Czech Republic in March 2005. The main task of the ENC CR is to co-ordinate activities related to Europass documents. The ENC CR is the first point of contact for individuals or organisations who wish to obtain more detailed information on Europasses or wish to obtain one. The Centre is part of the network of national Europass centres which are being set up in all EU and EEA countries. Their activities are co-ordinated by the European Commission and Cedefop.

In the period between October 2005 and February 2006 an executive report was compiled for mapping learning processes between volunteers and mentors within the EVS (European Voluntary Service). A working sub-group was involved in drafting the report, which was made up of national youth agencies, including the Czech National Youth Agency, the European Youth forum, end recipients and the European Commission.

In May 2006 the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on recognising the values of non-formal education and informal learning at youth and European levels. As a result of this resolution member states and the European Commission were invited to create compatible and transparent instruments for identifying and recognising the skills and

knowledge gained by young people via non-formal education and informal learning, which takes into account the specific situation of each member state. Based on the above-mentioned resolution the European Commission initiated the establishment of an ad hoc group of experts for recognising the results of non-formal education and informal learning. The work of this group is focused on implementing the YOUTHPASS, which is the only instrument which assesses and recognises education as part of the work activities of young people at a European level. The Youthpass is a part of Europass and provides support for its further development. In 2007 the implementation of Youthpass will take place as part of the Youth in Action programme.

At a national level, population mobility is one of the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP is an outlet for the Czech strategic documents, which are the basis for drawing funds from EU Structural Funds.

## **Chapter 3: Implementation of Policy Objectives in Schools, Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Adult Education)**

### **3.1 Elements reported on for all levels (schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning)**

**3.1.1** The governing body of the civil service for education is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, which not only manages the performance of the civil service on education but also creates the conditions for achieving the objectives of education and training, manages the schools and education facilities. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for the concept, status and development of the education system.

As civil service reforms transferred certain tasks and competencies for providing education and schooling services, which are primarily the responsibility of the state, to local council entities, the Education Act did at least set out framework criteria for education and schooling services which municipalities and regions are obliged to respect. In view of the purpose and status of the local council entities this mainly involves respecting the interests of citizens in municipalities and regions, providing access to education and schooling services according to local conditions and other criteria.

There was a significant change in university education when the amendment to the Universities Act came into effect on 1.1. 2006. This was another step towards more efficient use of state budget funds and towards the sustainable development of universities. The amendment introduced the obligatory payment of social study grants for financially weaker students at universities. About 7 thousand students are supported, with the minimum amount being CZK 1 620 per month. The amendment also gave public universities more autonomy when managing their funds. Contrary to the previous situation, public universities were now allowed to transfer any remaining funds which were provided to them from the national budget for the calendar year for educational, science, research, development, artistic or other creative activities over to funds established by the universities for the subsequent calendar year. This enabled public universities to manage their funds more efficiently, and gave them the possibility to save funds for more extensive events or investments. At the same time there was an extension to the term of office for deans and associate professors, from 3 to 4 years and the maximum period for study programme accreditation validity was extended to 10 years.

As public universities in the Czech Republic have considerable autonomy, the Ministry uses indirect instruments to implement its objectives and manage systems. The strongest of these is financing. The implementation of educational system development objectives is supported with the help of financial mechanisms dependant on a correspondence between the long-term aims of educational and science, research, development, artistic and other creative activities for universities for the 2006-2010 period, which have been drafted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and the long-term aims in these areas of the individual universities. The mechanism is based on development programmes which cover the main priorities and which are announced by the Ministry each year. Universities create projects which have been in the previous period focused particularly on innovating study programmes so that they correspond better with actual practice (in the various regions) and which lead to better graduate employability.

The Ministry has also supported co-operation between universities and industry, particular with work experience placements for students and lecturers, the participation of experts in various fields in creating study programmes or tutoring bachelor degree, post-graduate diploma or doctorate dissertation work, implementation of ECTS and Annexes to diplomas, quality control systems, student and lecturer mobility (trips and enrolment) and “joint degree” type programmes, etc. Experience shows that these instruments lead to higher specification and openness in Ministry policies and to increased precision and improved strategy planning by individual public universities.

