

**THE 2009 POLISH NATIONAL REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010 WORK PROGRAMME**

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
WARSAW

CHAPTER 1: KEY COMPETENCES for lifelong learning as a part of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies

QUESTION 1

In what concrete ways has your country developed its provision for Key Competences since 2006? Has there been any link in this scope to the lifelong learning strategy? Which actors have been involved? What use was made of the European framework and the work of the cluster on key competences?

The development of the provision for Key Competences in Poland since the adoption of the Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning by the end of 2006 has primarily consisted in:

- developing provision for children and youth launched by the widespread reform of the education system in 1999, the effectiveness of which, visible in comparison with the EU and the OECD, has been proven by results of the PISA 2003 and PISA 2006 surveys,
- preparation of the curriculum reform for pre-school education and general education in all types of schools for children, youth and adults focused on effects of learning and, at the same time, allowing for a more flexible approach to the education process (described in the answer to Question 2),
- the increasingly widespread impact of complex education development programmes for children, youth and adults covering key competences, carried out with the use of EU funds, in co-operation with numerous ministries, regional and local self-government bodies, social partners, NGOs and schools, involving headmasters and teachers, as well as employment agencies (described in the answer to Questions 3 and 4).

The role of key competences in the development of the educational system with reference to curriculum changes in general and vocational education has been highlighted in the *Strategy for development of education for the years 2007-2013* adopted in the year 2005. The strategy encompasses the whole educational system from pre-school to adult education. Currently, works are in progress on a lifelong learning strategy which aims to highlight two dimensions of LLL – *lifewide learning* (taking account of the potential of non-formal and informal learning) and the *learning outcomes* (indicating the need for assessment and recognition of the competences as learning outcomes, irrespective of the method, place and time of their acquisition). Elements of the so designed LLL strategy are already now being implemented on the basis of the *National Reform Programme (NRP) for 2005-2008 and for 2008-2011*. The significance of education has been especially emphasized in the *NRP 2008-2011* – the activity entitled *Development of Education in the Knowledge-based Society and Economy* is listed in the first place in the document. The curriculum reform of general education for all types of schools which fully recognizes the outcome of works of the cluster on key competences is a crucial part. The main benchmarks adopted to monitor changes in the scope of this activity refer to the level of key competences.

QUESTION 2

Describe briefly how each of the eight key competences is included in (i) the national framework curriculum for general education, and (ii) for VET?

The currently binding core curriculum was established in 2002 for various types of schools, including vocational schools and schools for adults. The reform of 1999 introduced the new schools structure consisting of four three-year education stages: two of them in the primary school and one respectively in the each of the new type of three-year schools – the lower secondary school and upper secondary school (which includes the four-year technical school).

The Key Competences in the currently binding core curriculum (up to the year 2009)

Key Competence	General education (primary, lower and general upper secondary education)	Vocational education and training
Mother tongue	The core curriculum fosters communicative competence, shaping the awareness of the power of language and expanding knowledge on the language treated as a system developed in history. The language competence education is continued throughout the education period and carried out in all types of schools.	The aim of education at basic vocational schools is to prepare students to gain professional qualifications based on the key competences. The aim of general education at basic vocational schools is to facilitate proper functioning of the students in various areas of social life. The task is executed by improving cultural awareness and expression, awakening aspirations and fostering the ability to learn, and especially by fostering initiative taking and entrepreneurship. School education rests on harmonious execution of tasks by the teachers in the scope of teaching, fostering the competences and upbringing (fostering pro-social and civic competences).
Foreign languages	Learning of first foreign language is compulsory from the 1 st education stage beginning from the year 2008/2009. Compulsory learning of the second foreign language starts from the 4 th education stage.	
Math, science and technology	Math, science and technology competences are shaped throughout all the education stages. The most important role is played by the following subjects: <i>Math, Physics and Astronomy, Chemistry and Biology</i> . Technology competence and knowledge are acquired at classes in <i>Technology</i> at the 2 nd and 3 rd education stages.	
Digital competence	The digital competence is acquired at <i>IT classes</i> starting from the 2 nd education stage.	
Learning to learn	The learning to learn competence is included in the scope of the particular subjects and, especially, discussed at <i>Classes with the Form-Master</i> and <i>Civic Education Classes</i> .	
Social and civic competence	Shaping of pro-social and civic attitudes is the aim of such subjects as <i>History and Society, Civic Education and Ethics</i> . <i>Classes with the Form-Master</i> are also of a great importance as they directly influence the pupils pro-social conduct.	
Initiative taking and entrepreneurship	Initiative taking and entrepreneurship are covered at the 4 th education stage when students go through the educational contents at subjects such as <i>Basis of Entrepreneurship</i> and <i>Geography</i> . At 3 rd education stage the students go through a separate module <i>Upbringing for Active Participation in the Economic Life</i> in the scope of <i>Civic Education</i> .	
Cultural awareness and expression	Cultural awareness and expression are developed at classes of <i>Plastic Arts and Music</i> at 2 nd and 3 rd education stages, as well as at <i>Knowledge of Culture</i> at 4 th education stage.	

Starting from the year 2007 preparations were under way for the next stage of the general education curriculum reform, works on which began in the first half of the 1990s and which was a crucial part of the education reform of the year 1999 – one of the four great reforms aimed at better preparing Poland for the European integration (accompanied by the reform of public administration, health care and social insurances system). The works resulted in December 2008 in the issuance of a regulation on the new core curriculum for general education by the Minister of National Education.

Due to the reform of the educational system of 1999, and – especially – to extending uniform general education by a one year, up to the age of 15, a progress has been recorded in Poland in the scope of the key competences of 15-year-olds tested in the PISA 2003 and PISA 2006 surveys, in comparison with the EU and OECD countries (the reform of 1999 was introduced gradually and in the year 2000 it did not cover 15-year-olds tested in the PISA 2000). Despite the success, the need for further changes of the educational contents has been primarily dictated by:

- the unprecedented growth of youth’s educational aspirations – currently around 80% of students take up learning at upper secondary schools finished with the general upper secondary school graduation exam and a majority of them continue learning at the higher

education level, which has resulted in the five-fold increase in the number of the higher education students in the last years,

- the fact that the reforms of 1999 were not finished in connection with the change of the government in 2001 (the extension of education at the ISCED 2 level by a one year resulted in the shortening of education at the ISCED 3 level, for which the educational curricula had been insufficiently prepared),
- the need to better prepare the pupils for life and the more tailored approach to their education based on the bigger autonomy of schools.

