

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK  
FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ET2020)**

**POLAND - NATIONAL REPORT 2011**

**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION**

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## CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

### QUESTION 1

#### Summary of the main education and training elements in the National Reform Programme (NRP)

The National Reform Programme (NRP) regarding implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 April 2011.

Measurable objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy in respect of education that have been established in Poland are more ambitious than those for the EU. The objective aiming at decreasing the share of early school leavers by 2020 was set **at 4.5%** (below 10% for the EU). The objective aiming at increasing the share of people aged 30-34 with higher education was set **at 45%** (for the EU – at least 40% of people with tertiary or equivalent education).

Such setting of objectives results from a significant growth of citizens' educational aspirations and ability of the education and training system to meet these aspirations.

The rise of educational aspirations has been confirmed by studies carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre, which were published in May 2009. According to those studies 91% of adult Poles believe that it is important to get an education, of which 68% are strong supporters of this viewpoint (in comparison with 76% and 48% in 1993, respectively). 86% of respondents would wish for their daughters to hold a degree and 84% of them would wish the same for their sons (compared with 64% and 65% in 1993, respectively). The main motivation to get an education that was declared concerned better earnings (64%), followed by an interesting profession (39%). To a large extent the education and training system have managed to meet these aspirations.

It was already at the beginning of the previous decade that Poland outperformed the results established at the EU level for 2010 and 2020 with respect to decreasing the share of early school leavers. In addition, there was a progressive decline in this share from 7.4% in 2001 to 5.0% in 2007. However, impediment of this progress in the subsequent years may be a sign that Poland has reached the limit of improvement that is difficult to cross. Therefore, the NRP sets the objective adopted for 2020 – a decrease of the said share to 4.5%. The decline of this share in Poland has been positively affected by above all else a high percentage of people with at least upper secondary education. This tendency may be strengthened by more learning outcomes oriented and flexible approach to teaching in schools based on the curricular reform of general education implemented from September 2009 and complemented by the projected reform of vocational training to be enforced since September 2012.

Table 1: The share of early school leavers in Poland in the years 2001-2010 and the objective set for 2020

2001	2007	2010	2020
7.4 %	5.0%	5.4%	4.5%

As for the share of people aged 30-34 having completed higher education Poland outperforms the average of the EU (in 2010 - 35.3% in Poland and 33.6% in the EU). Furthermore, the progress in higher education attainment rate in Poland in the last decade is one of the fastest in the EU. The NRP defines measures which are to contribute to further growth and reaching the level exceeding the EU's headline target in 2020 (these measures are described below when answering question 3).

Table 2: The share of people aged 30-34 having completed higher education in the years 2000-2010 and the path leading to the fulfilment of the objective set for 2020

2000	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
12.5%	35.3%	37.0%	38.5%	39.0%	40.5%	41.5%	42.3%	43.6%	44.5%	45.0%

The above mentioned headlines targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy in respect of education do not constitute the most important challenges for Poland. Due to specific conditions such challenges include **lifelong learning** (particularly under the age of 6 and above the age of 24), **quality of education and training** and **linking education and training to economic needs and needs of civil society**. These challenges are connected with the barriers to growth identified for Poland in the Europe 2020 Strategy, i.e. low labour demand (particularly among people under the age of 24 and above the age of 45) and companies' insufficient ability to innovate.

The NRP concentrates on activities that aim at Poland's catching up in terms of development and building new competitive advantages. These activities are presented in three priority areas: (1) *Infrastructure for sustainable growth*; (2) *Innovativeness for smart growth*; (3) *Activity for inclusive growth*.

In the area of *Infrastructure for sustainable growth* within *Modernisation of social infrastructure* priority is planned to adjust schools to enrolment of younger students. This is due to lowering of the age of commencing compulsory education, which will apply to children at the age of 6 since September 2012 (from September 2009 parents may exercise more extensively the right to send their children to school earlier). In the long run earlier commencement of compulsory education should improve labour demand among people under the age of 24.