The Ministry also uses formula financing to fulfil its objectives. There are a number of formulas for improved planning of the tasks they are created for. They are all based on performance indicators; student numbers, study programme costs derived from basic cost limits of the relevant multiple of study programme costs coefficients. The calculation for the calendar year is performed based on the number of students enrolled for studies as at 31 October of the previous year. We have been using a similar principle for bonuses for graduates in order to achieve higher diversification of the range of studies which better reflects the capabilities of students. Another example is the calculation of funds for specific research. The model is dependent on the qualification structure of academic staff (the percentage of the adjusted number of professors and associate professors in the adjusted number of academic staff of the respective university), the number of graduates of post-graduate study programmes, the number of students in doctorate study programmes, higher funds obtained by the given public university for research and development pursuant to the Act on Supporting Research and Development and higher funds obtained for research and development with proven results. There are also others.

Further education is not regulated significantly in the Czech Republic, except for normative education, i.e. education which is set out in legislation for members of certain professions. The share of the population actively studying in the Czech Republic is also low compared with other EU countries, and there is also evidence that the higher an employee’s education qualification level, the more these individuals are involved in studying. One of the objectives of the UNIV system project is to support further education in secondary and higher vocational schools and universities. Schools involved in the project create a network of co-operating schools in the various regions together with a co-ordination centre which performs methodological, co-ordination and marketing support. There is also an information server for available further education provided by the schools involved in the project. Secondary schools are gradually changing from being institutions providing only initial education into schools which provide both initial and further education.

**3.1.2** See 3.1.7

**3.1.3** The principle of non-discrimination is also respected in the generally applicable legislation concerning education, and in particular in the main Acts governing the individual fields of education. For pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher vocational education this involves Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-schools, primary, secondary and higher vocational education and other education (the Education Act), as amended, Act No. 109/2002 Coll., on constitutional education or protecting education in educational facilities and preventative educational care in education facilities and amendments to certain other acts, and also Act No. 563/2004 Coll., on pedagogical staff and amendments to certain other acts, as amended.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport continues to dedicate extraordinary attention to the issue of upholding human rights and includes discrimination prevention both in its relevant legislation and in other documents, and adopts measures intended to ensure that the non-discrimination in education and the provision of educational services is respected.

Emphasis is placed on equal education opportunities for all and on removing barriers which

would prevent this; on respecting the educational needs of individuals during their studies and on adopting measures against any instances of discrimination and intolerance in all its forms. Non-discrimination is emphasised, in particular, for access to education.

The Education Act also guarantees equal access to all individuals irrespective of their gender. The equal access of all people to education and the respecting of individual needs of people for education are declared and set out in the opening general provisions of the Act and run through the entire act. It contains special provisions for the education of ethnic minorities, for religious education, for educating pupils with special education requirements and for exceptionally talented pupils. The Act has brought considerable changes in the access to education of pupils with special education requirements, including pupils with very high levels of special education requirements.

The Act does not contain any provisions which could be interpreted as being discriminatory or provisions which could breach equal opportunities principles.

The legislation and other measures adopted by the Czech Republic is an attempt to provide access to all levels of education and to provide opportunities for the optimum development of the various capabilities of all individuals during the course of their lives in accordance with the principles of justice. This applies to the entire spectrum of the population – from exceptionally talented individuals to individuals who are socially, or physically and mentally disadvantaged. The individual approach to children, pupils and students and the diversification of the range of offered education together with other organisational measures in the education system make it possible to respect, strengthen and make use of all types of talent and to compensate any possible disadvantages related both to the lower capabilities of certain individuals to find themselves a place in a given educational system and also restricted opportunities to change or correct their educational paths. There is an effort for inequalities, be they of a material, social or physical nature or arising from ethnic or other differences, be compensated for by mechanisms which limit their consequences. The recognition of the right for members of national minorities to learn in their own languages or obtain education in these languages has been set out in the Education Act.

A comprehensive system of pre-school care for socially disadvantaged groups has been set up. The objective of the Concept of the Timely Care Project is, for example, to increase the number of Roma pupils in the main education streams and to increase their educational success and provide families, children and societies the basics for social integration.

**3.1.4** It can be stated that there are no women or girls in the Czech Republic who are discriminated against in terms of access to education and that equal access to education in terms of men and women is being upheld.

During the course of the monitored period the efforts to eliminate stereotypical views on the position of women and men in the family, in the workplace and in society have continued via school curriculums, textbooks and other materials. The principle of equality between men and women has also been promoted through activities connected with the national programme for education development in the Czech Republic – the White Paper.

The task was resolved continuously through drafting teaching materials. All conceptual materials were assessed from a gender point of view. The issue of equality between men and women was included in a similar way in the Framework Educational Programme for Secondary Education and in the Framework Educational Programme for Grammar School Education.

The issue of the unacceptability of violence towards women was included in the framework educational programmes for secondary and grammar school education. This was similarly done with the framework educational programme for vocational education.