The new core curriculum has been worded in the terms of expected outcomes of education by specifying the requirements to be met at the end of each education stage. This is supposed to increase the autonomy of schools with reference to organisation of the educational process. The increased schools' freedom and flexibility in the scope of organising work and the bigger responsibility for achieving precisely defined objectives are the main concepts of the currently introduced changes. The new offer emphasizes the development of autonomy, creativity and responsibility in learning. Honoring the Polish traditions of education, the set of eight key competences agreed on the EU level has been accounted for. In the new offer, the ISCED 2 and 3 levels are treated as a self-consistent, six-year period. Within its scope, the curriculum provides for a separate uniform education period offering solid basis for further education on the basis of the key competences. Then, there will be time to deepen the previously acquired knowledge and competences.

The new core curriculum and the new school manuals will be gradually introduced from September 2009, beginning with the 1st grades of schools at the ISCED 1 and 2 levels. The reform will encompass all types of schools, including vocational schools and schools for adults.

Key competences in the new core curriculum (launched in 2009)

Key Competence	General education (primary, lower and general upper secondary education)	Vocational education and training
Mother tongue	The fluent communication competence will be mastered at all stages of education, enriched by deepened reflection on the language, allowing for reception and production of elaborate and complex messages. Methods of teaching of the Polish language will also be promoted accounting for the pupils' independent search, analysis and interpretation of cultural texts, linked with the awareness of their own language competence.	Apart from vocational training, the aim of vocational schools is to equip the students with an appropriate scope of general knowledge and key competences, as basis for further learning. In relation to this, the same core curriculum of general education at the initial level is provided for basic vocational schools and secondary schools of general education finished with the general upper secondary school graduation exam. The aim of general education in vocational schools is to make the student acquire a specified scope of knowledge about facts, principles, theories and practice, to equip them with the ability to apply
Foreign languages	The reform introduces the first foreign language learning at the 1 st education stage and the second foreign language learning at the 3 rd education stage. The main aim of teaching modern foreign languages has been defined as fostering effective written and oral communication in the foreign language. Shaping tolerance and openness towards other cultures, as well as a scope of information on a given language region in the fields such as literature, arts, history, geography and politics have also been structured in the foreign language teaching.	
Math, science and technology	The emphasis has been put on education in the scope of math, science and technology. This is to be facilitated by the requirements worded in terms of skills, such as modeling, strategic thinking connected with logical reasoning and argumentation. Limiting the up till now dominant theoretical knowledge to the benefit of a broader use of practical terms and experimentation will be of crucial importance for the scientific competences. In the technological training <i>classes in technical skills</i> designed for the 3 rd stage of education will be better suited to the popular interests of the pupils.	

Digital competence	Preparation for efficient functioning in the information society beginning from the 1 st stage of education is of a crucial importance. The abilities to safely operate computers and software, to search, store and process information, as well as to assess threats and limitations and value the social aspects of the IT applications development will be enhanced.	gained knowledge to execute various tasks and solve problems; to foster the attitudes of students conditioning efficient and responsible functioning in the modern world. The most important skills acquired in the general education process at vocational schools include: the ability to understand, apply and reflectively process texts in order to achieve one's own goals; the ability to communicate (communication in the mother tongue and a foreign language, initiative taking and entrepreneurship); the ability to use mathematic tools in everyday life (mathematic competences and learning to learn); the ability to use scientific knowledge and formulate conclusions based on empirical observations regarding nature and the society (scientific competences); the ability to use modern information and communication technologies; the ability to recognize one's own educational needs and to learn, the ability to work in teams.
Learning to learn	Learning how to learn will be carried out throughout the education cycle with the emphasis put on building autonomy and responsibility. Execution of individual and group projects is planned, which will encourage active acquisition of knowledge. Also, preparing students for making important choices of the future areas of studies, ways of improving qualifications, up to the choice of profession will be important.	
Social and civic competence	Social and civic competences will be developed in the scope of <i>Civic Education</i> and the classes of <i>History and Society</i> , <i>History, Ethics</i> and <i>Education for Security</i> . The core curriculum is aimed at fostering attitudes, such as: honesty, reliability, responsibility, interest in gaining knowledge, personal culture, readiness to participate in culture and teamwork. Shaping the civic posture, the attitude characterized by respect for the tradition and culture of the pupils' own nation, as well as respect for other cultures and traditions are crucial for the social development. Schools take appropriate measures to prevent all discrimination.	
Initiative taking and entrepreneurship	In order to develop initiative taking and entrepreneurship, apart from the <i>Basis of Entrepreneurship</i> , the subject called <i>Economics in Practice</i> has been singled out as a continuation of the <i>Basis of Entrepreneurship</i> . The subject provides an introduction to the realities of functioning of economy, preparing the students to enter the labour market. Projects within which the students will have to independently make decisions of economic nature will be the recommended method of work.	
Cultural awareness and expression	In the new core curriculum a new importance has been given to art-related activities. The development of artistic awareness and cultural expression will be supported within the subjects: <i>Music, the History of Music, Plastic Arts, History of Arts, Knowledge of Culture</i> and <i>Artistic Classes</i> . The aims are to: develop a creative posture in pupils and motivate them to participate in various forms in culture, equip the pupils with intellectual tools enabling analysis of work of arts, awaken musical interests and gifts, as well as to create conditions for the pupils to create and present their artistic output.	

QUESTION 3

By what means does your country seek to support schools and teachers to ensure that *all* youth leaving initial education and training (i.e. including the educationally disadvantaged) have developed these competences to a level that equips them for adult life?

Schools and teachers are supported by an in-service professional development system. Apart from the routine functioning of the system, implementation of the new curriculum offer is significant. In the scope of the programme *Advancement of the core curriculum for pre-school education and general education in various types of school for the curriculum's compliance with the knowledge-based economy*, financed from the ESF funds, regional agents of change have been appointed, whose role is to support and train self-government bodies, schools headmasters and teachers in its implementation. As a part of the preparations training courses for teachers of all types of schools have been organised – from pre-school education to the upper secondary schools finished with the general upper secondary school graduation exam (ISCED 3A) and basic vocational schools (ISCED 3C).

Activities supporting development of the key competences in children and youth are a crucial part of complex education development programmes in which the key competences are also developed in the additional offer – at extra curriculum classes and out-of-school classes.

Such programmes include primarily the *Education Development Programme in Rural Areas in the years 2008-2013*. It is aimed at eliminating barriers in the access of rural areas inhabitants to a good quality educational, cultural, IT and sports offer. The interdisciplinary nature of this programme results in that the ministries of education, higher education, culture, sport and tourism, health care, rural areas development, labour and social politics, internal affairs, economy, infrastructure, and the environment protection, as well as self-government units and non-government organisations are involved. The programme is composed of many elements aimed at supporting education of rural areas inhabitants, which indirectly foster the key competences development (for example, by changes in the curriculum of training in professions important for the rural areas development, furnishing schools with IT equipment, as well as holding internal vocational exams and strengthening of the counseling system). The activity entitled *Shaping social and life skills, fostering proper relations among people* is an element directly regarding the key competences development. In the year 2008 the activity provided funding for 309 programmes fostering social and life skills in around 44 thousand children and youth, accounting for the following priorities: shaping of basic life skills, especially in the areas of communication, critical and creative thinking, development of creativity and the ability to participate in culture, as well as supporting activities for the benefit of the school and local communities.