In the area of *Innovativeness for smart growth* activities related to education and training are presented in three priorities:

- 1) *New directions of innovation development*, which foresee:
  - implementation of a new teaching model at all levels of education promoting creativity and innovativeness – based on curricular reform of pre-primary and general education implemented from September 2009, projected curricular reform of vocational training and curricular reform of higher education planned to be implemented from October this year that aims at strengthening curricular autonomy of universities which will be able to develop their proprietary curriculums and faculties integrating knowledge spanning different fields;
  - supporting innovative solutions in the economy by among others promoting good practices regarding cooperation of businesses with research and development centres, training courses on economic development policy based on clusters operating on the basis of regional innovation systems and the regional trade clusters, development of training and advisory services for clusters' representatives aiming at increasing their competencies with respect to functioning and managing cooperation ties;
- 2) *Intellectual capital for innovativeness*, which includes:
  - improving access to early education by development of new forms of pre-primary education, including compulsory pre-primary preparation for children at the age of 5 from September 2011, guaranteeing the right to pre-primary education to 4-year-old children starting from September 2014 and granting financial support to activities implemented by local governments from the state budget;
  - improving effectiveness of schools management and modernisation of vocational training by grouping schools under a single management accompanied by strengthened coordination of lifelong guidance as well as special educational needs; construction of a complex system supporting education based on district education development centres that would combine tasks of psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, teacher in-service training institutions and pedagogical libraries; construction of a new monitoring

system and quality assessment, including creation of regional centres of education quality performing external examinations and pedagogic supervision; creating vocational training and continuing education centres; making vocational training and continuing education more flexible; development of a new classification of occupations for vocational education comprising the new division of occupations based on qualifications and adjusting external examinations to it; making co-financing of private provision of education for adults dependent on scores on professional examinations;

- reforming of higher education and research careers based on the amended act signed in April this year by the President of the Republic of Poland: namely *Higher Education Law, Act on Academic Degrees and the Title as well as the Degrees and the Title in the arts and other acts*, by strengthening autonomy of universities, increasing dependence of their financing on quality of education and level of scientific studies, integration of universities with social and economic environment;
  - promoting innovativeness – shaping innovation-oriented and entrepreneurial attitudes in society, especially in scientific and economic environment, stimulating cross-sectional flow of human capital, combating negative approach to taking risk in business, promoting academic entrepreneurship, education activities related to application of intellectual property;
- 3) *Conscious management of driver of innovation*, which relates to increasing the adaptability of companies to ongoing changes, particularly Micro Small and Medium Enterprises by providing training and counselling aimed at developing skills in the field of strategic management as well as change and human capital management and creation of companies' adaptability support centre.

In the area of *Activity for inclusive growth* activities related to education and training are presented in two priorities:

- 1) *Modern labour market*, which encompasses the implementation of the lifelong learning policy concentrated on improving quality in learning in different forms, places and at different stages of life, including: development and implementation of the National Qualification Framework; facilitating moving from education to the first employment; improving links between education and training and needs of the labour market; supporting the increase in women's participation in the labour market; increasing the average retirement age; improving employment system of the disabled; better reconciliation of working life and family life by, among others, developing childcare for the youngest children.
- 2) *Preventing social exclusion*, through the extension of services enabling acquisition of competences in tackling different forms of social exclusion. Within the framework of this extension efforts will be taken to strengthen struggle against social exclusion, to promote social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled, social integration of immigrants, development of social economy and construction of a uniform family and childcare supporting system.

With respect to the headline targets for the year 2020 the NRP identifies actions that should be undertaken by 2014. However, it concentrates in more detail on tasks to be implemented in the coming year. The aim of the annual update is to identify tasks to be implemented in the first place because of the current social and economic situation.

## EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

### QUESTION 2

**What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving?**

#### **2.1 Measures to analyse the current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving (e.g. data collection, surveys and research)**

As for compulsory part-time education (in school or outside of school), which applies to all students under the age of 18, compulsory one-year of pre-primary preparation and the compulsory full-time education until graduation from lower secondary school basic information can be found in the **administrative data base** run in electronic form by all education and training operators at ISCED 0-5B levels and at all management levels of school and educational establishments. It is the System of Educational Information (SEI) introduced at the beginning of 2005 based on a separate law, which integrates all duties related to performing official statistics surveys and running administrative data bases. Twice a year the SEI performs monitoring of the compulsory part-time education (all communities monitor it and provide data to the SEI), compulsory one-year of pre-primary preparation and compulsory full-time education (headmasters of primary and lower secondary schools monitor this duty and provide data to the SEI) on a national scale. Although the system is an improvement compared with paper statistical reports which were used earlier and the division between statistical and administrative surveys, one of its major drawbacks is that it provides only collective information about students.