The opportunity to participate in activities and programmes of international organisations whose objectives or declared principles include equal opportunities for men and women has been used to a considerable extent. These include the EUPRO programme, the Kontakt programme: Creating an International Political Environment/ The European Union, eastern expansion and women's issues/. The expert departments of the MEYS are represented in EU international research programmes on this issue. An inseparable part of international co-operation is membership of the Ministry's representatives in the "Helsinki Group" working group, which was established by the EC Directorate for Science to support solutions for increasing the participation of women in science, research and further education. Supporting women in science and research is included in the themes in the National Research Programme II.

**3.1.5** The change of the concept of education from formal inputs to the output whereby every individual becomes equipped for their working (and other) life with key knowledge and skills is the subject of curricular reforms. The separate steps in this reform were implemented during the monitored period. Framework Education Programmes in particular were prepared, which were used as a basis for the education programmes of each individual school. Contrary to the previous teaching materials, these Framework Education Programmes emphasises both the gaining of knowledge and information and also support the development of pupil's skills, attitudes and values and their key competencies. The Education Programmes for Schools enable schools to realise their own ideas of what form the education should take and help them to react better to the requirements of the pupils and their parents. Support for the further education of teachers in this area is closely related to these reforms. These steps are part of the planning of the national education policy pursuant to the Long-term Education Aims and Education System Development of the Czech Republic.

In view of the connection of the implementation of the curricula reforms with the opportunity for the co-financing with structural funds, or the European Social Fund (The Operational Programme for Human Resources Development), the various steps are carried out via national and systems projects, or via grant schemes. The national projects involve particularly the creation and pilot verification of education programmes for schools, the methodological support of teachers and support for the content of educational programmes (PILOT Z, PILOT G, PILOT S, METODIKA (methodology), HODINA (lesson), etc.). Further information on the realisation of the various projects is contained in the report on the fulfilment of the Czech Republic's National Reforms Programme (October 2006).

The Framework Education Programmes and the curricular reforms are based, amongst others, on Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary and higher vocational and other education (the Education Act), as amended. This Act has influenced a number of areas which are the subject of this report.

**3.1.6** The provision of quality education in schools and educational facilities is one of the basic tasks of all schools and educational facility authorities and the directors of these institutions. Over the past few years there has been a noticeable effort in the Czech education system to create mechanisms for assessing the quality of education, both at a national and a regional level. It can generally be stated that a number of beneficial assessment and self-evaluation mechanisms have been created at various management levels, which, however, do not make up a complete comprehensive system. Over the next few years these efforts should efficiently co-ordinated so that schools in particular will be provided with corresponding mechanisms for monitoring and assessing their activities and at the same time an efficient system is established for monitoring and assessment, which will provide feedback to all decision making players in the education sphere. Regions or municipalities will continue to have opportunities to create their own mechanisms

assessing the quality of the education they provide, which will supplement the national programmes and products which are provided. A significant element, which will gain greater importance, will be the self assessment of schools and also education facilities. A considerable innovative role in introducing the new procedures for assessing schools and education facilities will be played by the Czech Schools Inspection Authority, particularly in terms of its role and relations with the new evaluation and self-evaluation mechanisms.

The mechanisms for ensuring quality within the Czech education system will include:

- High school graduation tests
- Final exams for vocational education with a qualification certificate
- Self assessment mechanisms for schools

The recently adopted concept proposes comprehensive high school graduation tests which will consist of joint and profile sections. The joint section will come under the jurisdiction of the State, which will set out the content and format of the tests. As part of this joint section pupils will sit three exams at a compatible difficulty level; Czech language, a foreign language and an obligatory selected subject. This subject will be chosen by pupils from subjects which have a mathematics, civic, natural science/technical or information technology basis. The profile section of the exams will contain at least three exams. The content and form of these exams will be fully within the jurisdiction of the directors of the schools. They may include subjects from the joint section of the exams or subjects from an expanded range of subjects as offered by the centre. The joint sections of the new high school graduation exams should provide a basic standard of graduates in general education via a higher quality of exams and more objective assessment and also make it possible for exam results to be compared between schools. The Centre for Providing Education Results will organise Mock Graduation programmes as part of the preparation for the new exams. These programmes will be offered to all secondary schools with graduation years on a voluntary basis.

The Final Assessment Exam is based on uniform (common) assignment, which is in the field of education produced by an expert team comprising of schools', employers' and education experts' representatives. The new conception of the Final Assessment Exam for vocational education with a qualification certificate should bring about higher comparability of results, enhance the prestige of vocational education graduates and improve their placement on the labour market.