The *Programme of equaling educational chances of pupils coming from families of former employees of the estate-run agricultural establishments in the years 2006-2008* was aimed at fostering educational development of children and youth from rural areas that are in the most difficult situation. The programme was aimed at enabling the pupils to continue education despite the difficult financial situation of their families. The pupils received special scholarships for partial or complete covering of education-related expenditures, including those for foreign languages learning and other classes developing the key competences. In the years 2007-2008 the assistance reached around 20 thousand pupils.

In connection with the decentralized schools management system the Government takes a special interest in the cooperation with local governments in the area of carrying out of additional educational tasks. With the aim of supporting generation and execution of regional or local programmes of equaling educational chances of children and youth, starting from 2006 the Government adopts annual programmes entitled *Promoting activity of self-government and non-government bodies*. The programme provides partial financing, among others, for classes aimed at development of knowledge and skills, as well as interests, hobbies and gifts (classes in the Polish and foreign languages, mathematics, computer literacy, biological sciences, EU knowledge, fast reading techniques, workshops on creation of www pages, press and journalism workshops, creation of school and commune news-sheets, classes developing knowledge of arts and culture (filmmaking and plastic arts workshops, organisation of vernissages, gaining knowledge of the region, monuments and history, cultivating regional habits, patriotism and traditions), classes fostering entrepreneurship attitudes (assistance in making carrier choices, career aptitude assessment, self-presentation and entrepreneurship courses). In the years 2007-2008 the programmes were participated in by over 1,5 million pupils from all types of schools, primarily including pupils coming from low-income families, with upbringing problems, pupils with learning difficulties, threatened with dropping, coming from rural areas. Self-governments implementing such programmes may count for partial financing at the level of 70% of costs.

In the framework of programmes absorbing EU funds the contest projects are currently being executed for development of the key competences in the following areas:

- development and pilot implementation of innovative programmes regarding, among others education in the scope of mathematics, biological and technological sciences, as well as entrepreneurship,
- trans-regional programmes for development of the pupils' skills in the scope of the key competences, in particular mathematics and biological sciences, information communication technology, foreign languages and entrepreneurship,
- development programmes executed by schools and teaching establishments aimed at equaling educational chances and rising the quality of education, encompassing, among others, additional classes for pupils aimed at the key competences development, with special emphasis on the ICT, foreign languages, entrepreneurship, mathematics and biological sciences.

The functioning of the Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC) is a special example of education and training provided to youth from poor families or those threatened with pathologies. The corps organise vocational training for their participants. Every year the assistance is provided for around 32 thousand youth. They may learn a profession in the school system or may be employed as juvenile employees. In the years 2006-2008 the VLC executed their own projects participated yearly by over 4 thousand people below the age of 25, such as, among others: *Equal Start and Start to Self-Reliance* (which prepares for running business activities, carrier planning and functioning on the labour market); *Plan Your Carrier* (which offers training and facilitates adaptation of the unemployed from rural areas to take up non-agricultural s, *Path to Carrier* (a package of training enhancing and compensating the participants' qualifications, counseling and services of a centre). The *Programme promoting social activity of youth*, carried out on continuous basis since the year 2001, aimed at promoting activity on the self-government level for participants of the VLC.

QUESTION 4

What progress has your country made towards ensuring that all adults have opportunities to develop and update their key competences?

Provisions of the labour law make it obligatory for employers to aid employees in raising their qualifications as well as specify the scope and conditions of assistance for studying people (complete or partial refund of fees for studies and exams, granting leaves allowing them to attend classes and take exams, refund of the costs of travel, accommodation and purchase of learning materials). The Polish Labour Code also regulates terms and conditions of juvenile employees training (aged 16-19). Vocational training of this group is carried out in two forms: vocational training according to the 2-3 year school curriculum partially covered on the and finished with a vocational or apprentice's exam, or executed through work-experience labour which lasts 3-6 months. The employer gets refund for the employee's wages and social insurance premiums; a bonus for the coach and a subsidy for training a juvenile employee through work-experience labour are also paid (after completion of the programme). Special attention is given to supporting education of adult people who remain in a difficult situation.

QUESTION 4.a

What, if any, are the current adult target groups and the specific provisions put in place for them?

The adult target groups entitled to special forms of assistance with regard to learning have been specified in several acts passed by the Parliament.

The *Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 2004* lists the following target groups for whom educational and training assistance is granted by projects funded from the Labour Fund: (1) the unemployed; (2) individuals looking for , including the specific categories: reserve soldiers, individuals collecting training pensions, employees discharged from establishments going bankrupt, individuals receiving social benefits, participants of integration programmes, families of farmers; (3) employees aged 45 and more.

These persons may benefit from forms of assistance organised or financed by employment agencies, including: (1) trainings; (2) refund of the costs of exams and licenses; (3) financing of post-graduate studies; (4) loans for training; (5) scholarships for further education in the school system; (6) internships on the . Under the act, two regulations were passed in March 2007 obliging employment agencies to organise trainings according to specified procedures which are supposed to guarantee high quality of service (regulations respectively on the matter of detailed conditions for organisation of services on the labour market and on standards for services on the labour market). In the years 2006-2008 research was conducted from the ESF funds on the effectiveness of training services for the unemployed. The research results have been used to prepare changes in the provisions of the above mentioned act, aimed at increasing availability of the training sessions. The new solutions expand and facilitate access to the new training services and introduce a new instrument called *Vocational Preparations for Adults*. This is mainly on-the- learning finished with obtaining a professional title or – in an abbreviated form – an acknowledgement of qualifications. The unemployed person receives a state certificate or a certificate of the training institution. The cost of this form of increasing activity are covered by the centre and the unemployed person gets a scholarship for the time of the training.

The *Act on Professional and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons of 1997* defines the following target groups supported, among others, in obtaining adequate professional preparation: (1) adults classified by decision-making bodies to one of the three disability levels (significant, limited and slight); (2) adults totally or partially unable to work. These individuals are entitled to participate in various forms of professional rehabilitations, in training sessions and in internships with the purpose of gaining qualifications for a , retraining or developing professional qualifications. The employers may get a refund of 90% of the costs of training disabled employees.