Therefore, in 2010 a bill on modernisation of the SEI was drawn. It assumes an improved and accelerated provision of data and collection of individual data with respect to all students based on a **unique and anonymous number** of universal citizen identification (so called PESEL granted from birth). Collection of individual data will allow to correlate major features of students, particularly information concerning the process and conditions of education, with its effects (based on scores on external examinations). This will also help significantly improve identification of failures to fulfil compulsory pre-primary preparation, compulsory schooling and education. The bill was adopted by the Parliament in April 2011. Implementation of the new SEI is planned to start in 2013.

Due to the progressing differentiation of learning forms after fulfilment of compulsory education, it seems that it is more future-oriented to examine further education paths concentrating on **recipients of different education forms** rather than on school education operators. The Labour Force Survey in Poland performed on a quarterly basis by the Central Statistical Office may serve as an example of such survey. It is complemented by other representative studies, e.g. studies performed by research institutes upon their own initiative or occasional checks by services controlling fulfilment of the duties imposed by the acts. Such surveys concerning fulfilment of compulsory education were carried out on the national scale before the period covered by this report, i.e. before 2009.

Within the framework of the ongoing planning of lifelong learning policy it is projected to enforce a better **interdepartmental coordination** with respect to data storage and analysis. This results from the recognition that learning does not take place only in school and that data regarding non-formal and informal learning as well as learning at all stages of life should be collected for the purpose of the lifelong learning policy.

## 2.2 Please indicate the priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, education sectors)

Education sectors which are priority areas for the years 2009-2011 include:

- **pre-primary education** – participation in this form of education measured by the ET2020 benchmark, which relates to the share of children between age 4 and the age for starting of compulsory education, increased from 67.5% in the school year 2007/08 to 82.1% in the school year 2010/11,
- **general education** – in which a curricular reform has been implemented since September 2009 formulating curriculum content in terms of learning outcomes (in accordance with the European qualification framework), which grants more autonomy to schools and teachers in organising the learning process and allows for more extensive individualisation of this process, which is particularly important for students that are vulnerable to early school leaving.

Since 2009 design works have been carried out, also as part of projects co-financed from European funds, as well as work on legal bases with respect to modifications which are to be implemented in the field of:

(1) comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning policy, including modifications as regards national qualifications system aimed, among others, at more extensive recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is also of importance for students that are vulnerable to early school leaving; (2) reforms concerning higher education and scientific careers (legal bases of the reform have already been adopted and will enter into force in October this year); (3) reforms of vocational training and continuing education of adults; (4) consolidation of the support system to education processes based on district education development centres; (5) reform of the childcare system with respect to children under the age of 3 (the reform will enter into force in June this year). These changes are described in more detail in subsequent parts of the report.

Target groups which have been a priority in the recent years in the policy on reducing the phenomenon of early school leaving include:

(1) **children aged 0-6** (due to a significant delay in development of the early childhood education and care system in Poland); (2) young children requiring **early intervention**, i.e. forms of support eliminating developmental disorders from the moment of detection of disability to the commencement of education at school (over 15 thousand children received such support in 2010); (3) children and youth with **special educational needs**; (4) children and youth at **high risk of poverty** (i.e. approx. 520 thousand students meeting the required criteria are beneficiaries of school scholarships and allowances as part of social aid, approx. 260 thousand students receive financial support for textbooks' purchasing, approx. 700 thousand students benefit from provision of meals at school); (5) children and youth from **rural areas**; (6) children and youth from of the **migrant background** – since 2010 tuition fees have been lifted for students who are not Polish citizens at the level of upper-secondary schools. In addition, with respect to the fulfilment of the schooling duty students who are not Polish citizens are entitled to an annual, additional and free-of-charge course of Polish and the right to aid to be provided by a teaching assistant speaking their native language. All students coming to Poland from other education systems who do not speak Polish sufficiently may attend additional remedial classes concerning subjects taught; (7) **early school leavers** (description in point 2.4).

### **2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving - the most effective measures taken at the system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners**

The outstanding result of Poland in reducing the share of early school leavers is connected with equally good results as regards increasing the share of young people **gaining an education** at ISCED 1-6 level and with **at least upper secondary education** (ISCED 3)<sup>1</sup>. This is despite one of the highest risk of poverty among children and youth in the EU and a poorly developed system of the early childhood education and care<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, activities that have been undertaken and addressed to all these groups should be assessed as effective (even if undertaken rather late but they have activated the potential which had earlier been restrained). In terms of expenditure per capita they are usually cheaper and do not entail the risk of stigmatization. They include measures which respond to the growth of citizens' educational aspirations: **extending the duration of comprehensive education** at the level of lower-secondary school, **improving access to upper-secondary education** enabling a **5-times increase in the number of students** in the last two decades.