The elementary schools will have the option of using the Centre for Providing Education Results' offer to participate in the voluntary program of assessment of pupils in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> years of primary school. The pilot program is under way along with the testing of the Pupil Personal File as a diagnostic tool for teachers and pupils. The outputs should allow the teachers and their pupils to compare their results with the average results achieved by pupils who took the same test. The MEYS systematically, financially and methodologically supports the use of the European language portfolio which makes it possible to assess the language competencies of pupils in foreign languages in an internationally recognised and transparent way.

Self assessment by schools is a systematic, regular and structured process in which schools themselves obtain and using given criteria assesses data on the main areas of their activities. Self assessment is an important factor in the efforts for change and the efforts to achieve higher quality education in schools. Schools will take on responsibility, initiative and creative activities based on the information obtained, and by their own reflex reactions will look to apply new strategies leading towards making improvements. Over the next period it is expected that supportive material will be prepared to assist schools in creating their own assessments of themselves (evaluation at the school, teacher, pupil, curriculum level etc.) and provide methods for the obtained information to be used for the interests of

the school, the pupils and their parents. Using this self assessment in co-operation with the Czech Schools Inspection Authority or the schools authority will also be important. On this subject it will be necessary to proceed relatively carefully so that the affect of the self assessment will be used to actually remedy any uncovered shortcomings and not to initiate insensitive measures against the compilers of the assessment. Over the next period it will be necessary to create a theoretical methodology platform for schools evaluation and monitoring processes; create an evaluation and monitoring environment in schools using experiences from abroad; create a list of criteria and methodology for self assessment; prepare supporting mechanisms for self assessment; create a system of further education for the people responsible for evaluation and monitoring; to support the implementation of self assessment mechanisms in co-operation with the regions, universities, DVPP (Further Education of Pedagogical Staff) facilities; to shed light on a methodology and provide support for self assessment from the Czech Schools Inspection Authority and the relevant schools authorities (regions and municipalities) and to set up a network of schools for exchanging “best practices” etc.

Over the past period the Centre for University Studies performed the “University Quality Assessment” project which was supported by the Ministry. The objective was to develop a comprehensive methodology for quality assessment focused on all university activities, not only the primary educational activities or research and development results. All the standard phases of processes were included; self assessment, external assessment, concluding report, and their presentation and use for improvements in the subsequent phases. The Accreditation Commission, which wants to use the results for their own self assessment, is actively involved in the project. This project is an important step in implementing European Standards (drafted by ENQA and adopted by the conference of Ministers responsible for University education in Bergen in 2005) into practice in the Czech Republic.

**3.1.7** The support of co-ordination between educational institutions and business/employers/social partners and, not least, with the regions is one of the main priorities of the Czech Republic. This is set out in the National Reforms Programme and in other strategic documents. One way of developing this co-operation is by compiling long-term aims for education and the development of the education system at both a national level (compiled by the Ministry) and a regional level (compiled by the regional authorities). These long-term aims are regularly updated to take into account the actual needs of the regions and they are also discussed with partners (employers, social partners). The role of social partners (representatives of employees, employers and professional associations) is growing increasingly stronger in final and high school graduation exams, particularly their participation in exam boards for the completion of secondary or higher vocational education (for obligatory attendance final exams).

The Ministry consults framework education programmes for vocational education before these are published, and also long-term education aims and the development of the Czech Republic education system with trade union central bodies, the relevant employers’ organisations and with the regions. One form of partnership could be education councils, which have their establishment and main direction of their activities set out in the Education Act.

Co-operation between universities and businesses is continuing to develop, with both sides being aware of its importance. This co-operation should be seen in an improvement in the employability of graduates and also in transferring the results of scientific research into practise. We consider that an important factor in increasing the competitiveness of our economy will be to efficiently adapt the range of available education to fit the requirements of the labour market.

This issue is being covered by, amongst others, a working group of the Business Environment Development Council which is called “Support of Co-operation Between Educational Institutions and Businesses in Terms of Human Resources Development”. The basic objective of this working group is to improve the existing state of co-operation between businesses and the vocational education sphere so that the structure of education, or the profile of graduates, will suit the requirements of the industrial production and business sectors. The group members include representatives from various Ministries, universities, the Czech Chamber of Commerce and social partners.

One of the tasks of the working group is to gather information on the co-operation of the education institutions and businesses and then present it and promote as a working example of this type of co-operation. One output from the group was the idea to set up a single public database which would enable businesses and education institutions to view lists of offered and required work experience places, work placements and research projects.