The *Social Services Act of 2004* defines the target groups - supported, among others, in the scope of learning – as individuals threatened with marginalization and social exclusion due, among others, to poverty, being an orphan, homelessness, unemployment, disability, a severe illness, home violence or helplessness, or individuals in trouble with integration, such as foreigners, formerly imprisoned or addicted persons. Commune Social Assistance Centres participate in execution of programmes including training sessions for adults. District Family Assistance Centres may grant financial support for continuation of studies for a person aided in his/her process of gaining living independence or covered by an individual foreigners' integration programme. In February 2007 an order was passed on a framework curriculum of Polish language courses for foreigners.

Provisions of the *Social Employment Act of 2003* are addressed to the unemployed, alcoholics and drug-users, psychically disabled, long-unemployed or formerly imprisoned persons, refugees or disabled persons. Under this act social integration centers and clubs are created which work for social integration by providing services such as: training of abilities allowing to play social roles, gain professional qualifications, retrain oneself or increase qualifications, plan one's life and cater for one's own needs through one's own efforts, as well as to learn how to manage financial resources.

Provisions of the *Social Cooperatives Act* of 2006 are addressed to unemployed persons (defined in the Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market), individuals threatened with marginalization (defined in the Social Employment Act) and disabled persons (defined in the Act on Professional and Social Rehabilitation). They allow for creation of social cooperatives for a joint venture aimed at recreating the individual's participation in local community life and his/her employability. A social cooperative may run social and educational-cultural activities, as well as organise volunteer services.

QUESTION 4.b

What national data are available on the participation of adults (and any adult target groups identified as priority) in provision designed to develop their key competences?

Sources of data regarding adults learning may be divided into: (1) cyclical research in the public statistics system, including counterparts of international research – LFS and AES; (2) administrative bases related to the ministries' execution of tasks and related to institutions subject to the ministries (such as continuous learning institutions, institutions of the labour market or public administration programmes, including programmes supported by EU funds; (3) ordered statistical research or such research conducted for scientific purposes.

The quoted resources, apart from certain smaller administration bases regarding projects directly aimed at the key competences development, cover primarily the whole of area of adult education and training, especially including activities aimed at gaining and development of professional competences by selected target groups. The key competences in this context are often necessary conditions, though insufficient for the return of these individuals to professional activity. For this reason the above sources do not give full information on the processes of the key competences development in adults or on the effects of these processes, that is on the competence level. Keeping the above reservations in mind, it is possible to give examples of data from some of the administration bases (the LFS and AES data from Poland are transferred to the Eurostat).

In the years 2006-2008 the unemployed participation in training programmes of the centers grew from 5.5% to 11% of the whole unemployed number. In the year 2008 the biggest group of the unemployed covered by training programmes organised by the centers specialised in the area of transport services, including in courses for the driving license, (around 33%), computer literacy courses (around 13%), including the use of computers in sales/marketing (around 10%). Only 5% took advantage of foreign languages courses and a minute number used the key competences development courses – including of writing, reading and counting (around 0.1%).

In the years 2007-2008 employment promotion programmes were carried out financed from the Labour Fund reserve remaining at the disposal of the minister of labour:

- *s for Youth – a Good Start*, which covered 11.5 thousand of youth benefiting from the key competence and professional development courses combined with in-service training, financial grants for starting business activities, refund of exams and professional licenses costs,
- *Investment in qualifications deficit on the labour market*, which covered 21 thousand unemployed persons benefiting from courses facilitating their search for s (with elements of the key competences – computer literacy, running own business, basics of foreign languages, -searching skills),
- *Active Woman* which covered 2.5 thousand unemployed women over the age of 50 benefiting from projects aimed at finding and keeping s or starting a new business,
- *Programme 45/50 plus*, which covered several thousand unemployed women, aged over 45 aimed at restoring their employability.

In the years 2006-2008 the following programmes were financed from the means of the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons affecting the increase of education availability to the disabled:

- *Student* – continuous learning, which covered around 35 thousand students with special education needs,
- *Pythagoras* – a programme aiding deaf or partially hearing individuals,
- *Computer for Homer 2003* – a programme aiding digital competence of blind and partially sighted persons, which covered over 31 thousand people (support in buying equipment), including over 3.5 thousand of those participating in the ICT courses.

Data bases are held for operational programmes absorbing the ESF funds. Up to the year 2008 the following activities were funded:

- *Active social policy promotion by supporting special risk groups* (over 63 thousand participants),
- *Professional integration and re-integration of women* (over 48 thousand women),
- *Development and modernisation of institutions of the labour market* (over 37 thousand staffs of institutions of the labour market).

In the framework of absorption of the ESF funds in the year 2007-2013 the following tasks were carried out:

- *Human resources and business entities' adapting potential* – conducted from 2009, covering, among others, training courses for 350 thousand employees of business establishments, including around 70 thousand of employees aged over 50,
- *Employment and Social Integration* – covering all key employees of public employment agencies and most employees of the social assistance system.

In October 2008 the Ministry Council adopted the *Solidarity Between Generations Programme. Action for the increase of professional activity of persons aged 50+*. This is a multi-year complex programme conducted by many actors (the government and self-government administrations, social partners and non-government institutions). The following aims related to lifelong learning have been included in the programme:

- increase of competence and qualifications of employees aged over 50,
- facilitating activity of the unemployed persons and those threatened with the loss of s aged over 50.

QUESTION 4.c

In designing the provision for adults, what collaboration is in place with representatives of other policy areas, social partners and other stakeholders?

The labour market policy conducted by the public authorities is based on dialogue and co-operation with social partners, especially in the framework of:

- functioning of the employment councils (opinion giving and counseling bodies at the level of the minister of labour, as well as that of provincial and district centers),
- local partnership,
- complementing and expanding the offer public employment services by social partners and agencies.

A special role in creating the educational offer for adults is played supported with public funds is played by the provincial and district employment councils. Their competences encompass filing motions and issuing opinions on matters related to the directions of professional education and training.

QUESTION 5

How have curricula, statements of teacher competence requirements, or equivalent guidelines, for (a) initial and (b) in-service teacher education been developed to ensure that teachers are equipped to implement a competence-based approach? Have any specific measures been taken in the area of VET teachers and trainers?

The curricula and the standards of requirements with regard to initial and in-service teacher education are congruent with the above described reform of the general curriculum. In the year 2004 new legal regulations were imposed aimed at implementation of the systematic solutions in the area of initial teacher education at higher education. According to the regulations, graduates of studies licensing teachers should be prepared in the scopes of: the chosen major, psychology and pedagogy, teaching methodology for a given subject, use of information computer technology and an advanced foreign language competence. The graduate should be prepared to implement the attitude based on competences, the gaining of which is one of the aims of the subjects taught in the course of higher and post-graduate studies licensing teachers.