This occurs in parallel to the **extension of the upper limit of compulsory education** (full-time and part-time). The Constitution of the Republic of Poland adopted in 1997 introduced, besides the full-time compulsory education from the age of 7 in the formerly existing 8-year primary school, compulsory part-time education until the age of 18 in school or outside school (by among others vocational training provided by employer). On the other hand, the reform of education system implemented from 1999 extended the compulsory full-time education by one year, which now takes place in 6-year primary school followed by 3-year lower secondary school offering general education at ISCED 2 level.

Since 2004 solutions have been introduced which are connected with the **extension of the lower limit of compulsory education**. Since September 2004 a compulsory one-year of pre-primary preparation for 6-year-old children has been introduced. From September 2009 5-year-old children have been granted the right to pre-primary education and since September 2011 five-year-olds will be subjected to compulsory one-year pre-primary preparation, which will be followed by lowering the age of compulsory education in primary schools to 6 years starting from September 2012. What is more, it is planned to grant the right to pre-primary education to 4-year-old children. Since April 2011 implementation of an act introducing new forms of support for parents raising children under the age of 3 and facilitating organisation of these forms has been ongoing.

The extension of full-time compulsory education in lower secondary school turned out to be an **effective solution in reduction of students' segregation**, which is an important aspect of reducing the ESL. Its positive effect was reflected in PISA 2000 and 2003 – Poland reported the greatest in the EU and the OECD reduction in variance of student performance between schools. PISA 2006 and 2009 confirmed the persistence of this reduction.

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<sup>1</sup> In Poland in 2009 the largest share of people in the EU aged 15-24, i.e. 71.7%, participated in education on ISCED 1-6 level. Simultaneously 91.3% of people aged 20-24 completed education on at least ISCED 3 level, while the EU average is 78.6%.

<sup>2</sup> According to EU-SILC data in Poland in 2009 23% of children under the age of 18 were exposed to a high risk of poverty and there was the least share of children under and above the age of 3 who participated in early education and care on the EU scale. It must be, however, emphasised that the reduction of early school leaving in Poland is positively affected by a small share of foreigners in schools (calculated only in pro miles) and a difficult transition from education into the labour market. This is why some young people delay the moment of transition and stay longer in the education system.

## 2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving - the most effective measures taken

While solutions targeted at all students, which satisfy the needs of approx. 90% of children and young people until the age of 18, are credited with the greatest efficiency in reducing the early school leaving phenomenon, compensating measures are also developed. Offers which are considered the most effective include:

- 1) **schools for adults** operating based on separate rules and facilitating reconciliation of schooling with employment; in justified cases they enrol people who have attained 15 years of age; in 2010/11 there have been nearly 290 thousand students learning at ISCED 1-3 level, of which only 237 were primary school students, over 16 thousand learning at ISCED 2 level (more than 80% above the age of 18), over 272 thousand learning at ISCED 3 level (approx. 80% are students of general education and approx. 70% are under the age of 25);
- 2) **out-of-school establishments** for continuing education of adults, where several hundred thousand adults and several thousand juveniles (16-18 year-olds, including juvenile workers) take part in training annually;
- 3) **special schools**, including schools that prepare their students to employment for disabled and young people vulnerable to social maladjustment; at present there are approx. 28 thousand people who learn at ISCED 3 level, of which nearly 10 thousand are students at special schools adopting to employment;
- 4) **education in the form of vocational training provided by the employer** – in 2010/11 over 16 thousand youngsters have attended such training;
- 5) institutions offering **multirange and integrated forms of services** for young people being at risk of early school leaving (example provided below).

**Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC)** are institutions providing integrated forms of support. They offer help to young people under the age of 15 who have not completed primary or lower secondary school or do not fulfil the compulsory part-time education. In most cases this applies to young people who dropped out of school because of educational neglect. In 2010/11 the VCL coordinate support addressed to approx. 34 thousand young people, including approx. 17 thousand students who supplement their general education and simultaneously participate in the programme of vocational training, approx. 15 thousand are students of vocational schools and approx. 2 thousand attend vocational training provided by the employer. The vast majority of the VCL members have the status of juvenile workers. They specialise in 50 professions that are required by the local labour market. The VCL employees organise learning activities which are aimed at minimising education-related failures. These activities include organisation of peer support and remedial courses. More than 80% of participants successfully complete their education or get promotions to the next class while the pass rate of examinations for qualification titles exceeds 90%.