In March 2006 the Committee for Schools and Employers Co-operation, which was set up by the Government Council for Human Resources Development, compiled a report entitled “Barriers to Co-operation Between Schools and Employers and Opportunities for Resolving Them”. The barriers identified by the report included not enough work places in businesses or insufficient motivation for the businesses; work experience was a burden on the time of companies; the complicated labour law concerning the relationship between the student – internee – and the employer; fears of company know-how being leaked or that it was not possible to deduct company costs from the tax base.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports announces a development programme each year for public universities. The objective is to motivate the universities to draft integrated projects according to the priorities contained in the Ministry’s Long-term Aims for Universities. These are; co-operation between the universities and the regions, linking theory with practise and co-operation between universities and businesses. In 2006 and 2007 the Programme for Supporting the Establishment of Joint Structures Between Universities and the Business Sector” was announced, which was based on these priorities. In 2006 10 universities took up this opportunity and were awarded CZK 23 million for realising projects which included supporting student work experience and involving students in problem solving in practise, including co-operation and tutoring for bachelor, post graduate theses and doctorate dissertations and also the participation of industry experts in lectures and project activities at universities, work experience placements for academic staff in businesses, transferring technology into the practical sphere, establishing and co-operating on technology centres, and others. From 2008 onwards co-operation between universities and industry will be an important priority for Education for Competitiveness Operational Programme.

The Ministry provides examples of good practise in co-operation between business and schools organises seminars which presents these examples to interested universities and employer organisations.

Important social partners also include non-governmental non-profit organisations. The MEYS works closely with representatives of these organisations via various working groups and supports associations education workers (the programme for Supporting Regional Education Associations).

## **3.2 Schools**

**3.2.1** Pre-school education is provided by kindergartens and by preparatory classes of primary schools set up for socially under-privileged children.

Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the Education Act) changed the status of kindergartens. Kindergartens are now a

type of school. The law guarantees the right to pre-school education to children in the last year before starting their compulsory school attendance. Children in the last year prior to the start of the compulsory school attendance are given priority in the provision of pre-school education; in cases where available facilities cannot accept them, the municipality where the children have permanent residence is obliged to find them places in another kindergarten.

Pre-school education can be provided for a fee with the exception of the last year in the kindergarten set up by the state, the region, the municipality or by an association of municipalities and of the education provided in preparatory classes of primary schools which is provided free of charge.

In March 2005 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport published a Framework Education Programme for pre-school education which sets out the requirements, conditions and regulations for institutional education for pre-school children. These regulations apply to pedagogical activities performed in education institutions included in the register of schools and educational institutions. They are binding for pre-school education in kindergartens, in kindergartens with a programme adapted to special needs of children in the preparatory classes of primary schools.

**3.2.2** As regards primary education, major changes are underway as part of the so called reform of the curricula. The state will no longer create educational programmes binding for schools without the possibility of taking into account specific requirements of schools. It shall only lay down an educational framework – the Framework Education Programme.

As opposed to the existing traditions, the educational objectives have been newly defined. In addition to acquiring key knowledge, they are focused at acquiring and developing key skills (key competences) including: the ability to learn, to communicate, to solve problems, to co-operate, to act like free individuals, to defend one's rights, to develop understanding of people, the environment and nature, to protect health, to be tolerant to other people and cultures, to understand one's own abilities for future life and one's choice of profession.

Primary education includes two foreign languages, information technology and health education, a number of partial topics and cross-cutting subjects (supra-disciplinary) which enhance the education of pupils (personality training, environmental education, media education and other). The specification of the curricula allow for sensible linking of subjects. The educational contents and anticipated results are more closely linked to practical needs. The Framework Education Programme as well as the National Plan for Foreign Language Teaching (the Government Decree of 21/12/2005 No. 1660/2005) as part of enhancing the quality of key competences supports the acquisition of language skills since a young age; it increases the number of foreign languages at schools and allows for greater diversity by supporting languages which are taught less. The Instruction by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport to allow the teaching of certain subjects in a foreign language (10/5/05) also allows schools to improve the acquisition of language competence by introducing the teaching of certain non-language subjects in a foreign language.

In particular, motivational and pro-active methods are given priority in teaching as they help to develop individual talents of each pupil; it is also necessary to provide better equipment to schools (teaching aids, methodology guidelines etc.).