Activities promoting better preparedness of teachers to implement the competence based attitude also regard already employed teachers. The ESF funds provide important support for these activities. In the framework of the programmes co-financed by the ESF in the year 2008 the projects were executed regarding: (1) post-graduate studies in the scope of ICT, foreign languages, the second subject and long-distance continuous learning; (2) courses improving foreign languages competence; (3) courses improving the ICT competence. The activities were also extended to VET teachers.

Moreover, in the areas considered as priorities for in-service teacher education the following national programmes of raising teachers' competence were carried out in the years 2007-2008: (1) foreign language courses (INSETT, DELFORT and COFRAN courses); (2) courses of civic and European education; (3) courses conducted in co-operation with non-government organisations in areas regarding, among others, economic education of teachers and shaping entrepreneurship skills, foreign languages teaching, mathematics and biological sciences, civic education, the ITC use in teaching, project-oriented teaching, global education and sustained development. The programmes were attended by around 115 thousand teachers (around 19% of the employed). Similarly directed forms of in-service teacher education financed from the special fund, as well as from means remaining at the disposal at the regional level were participated by around 107 thousand already employed teachers in the years 2007-2008.

In the view of the expected new absorption of the ESF funds in the years 2008 and 2009, implementation of numerous new programmes begin, supporting the system of initial and in-service teacher education. In the education system the biggest funds (PLN 306 mil. in the years 2009-2013) will be directed to the practical preparedness of students to play their role as teachers. The system of education and in-service education of VET teachers will be significantly boosted through execution of the following projects:

- *Launch of a new type of studies preparing for the of a teacher of VET subjects (PLN 50 mil., 2009-2013),*
- *Development and pilot implementation of in-service teaching programmes in business establishments for VET teachers (PLN 22.4 mil., 2008-2010),*
- *Model of system for implementation and popularization of long-distance education (PLN 20 mil., 2009-2011);*
- *System supporting schools and institutions implementing module curriculum in vocational education and training (PLN 10 mil., 2009-2011).*

QUESTION 6

What approaches does your country take to promote the acquisition of transversal key competences in general education, VET, adult learning and teacher training? Where appropriate please refer back to Question 2 on curricula.

The core curriculum and the teacher initial and in-service education system emphasize a cross-subject attitude to the development of transversal key competences. Work on boosting motivation and attitudes facilitating effective learning in the scope of upbringing programmes are an important part of the approach. Creation and implementation of upbringing programmes is one of the obligatory tasks of schools. The programmes regarded as an additional link among the teaching contents of specific subjects. The school upbringing programmes are created with participation of all the stockholders – teachers, parents and children take account values especially important for the school community, such as work on improving results as well as defining the model profile of the school graduate which guides the schoolwork.

The transversal key competences are developed also in the course of extra-curriculum and out-of-school classes, supported by education development programmes initiated on the national, regional and local levels (described in the answer to Question 3).

In the new basic general education curriculum common for general and vocational schools (described in the answer to Question 2), additional mechanisms were introduced facilitating the development of transversal key competence. The emphasis on the development of autonomy, creativity and responsibility in learning is the overriding idea of this approach. This is related to the diagnosis of the PISA research and the results of internal tests and exams which identify the existing faults of the curricula and of the school teaching practice. The development of creativity, autonomy and responsibility does not only concern pupils but also teachers and headmasters. Adopting a curriculum at a given school is a new, important mechanism facilitating the increase of individualization and flexibility of the educational process and creation of an appropriate, healthy atmosphere and a positive learning environment. The school curriculum is adopted by the headmaster, following an initiative of a teacher or teachers and after having learnt the opinion of the teaching staff. Prior to adopting a general curriculum proposed by a teacher, the headmaster shall seek opinion of: an experienced teacher, methodology counselor or the teaching staff, a specialist team for a given subject or another problem solving- task team, who will assist him/her in verifying if a given curriculum meets the requirements for such documents. The set of curricula adopted this way for teaching at a given school should also take account of the whole basic general education curriculum. The teacher may develop the curriculum on his/her own or in cooperation with other teachers, or he/she may present the headmaster with a curriculum developed by another author, possibly with his/her modifications.

Other mechanisms influencing the development of transversal key competences include application of: practical teaching, including experimentation, teamwork and using projects, as well as aligning the teaching contents with popular interests of children and youth.

QUESTION 7

How is summative and formative student assessment used to help pupils/students acquire key competences, including the transversal ones? Please describe your current approach.

The student assessment system, the key competence assessment, is based on internal school assessments and on the national tests and exams encompassing assessment of school education outcomes at the ISCED 1-3 levels. Aims of the two systems encompass both summative and formative assessment. For example, in the external tests and exams system an

increased role is given to feedback, aimed as facilitating improvement of learning and teaching methods. Such feedback allows pupils/students and teachers to rationally design their own learning strategy, thus giving them the sense of responsibility for their results. Comparative analyses are also held on results of internal school and external assessment, taking account of differences in the summative and formative assessment.

The importance of formative assessment in the form of current assessment at schools is emphasized in the information materials, sent to all schools, regarding the curriculum reform described in the answer to Question 2 which read: “correctly applied formative assessment of achieved progress helps pupils/students learn, as this is a form of feedback transmitted by the teacher. It should inform the pupil/student what they have done well and how they can make further improvements, as well as how they should work. Such feedback enables the pupils/students to rationally shape their own learning strategies and, consequently, their sense of responsibility for their achievements”.

Differences between summative and formative assessment are also taken into account in the initial and in-service teacher education. In the course of higher studies future teachers are prepared to assess and evaluate the pupils/students progress, including conduction of summative and formative assessment. Increased role of formative assessment is supported by institutions providing in-service teacher education and non-government organisations acting to the benefit of education development. Here the Center for Citizenship Education (NGO) should be mentioned which – apart from in-service education of teachers and headmasters - runs nationwide programmes promoting activity of schools and creates regional and nationwide cooperation networks among schools in the scope of the *Learning School* programme and conducts wide-ranging media campaigns shaping the vision of modern school and teacher, including actions propagating usage of formative assessment.

A similar approach is used with regard to vocational education and training. The VET curricula include provisions regarding assessment of pupils/students competence, as well as they recommend diagnoses and assessments: initial – conducted at the first stage of education, formative – in the course of covering the material and summative – conducted after completion of a cycle of studying specific modules of the learning contents.

QUESTION 8

How does your country - at national and or regional and local levels - evaluate the outcomes of education and training systems in relation to key competences? How is such evidence used for developing policy?

The system of monitoring and assessment of the outcomes of education and training with regard to the key competences is a part of the overall system of monitoring and assessment of the outcomes of education and training which encompasses:

- 1/ the assessment system of the outcomes of education (mentioned in the answer to Question 7) based on the combination of external system of tests and exams with the internal school assessment system,
- 2/ the Central Education Database (the national administrative database of data regarding schools and other educational institutions kept in the electronic form),
- 3/ results of international surveys (PISA, PIRLS, CIVIC),
- 4/ scientific research on pupils/students competence conducted in the chosen scope and on representative samples of pupils/students,
- 5/ the system of pedagogical supervision of schools and educational institutions including external supervision by education inspectors at the regional level, supervision by headmasters of schools and educational institutions, as well as self-assessment conducted by schools,

- 6/ the results of education assessment system in higher education based on the activities of the State Accreditation Committee and on voluntary accreditation done by commissions appointed in the academic circles,
- 7/ the accreditation system of continuous adult education institutions kept in cooperation with regional self-government and education superintendents and the registration system of educational institutions kept by regional level centers,
- 8/ the system of assessing the effectiveness of training for the unemployed and searching employment conducted by the public employment services.

Due to its development in the past few years, the system of national external tests and exams organised by the Central Examination Board and the eight Regional Examination Boards merits interest. The system services yearly 1.5 mil. pupils finishing the primary school (younger pupils are subjected only to the external test which has only an informative role) and schools on the ISCED 2 and 3A levels, including at vocational schools (with the exception of the basic vocational schools at the ISCED 3C level). At vocational schools state external exams are additionally conducted confirming vocational qualifications. The system is being supplemented by scientific research on the pupils/students competence conducted in the chosen scope on representative samples of pupils/students. This is exemplified by research on key language and math competence in 3rd grade pupils of primary schools. An important role is also played by results of international surveys PISA, PIRLS and CIVIC. Results of external tests and exams, research on selected domains of pupils/students competence were the basis for preparing the curriculum reform described in the answer to Question 2. Mindful of the diagnosis produced by this research, the new curriculum offer emphasizes development of autonomy, creativity and responsibility in learning.

Also important is the regulation by the minister dealing with labour from the middle of 2007 regarding the labour markets standards and the regulation on specific terms and conditions of providing services on the labour market which specifies duties of the public employment services in the scope of assessing the effectiveness of the unemployed training, including the key competences training. The regulation specifies, among others, the benchmarks for assessing effectiveness of training. Also, with the aim of facilitating analyses of the effectiveness of training, a manual dealing with these problems has been introduced to common use.

CHAPTER 2: TRANSVERSAL LIFELONG LEARNING ISSUES

QUESTION 9

What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy (including the development of national qualifications frameworks linked to the EQF, systems for the validation of non-formal or informal learning and learning outcomes based approaches)?

Development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive LLL strategy

In the middle of 2005 the Government adopted the *Education Development Strategy for 2007-2013* which covered the education system from the level of pre-school education, through the education on the ISCED 1-4, to the higher education and continuous education of adults. The strategy focused mainly on formal education with made insufficient reference to identification and use of other than formal learning potential. Also, at the level of diagnoses, as well as suggested priorities and directions for formal education development, the strategy focused on the input and the education process. It was insufficiently based on the learning outcomes-oriented approach to education. It did not raise the issues regarding modernisation of the

national qualification system based on assessment and recognition of the competences as learning outcomes – irrespective of the method, place and time of their acquisition and did not launch work on the National Qualification Framework.

Such approach, emphasizing formal education, is related to the unique in Europe manifestations of domination of formal learning in the whole area of learning in Poland.

As regards the development of formal education in its most traditional scope, that is the development of education for those aged 6/7 to 18/24, Poland is characterized by many good results, even some of the best ones in the EU and OECD area. For example, the *Commission Staff Working Document. Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training. Indicators and Benchmarks 2008* stresses that no country in the scope of this report is neither above the benchmark in performance and moving further ahead in all benchmark areas – only Poland has performance levels above the EU benchmark and moving further ahead in four of the five areas. Poland is one of the leaders as regards the relatively low and continuously decreasing number of early school leavers, as well as with regard to the upper secondary education completion rates. Poland had also recorded one of the highest in Europe development levels in reduction of the number of low achievers in reading among those aged 15, as well as in the increase of the number of Mathematics, Science and Technology graduates. Those benchmarks regard primarily the formal learning. As regards the benchmark exceeding this type of learning, that is concerning education and training of adults aged 25-64, Poland records one of the lowest level in the EU. Less attention is paid to the one-sided impact on this benchmark in Poland – its low value results mainly from the low participation in learning other than formal, including primarily non-formal learning (participation of adults in formal learning in Poland is close to the average rates in the EU).

A similar report of the Commission from 2007 stresses the relatively high effectiveness of school education in Poland. With the relatively low expenditures on education, including the low level of teacher's salaries, the relatively poor equipping of schools with modern tools and the not high number of teaching hours, the learning outcomes are at least on average level in EU and OECD and in some areas higher than the average (it concerns especially key competencies surveyed in PISA and CIVIC).

Currently works are under way on a comprehensive LLL strategy in Poland which is to emphasize two dimensions of the LLL related to the potential of other than formal learning: the *lifewide learning* – that is the dimension stressing the value of learning in various forms, places and life roles, and the *learning outcomes* – that is the dimension stressing the need for assessment and recognition of people's competences irrespective of the way, place and time of their acquisition. For this reason, a major priority will be given to the works on modernisation of the national qualification system, the creation of the National Qualifications Framework and of a validation system. It is assumed that a complete LLL strategy encompassing the period of up to the year 2020 will be ready by the end of 2009. The *National Reform Programme for 2008-2011* specifies that the responsibility for the development of the multi-sector LLL strategy is that of the ministers of education, science and higher education, labour and social policy, economy, regional development and representatives of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister.

The strategy is preceded by important documents: the *Report on Intellectual Capital in Poland* announced by the Prime Minister's strategic advisers in July 2008 and the report *Poland 2030. Development Challenges*, announced by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in May 2009. The main ideas of these reports regarding the human and intellectual resources are congruent with the LLL strategy objectives.

Approach based on learning outcomes

The approach based on the outcomes of learning is one of the main characteristics of the curriculum reform described in the answer to Question 2. The focus on learning outcomes is supposed to accompany the increase of flexibility with regard to organisation of the education process, encompassing the increased schools autonomy and a more tailored approach to the students' needs and possibilities. The approach based on learning outcomes is also developed with regard to the vocational education and training. The projects launched due to the initiative of the minister of labour are helpful in this area. They consist in the analyses aimed at creation of a database with information on employers' requirements with regard to qualifications. In the scope of implementation of the project entitled *Development and Dissemination of the National Vocational Qualifications Standards*, co-financed from the ESF in the years 2006-2008 two hundred new vocational qualifications standards were developed (these are available at www.standardyiszkolenia.praca.gov.pl).

The qualification standards are a tool aiding career guidance practitioners in balancing the vacancies and capabilities of the unemployed and they will help professional development specialists adjust educational and training programmes to the employers' requirements.