Framework Educational Programmes for secondary education in a particular field are pedagogical documents laid down and approved by the state which are binding for all secondary schools teaching the subject concerned, they are publicly accessible for

pedagogical and non-pedagogical public and they are open to innovation. In 2007 63 Framework Education Programmes for secondary vocational schools and 2 Framework Educational Programmes for grammar schools will be published. In general, Framework Education Programmes strive to:

- create a plural educational environment and support the pedagogical autonomy of schools
- improve the chances of graduates on the job market and their readiness for further training, or re-training, in order to lead a better personal and civic life – they emphasise, in particular, the development of key competencies.

**3.2.3** A pre-condition for the success of the curricular reform is teacher training. Human resources development in education is a primary task which will have to be developed in several directions. University training of teachers and their further education will have to be redefined, their work will have to be supported systematically. Their incentives to be involved personally in the development of the school will have to be increased and the job of teachers will have to be made more attractive. The involvement of teacher representatives in the drafting of policies and educational programmes is equally necessary as well as their involvement in the setting of goals for further education and improvement of working conditions.

The status of teachers has been governed by Act No. 563/2004 since 2005 on Pedagogical Staff, as amended. This Act which applies to all pedagogical workers in schools and educational institutions set up by all the responsible authorities registered in the Register of Schools and School Institutions, newly defines conditions for working as a pedagogue and the requirements for directors of schools and educational institutions and lays down the system for the further training of pedagogues, including general career development principles. The law specifies in detail the required professional qualifications for pedagogical staff as a precondition for working as a teacher. The law also sets up a system for further education of pedagogical staff. It lays down for teachers the obligation of further education to renew, improve and update their qualification, as well as the possibility of further training to increase their professional qualifications. Language training of teachers is strongly supported by the National Plan for foreign language teaching.

The planned changes will increase the requirements for exercising their profession. The important task is to start the process of unification of the undergraduate training of teachers, in particular in the acquisition of teaching competence. Equally, it is necessary to define and to codify ethical principles for the teaching profession. The Ministry is aware of the unsatisfactory levels of financial remuneration for teachers and continues to strive for increasing the average salary levels in regional education systems.

Changes are in the pipeline in the so called supplementary teacher training field, which allows individuals with a university education acquired in an accredited university course in a different field other than teacher training to obtain the teaching qualification necessary for teachers of vocational subjects. It must be seen as an independent course with a final state exam subject to accreditation under the same conditions as the other teacher training courses.

Other changes in teacher training result from changes in teaching and from new requirements placed on schools, e.g. increasing differentiations or individualisation of teaching, new forms of group or independent work by pupils, integration of children with special needs, the introduction of compensatory programmes, increased broader education on the function of schools, inclusive education, new forms of team work by teachers, the preparation of curricular and other documents. A necessary part of preparatory training of teachers and other pedagogy works is their introduction into multicultural education, education in tolerance and against racism, including the issues of the holocaust.

The quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the qualification structure, characteristics, conditions and attitudes of teachers will play an important role in the management of the education system and it will form a basis for proposing necessary measures.

One of the main tasks of the Ministry in the changing management is the systematic support for further education by providing targeted financing, creating development programmes and appropriate support infrastructure.

**3.2.4** See 3.1.6, 3.2.2 and 3.3.4.

### **3.3 Higher education**

**3.3.1** The education – research – innovation triangle has become a central issue in connection with the preparation of Operational Programmes co-financed from structural funds for the period 2007 to 2013. The fact that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is the controlling body for two operational programmes – the OP Education for Competitiveness and OP for Research, Development and Innovation – is key for the actual development of the knowledge triangle in the future period. In addition to the preparation of the above programme, funds from the OP Human Resources Development have been used in the reference period both for education as well as for human resources development in research.

In order to meet this priority and to develop life-long learning, higher education establishments can use funds from the Development Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and from the European Social Fund for projects aimed at improving chances on the job market. As part of the OP Human Resources Development, Measure 3.2. Support for tertiary education, research and development, almost CZK 118 million were allocated. The projects were aimed at training people with difficult access to the labour market (people on parental leave, older people etc.) or at training in accordance with employers' requirements (e.g. training of nurses and other healthcare workers with a view to EU regulations). Additional funds for universities came from community programmes (e.g. from the Socrates-Grundtvig Programme).

**3.3.2** In the 2006/07 academic year, there were 325 541 students at Czech universities. The increase in the total number of students compared to 2005/06 is 9,8 % which has exceeded the projected increases in the Long Term Plan of the Ministry and the update for 2007.

In relation to the Long Term Plan of the Ministry, and Act No. 162/2006 Coll. effective as of 27/4/06, a new higher education establishment was set up – the High School of Technology and Economics in České Budějovice, which is focused on economic and technical disciplines. The target for this establishment is to have up to 1 200 students.

**3.3.3** In order to obtain an independent assessment of its tertiary education system, the Czech Republic joined the OECD project Thematic Review of Tertiary Education in 2005 – 2006. The resulting recommendations were presented in November 2006. Some of them can be applied immediately and the Ministry fully agrees with them. It is willing and able to implement them itself. They have become an important basis for the preparation of the Update of the Long Term Plan for 2008 which is currently being drafted. However, it will not be simple to implement them in practice because they affect established practices. In some cases, a thorough debate amongst the professional public and in political circles will be required in order to make these recommendations acceptable and/or to find a suitable application of the proposed measures. The Ministry therefore is intending to draft a White Paper on Tertiary Education in 2008. It will have to be thoroughly discussed with university representatives (representatives of the Academia – the Czech Conference of Rectors and the Council of Universities including the Chamber of Students) as well as other interested parties (employers, regional representatives, state administration etc.).

**3.3.4** Statistics show that the interest in studying technical and scientific disciplines as shown in

relative indicators remains practically unchanged. The percentage of applicants for technical or scientific disciplines of the total number of applicants is between 34 and 39 per cent, most frequently the figure is 35 to 36 percent of the total number of applicants. The rate of success in admission is high – for technical subjects it was 88 per cent in the academic year 2005/06 and 90 per cent in the academic year 2006/07. For scientific disciplines the rate of success in admission corresponds to the average and reached 69 per cent in the academic year 2005/06 (the average rate of success in admission is 67 per cent), in the academic year 2006/07 the figure was 71 per cent (the average rate was 70 per cent). The number of admitted applicants to technical and scientific university courses is growing slightly in absolute figures but their share of the total number of applicants admitted to universities is falling. In the academic year 2005/06 34,300 of applicants to technical and scientific university courses were admitted which represented 43 per cent of all admitted applicants. In the academic year 2006/07 the figure was 36,800 applicants which corresponds to 41 per cent of all admitted students.

The problem is, therefore, not a lack of interest in studying these disciplines. However, a less rigorous selection of students combined with a relative difficulty of these courses probably contributes to the fairly high rate of failure in students of these courses. With the introduction a structured courses (2 levels, Bachelors and Masters instead of the traditional 5 to 6 year courses) we are expecting an improvement, but the rate of failure is still high. Since 2005 the Ministry began to give bonuses to schools to reward them for graduates (it does not apply only to technical disciplines – see above). In 2006 the Ministry published a pilot development programme to support talented young people interested in studying technical and scientific disciplines which was received with great enthusiasm and continues as part of centralised development programmes in 2007. Universities are thus trying to attract talented applicants without a clear focus who would probably otherwise opt for the more “fashionable” economic or legal fields.

### **3.4 Vocational education and training and adult learning**

**3.4.1** The support for adult education of adults is not sufficient at the moment; the main reason for further training of adults is the need of employers to innovate, to expand or increase the skills of the workforce. However, this requirement is not very common in the Czech Republic. It is more “expedient” for an employer to find a new employee rather than to finance further training of the existing workforce. A systematic training of employees is provided primarily by large and rich companies (e.g. Škoda, Siemens). Thanks to the support from the ESF training centres are being set up at the regional level, which provide further training in certain sectors.

The attractiveness of further training may be enhanced by the recognition of previously obtained qualifications, in particular, if the mechanism is appropriately structure, i.e. to differentiate learning from experience. The recognition procedures have to be supported by the development of life-long career counselling, including the so called balance diagnostics.

**3.4.2** Social partners – employer representatives, professional chambers and associations are thus able to reflect their requirements on worker qualification in documents governing the implementation of initial and further vocational training. The Framework Education Programmes for professional education and training which are binding for the drafting of School Education Programmes include professional competencies listed in the qualification standards for different qualifications (providing the standards already exist). The drafting of further education programmes – in particular in the UNIV project – also makes use of the existing qualification standards created in the NQS. Both for School Framework Education Programmes and for Further Education Programmes, schools are encouraged to

investigate the current requirements on regional labour markets; their findings are of course reflected into the proposed programmes. Further education programmes developed as part of the UNIV projects are subject to comments by social partners (real or potential employers of further education courses graduates).

**3.4.3** The Further Education Results Recognition Act (i.e. Act No. 179/2006 Coll.) is an instrument to support further education in the Czech Republic by providing for the verification and recognition of further education achievements (see 2.1 and 2.2).