Development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Works on the NQF development are conducted in the scope of a project co-financed from the ESF, planned for the years 2008-2013. In the scope of the project the Experts Team was created representing the main areas of the national qualifications system (general education, VET, including on-the- training, higher education) conducted by a leading expert who was previously involved in works on the NQF for the higher education system prepared in compliance with the Bologna Process. The Experts Team has made international contacts with institutions and individuals involved in creation of the NQFs in many European countries, and especially, in Scotland, Austria and Croatia. The team has so far initiated research on the system of acknowledging qualifications in Poland and it has prepared a draft proposal for the NQF model. Currently the institutional supporting structure for the NQF is being discussed within the circle of actors responsible for creation of the LLL strategy in Poland.

Since October 2006 the Working Group preparing the NQF for the higher education system has been in place aiding the Minister of Science and Higher Education. The Group has developed objectives of the framework which will soon be accepted by the Minister. Then, the objective will be put forward to the public consultations process. The works on the NQF for the higher education system are aimed at raising the quality and diversity of the educational offer of Polish higher education institutions, as well as better tailoring the studies curricula to expectations and predispositions of the students and at increasing the variety of the graduates' competences and improving their employability.

Validation system of non-formal and informal learning outcomes

Although in Poland there is still no complete system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, important elements of such a system may be defined already now. The elements include:

- a system of extramural exams for adults who may obtain graduation certificates from schools on ISCED 1-3 without the necessity of attending them,
- exemption from external national exams on the basis of achievements in national and international students' Olympiads and school subject contents,
- the system of exams for apprentices and masters organised by vocational associations,

- preparation of a launch of external exams acknowledging vocational qualifications of individuals who are not graduates of vocational schools,
- improving the external exams system with the aim of using them in the validation process.

Projects financed by the ESF are also worth attention. In 2008 the project was launched entitled *Upgrading the VET core curriculum with the aim of ensuring VET compliance with requirements of knowledge-based economy*. The division of s into qualification groups planned within the system, and – thus – creation of conditions for the use of the concept of the approach based on learning outcomes, encompassing among others introduction of the ECVET system together with the mechanisms of assessment and recognition of the non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Works on the development of the validation system are also within the scope of the above mentioned project regarding the creation of the National Qualification Framework.

CHAPTER 3: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

QUESTION 10

What progress has your country made in increasing the attractiveness of VET programmes and their relevance to the labour market?

The vocational education and training is conducted on the basis of the core curriculum in co-operation with analysts appointed by the ministers dealing with labour and with employers' representatives. The scope of vocational training, regulated in the core curriculum, is more specifically defined in the curricula in the areas of particular professions. At the moment VET teachers may use the offer of 134 module curricula corresponding with the real needs of the labour market. The module curricula range has been expanded by around 3500 education packages in the scope of the *Vocational education innovative curricula development* project financed from the ESF. The packages, each consisting of a guide for students and teachers, have been developed for the units singled out in the module curricula for particular professions.

Graduates of vocational schools may take external exams acknowledging their vocational qualifications, which assess the level of competence with regard to the knowledge and skills required for the particular professions, and which are a significant mechanism facilitating increase of VET quality. Considering the fact that learning on-the- is a very important part of VET, following an initiative by the Minister of National Education, agreements are made on the subject with employers' organisations and commercial self-government institutions. Similar agreements are signed by educational superintendents with employers' organisations operating on the regional and local levels.

One of the key tasks is preparing a team of competent career guidance practitioners and equipping them with the needed knowledge and with methodological-didactic materials increasing effectiveness of counseling young people on the matter of choosing the right direction of learning and the proper career path. The task is primarily executed by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuous Education. The Centre has developed a concept of a career guidance practitioner's duties and a framework curriculum of post-graduate studies on the subject of career guidance. It has also launched preparation of career guidance practitioners to work at schools and educational institutions, as well as prepared and disseminated methodological-didactic materials on students' career planning. It also runs various forms of in-service training for career guidance practitioners.

The enhancement of quality and attractiveness of the VET system is supported by activities taken in the scope of projects co-financed from the ESF. The most significant of them include: *Refining VET core curricula aimed at securing VET's compatibility with the economy's requirements; Development of a model of the vocational counseling system and the Internet information system on education and s; The launch of a new type of post-graduate studies preparing to the of a teacher of vocational subjects; The development and pilot implementation of in-service vocational education at business establishments for VET teachers and practical training instructor; Development of a model of the system for long-distance learning implementation and popularization; System for support of schools and educational institutions implementing module VET curricula.*

At the same time in 2008 the minister of education, in co-operation with other sectors, organisations, employers and social partners, started works on preparing changes in the VET system with regard to: the VET core curriculum modernisation and classification of professions; increasing flexibility of the curricula offer with the use of the model approach; adjusting the structure and organisation of the VET system to the new core curricula of general and vocational education; upgrading the model of schools' vocational counseling, creation of an exams system for acknowledgement of vocational qualifications obtained through formal, non-formal and informal learning; ensuring supply of professional teachers and specialists staff for VET, enhancement of the long-distance learning offer in VET with the use of ICT technologies; creation of mechanisms encouraging employers to take part in the process of planning, implementation and validation of vocational qualifications; increasing flexibility of VET financing ; VET promotion. In the result of this vocational schools are supposed to be schools of positive choice, innovative knowledge and competence.

To increase attractiveness of VET curricula and better adjust them to the needs of the labour market, results of the following projects are being used:

- continues verification of available, occupied and newly created positions,
- monitoring of surplus recording and deficit professions held since 2005 in six-month cycles by employment agencies,
- tracing the graduates' life-paths in the scope of: (1) the project *Analyzing the graduates' professional activity in the context of the "First " Government Programme*, carried out in the years 2006-2007, in the scope of which – among others – the graduates' preparedness to professional activity, their typical carrier paths and the scale of territorial and professional mobility are analyzed, the research study conducted in the year 2009 *Young people's entry to the labour market*,
- the labour market observation session held in several provinces, the result of which is published on the employment agencies www pages.

In the year 2009 a research project is being conducted entitled *Diagnosing the demand for qualifications and skills on the regional and local employment market – co-operation of employment agencies with employers and other partners on the market*. In the scope of this project an analysis was held of the current experience of employment agencies in the scope of diagnosing demand for qualifications and skills. On its basis a good practices catalogue will be drawn up, as well as a manual and information materials will be prepared for employment services on the subject of defining demand for qualifications.

Moreover, in the scope of this project, co-financed by the ESF, construction is prepared of a simulation model enabling forecasts of changes on the labour market in detailed cross-sections (among others, according to the age, sex of economy sectors criteria). The model will allow for projection of the employment structure classified by the level of employment or by professions.

CHAPTER 4: HIGHER EDUCATION

QUESTION 11

In the area of Modernisation of Higher Education what progress has your country made in relation to:

- **Plans/measures to diversify the income stream of Higher Education Institutions?**
- **Plans/incentives to encourage Higher Education Institutions to open up to lifelong learners?**

Diversification of the income stream of Higher Education Institutions

In compliance with the Act on Higher Education of 27 July 2005, functioning of public higher education institutions is financed from subsidies and means from the state budget, as well as it may be financed from their own income, including fees for provision of education services. At non-public higher education institutions fees for the educational services are the main source of income.

The state budget means are the main source of financing of higher education institutions. The means have been growing in absolute numbers in the period 2007-2009 – the expected use level for the year 2008 grew by 3.4% in comparison to the expenditures in the year 2007 and the planned expenditures for the year 2009 are growing in comparison the year 2008. Yet, due to the economic development and the GDP increase, in the years 2008-2009 the share of these expenditures in the GDP has decreased. In the year 2007 the expenditures made up for 0.92% of the GDP, in the years 2008-2009 these expenditures share of the GDP is estimated at the level of 0.87%. As regards financial assistance for students and doctoral students, subsidies from the state budget granted on the same bases to public and non-public higher education institutions are the main source of various forms of the assistance. Higher education institutions have the possibility of applying for the EU funds in the scope of the *Operational Human Resources Programme 2007-2013*.

The currently being prepared objectives of the higher education system reform include suggestions of the following changes in the financing of higher education institutions:

- 1/ the standing and statutory subsidies and the subsidies granted for the material assistance to students and doctoral students will be primarily used for maintaining the continuity of functioning of a given higher education institution; the development policy will be financed from grants from the state and EU budgets, awarded on the competitive basis,
- 2/ the financing of entities will be supported with the financing of tasks conducted in the form of contests promoting: the higher education institution's integrity with the regional labour market and with the economic and social environment; as well as the conduct of research and scientific tasks specific for a given region,
- 3/ the procedures will be simplified for granting of scholarships exempt from taxes by regional self-government bodies to students and doctoral students and academic staff; parallel mechanisms of scholarships financing by business entities will be introduced.

Incentives for higher education institutions to open up to lifelong learners

In the scope of programmes absorbing the EU funds in the years 2007-2013 projects are being conducted aimed at creation of an incentives system to promote lifelong learning and at increasing the role of the higher education system with regard to this.

In the scope of the activity *Strengthening of the didactic potential of higher education institutions* projects will be financed including development programmes of higher education institutions allowing for support to the following measures:

- opening of new fields of studies and adjusting the curricula at the existing fields to the needs of the labor market and the knowledge-based economy, plus opening of new fields of post-graduate studies.
- expanding the educational offer of higher education institutions by adding programmes directed towards individuals from outside of the academic community, including organisation of courses and training sessions by higher education institutions which reflect the needs of the labor market and of the economy,
- co-operation of higher education institutions with employers in strengthening practical elements of teaching and increasing employers' involvement in implementation of the curriculum,
- better preparation of graduates to enter the labor market, among other, by supporting academic career centres functioning at higher education institutions,
- projects directed towards students with special education needs with the aim of allowing them to use the complete offer of higher education institution,
- expanding the higher education institution's offer by adding optional classes in the form of catch-up programmes in mathematics and physics.

The activity entitled *Increasing the number of graduates of fields of studies critically important for the knowledge-based economy* supports projects encompassing execution of teaching curricula at fields of studies indicated by the minister for higher education, including:

- implementation of new curricula adjusted to the needs of Polish economy,
- creation and implementation of catch-up programmes addressed to 1st year students of the indicated fields of studies,
- other forms of didactic activities specified by the higher education institution and improving attractiveness of education at mathematics, science and technology fields,
- creation of scholarship programmes for students starting education at the indicated fields of studies.

The openness of higher education institutions to lifelong learners is also made real by the use of tools of the Bologna Process, including the ECTS, the diploma supplement and supporting students' and the academic staff's mobility. In the year 2007 regulations were adopted stimulating expansion of the education offer and creating learning outcome-based curricula, including regulation on degree programmes requirements at the particular fields, as well as the procedure for the establishment and the requirements for conducting interdisciplinary programmes and degree programmes in macro-fields of study, and on the terms and conditions which are to be met so that didactic classes at the studies may be held with the use of long-distance learning methods and techniques.

The higher education institution's openness is maintained also with regard to classes for older persons (in the form of the 3rd Age Universities functioning at several tens of higher education institutions), classes for young pupils (in the form of Children's Universities) and with particularly talented pupils of primary and secondary schools (the activity of higher education institutions is supported by the Foundation for Children).

Also important are the works on the LLL strategy and the National Qualifications Framework for higher education, the implementation of which is supposed to lead to:

- increase of higher education institutions autonomy and responsibility for created and maintained curricula of studies,
- facilitating modification of and changes to the curricula, including the possibility for the students to take various studies paths and education "planned over a period of time",

- increasing diversity of the curricula of studies and forms of learning and increasing availability of the education, as well as incentives for its continuing,
- changing the method of creating curricula of studies to one based on learning outcomes, which creates conditions for implementation of the idea of a "student-oriented education",
- directing the attention of creators of studies curricula to three basic aspects of learning (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and to the need of balancing them in higher education institutions' offer,
- increasing the availability of comprehensive information for candidates to the studies, for individuals willing to supplement their education, for employers and other stakeholders,
- adding classes aimed at development of competence facilitating the graduates' adjustment to the market requirements, such as communication, teamwork, self-teaching and responsible fulfillment of social roles in the civic society and the professional environment,
- the possibility to experiment and use innovative solutions in organisation of the didactic process and teaching methods, among others, by problem-based and project-based learning.

The minister of higher education has prepared a draft of the higher education system's reform which has been put forward to social consultations. It assumes adoption of the following principles with regard to the openness to lifelong learners:

- stimulating higher education institutions activities for execution of the lifelong learning process (among others, adding activities for the benefit of the LLL to the tasks of higher education institutions),
- continuing implementation of the Bologna Process, including elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework for higher education,
- stimulating development of the educational offer run in foreign languages by granting additional financing,
- supporting execution of the education process with the participation of economic entities, including classes for students held by employees of such entities who are not academic teachers,
- stimulation of education run together with the employer, including to the employer's order, with the aim of ensuring better preparation to the labor market requirements,
- making it obligatory for higher education institutions to track the graduates' life paths,
- preparing curricula of studies on the basis of an assessment of skills and knowledge made with the participation of employers,

developing forms of education oriented to the labor market needs, among others, by ordering fields of studies in compliance with the current tendencies in the economy.