Another instrument for the support of further education and for improvement of the competitiveness of labour is retraining, or re-training programmes aimed in particular at the unemployed (also employees and other groups have access to these courses). These education programmes are approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and institutions operating on the education market obtaining accreditation to provide re-training.

Re-training programmes are provided in support of active employment policies and are funded by the national budget. In re-training, focus is given to programmes aimed at acquiring complete competence to perform a specific job and to maximise chances of finding employment.

**3.4.4** In addition to the comprehensive approaches described in 3.2.3, efforts are being made to use networks of secondary schools and to convert them gradually into institutions providing initial as well as further education. It is necessary to prepare the teachers for this purpose. The pilot projects are being tested as part of the systemic UNIV projects – it is about developing the professional competences of teachers in the participating schools mainly in pedagogical projection, fundamentals of andragogy, fundamentals of distance and e-learning, provision and marketing of further education. The preparation of teachers for the development and provision of school training programmes is a part of the systemic project solution PILOT S despite the fact that the project is primarily focused on the testing of prepared school education programmes in selected secondary schools.

**3.4.5** See 3.1.7.

**3.4.6** Since the new Education Act has been effective, there is no separate system of special schools as had been the case previously; with the exception of the auxiliary school in the law referred to as a special primary school. Children, pupils and students with a handicap and socially underprivileged children are integrated whenever possible and desirable in standard schools. However, individual classes can be established at schools to provide education to these pupils using methods and forms of education adjusted to their needs. Alternatively, entire schools specialising in this education can be established.

The duration of secondary and higher vocational education can be prolonged in exceptional cases by the school director for individual handicapped pupils or students, however, the maximum prolongation is by 2 school years. Children, pupils and students with a handicap have the right to use special textbooks free of charge and special didactic and compensatory teaching aids provided by the school. Children, pupils and students who cannot hear spoken language have the right to free education in sign language. Children, pupils and students who cannot read standard script have the right to education using the Braille alphabet. Children, pupils and students who cannot communicate in spoken language have the right to free education using alternative means of communication. The director of a kindergarten, primary school, special primary school, secondary school and higher vocational school may establish the post of a pedagogical assistant in the class with a child, pupil or a student with special educational needs.

This is the reflection of the Conclusions of the Council of Ministers of Education at the Council meeting on May 14, 1987 concerning the programme of European co-operation in the integration of handicapped children into standard schools and the Decision of the

Council of Ministers of Education from the Council meeting on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1990 concerning the integration of handicapped children and young people into the system of standard education. The creation of special conditions for the education which suits these children, pupils and students in their education appears in other parts of the law as well, e.g. in the provisions on the admission to secondary and higher vocational schools, in the completion of education by the final graduation exam etc.

**3.4.7** According to the Czech Statistical Office data, 5.6 per cent of people aged 25 to 64 take part in further education. This figure is low compared to the other member states of the EU. (According to the EU Employment Policy Guidelines the average level of participation in the life-long learning in the EU should be at least 12.5 per cent of the working age population (25 to 64 years) by 2010). The low level of participation of the population in further education implies a slow increase in the supply of educational activities, a low level of motivation to further education both on the part of employees as well as employers and the relatively small contribution to the general level of education among the public.

The Czech Republic sees the creation of conditions to increase the participation of adults in the life-long learning as one of its priorities and major challenges. One instrument to increase the participation in further education is the use of ESF funds for systemic activities which are the key for motivation and awareness of further education and life-long learning. One tool to increase motivation is the National Qualifications Framework and the new law on the recognition of further education results (i.e. Act No. 179/2006 Coll.) which allows the adults to increase their qualification without the need to attend school, i.e. through non-formal education and informal learning (see 2.2. and 2.3.).

The awareness of further education is actively supported by another systemic UNIV project which establishes regional recognition centres whose task is to bring together social partners in the field of adult education, to increase awareness and to help people identify their needs and opportunities and to meet these needs in different courses.

The Czech Republic is planning to continue in this area in the programming period 2007 to 2013 in addition to the above listed systemic activities to support other systemic activities and directly to encourage supply and demand for further education (OP Education for Competitiveness).

Universities of the third age are a specific form of life-long learning. They operate in more than 20 institutions of the Association of Universities of Third Age. The objective of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is to contribute to the fulfilment of the idea of an active old age. This is why they support universities of third age financially on an annual basis. In 2006 the figure amounted to CZK 27 million as part of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Development Programmes and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Programme for Ageing.