The VCL also carry out activities in the field of employment, countering marginalisation and social exclusion, which are targeted at larger youth groups. These activities are carried out in education and labour centres, youth job centres and job clubs which are units that provide job-finding and consulting services and organise training courses on active job search. In 2010 over 175 thousand job seekers in total were registered in the VCL youth job centres. The VCL employment agents directed approx. 172 thousand people to work, of whom over 111 thousand started to work. The VCL units providing job-finding services organised 220 labour fairs and 1197 job fairs for young people all over the country in 2010.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

### QUESTION 3

**What measures has your country undertaken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment?**

#### **3.1 Measures to increase entry rates of students to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups**

The years 2009-2011 have witnessed the continuation of activities which, as a result, led to one of the greatest rises of the number of students in Europe, and contributed to gaining by Poland a top position with respect to participation rates in education on the ISCED 1-6 levels of students aged 15-24 years (see the ratio mentioned in footnote No. 1).

An increase in number of students was possible due to the outstanding increase of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) from 112 in the year 1990/91 to 461 in 2009/10 (excluding schools providing education at ISCED 5B level, i.e. teacher training colleges and training colleges for social workers which are not part of the Polish higher education system yet). Facilitating **establishment of non-state HEIs** was critical (its number rose from 7 to 330). The share of their students increased to 33%, which demonstrates that these schools are in most cases small (almost a half of them have fewer than 1 thousand students whereas the majority of the rest has only up to 3 thousand). The total number of students rose nearly 5 times from over 400 thousand to more than 1950 thousand in 2005/6, and then gradually fell as a consequence of the demographic decline – to 1900 thousand in 2009/10. Participation in higher education increased more than 4 times from 9.8% (net enrolment rate excluding education at ISCED 5B level) in 1990/01 to 41.2% in 2009/10 (gross enrolment rate rose from 12.9% to 53.7%).

Despite the small decreasing number of students in the recent years, the number of universities keep growing – from 445 in 2005/06 to 461 in 2009/10, mostly non-state higher education institutions – from 315 to 330. However, the annual growth of non-state universities fell from several to over 30 in the years 1990/91 – 2005 to the rate from 3 to 6. A large number of non-state HEIs play an important role in increasing entry rates to higher education. Many of these schools are located **in smaller towns**, close to large target groups from rural areas and small towns who earlier did not apply to get a higher education on a larger scale. A significant number of non-state HEIs offer shorter education cycles in the form of **bachelor's degree studies**. Their offer is dominated by **extramural studies** which are attended by more than 82% of their students.

However, such a significant increase in entry rates to higher education faces significant barriers whose removal may contribute to further development in this field. Apart from a limited accessibility of studies to less wealthy persons and people outside the traditional age group commencing higher education, i.e. population aged 19-24, it is worth **mentioning the relation between long and medium higher education cycles** and lack of Higher Education Short Cycles. In countries with high entry rates to higher education or in Poland where such rates are rapidly growing, medium-cycles (3-4.5 years) prevail over long-cycles (5-6 years). The World Bank's report *Europe 2020 Poland* (2001) points to the exactly reverse structure of the higher education system in Poland with 74% graduates of higher education long-cycles compared with merely 36% in the OECD and 46% in the EU-19. Simultaneously, Higher Education Short Cycles that play a substantial role in educational activating young people and adults who are less academically oriented is not offered in Poland.

Having regard to the fact that a rapid increase in entry rates to higher education is simultaneously accompanied by challenges related to the quality of education and linking it with the needs of economy, since 2008 actions have been undertaken to improve the structure of higher education courses, now dominated by humanities, which in principle are cheaper and easier to offer. With respect to mathematics, science and technology so called **ordered courses of studies** are offered. HEIs may obtain additional resources from the state budget to encourage people to attend such studies, which are allocated to enhancing attractiveness of the teaching content, catch-up activities and scholarship programmes.

Apart from continuing the earlier launched activities in the years 2009-2010 aiming at increasing entry rates to higher education, **higher education reform** was developed, leading to signature of the Reforming Act by the President of the Republic of Poland in April 2011. Within the framework of the said Act and the NPR regarding implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy (assuming an increase of the share of population aged 30-34 with higher education to 45% by 2020) it is planned to implement the following measures, which may contribute to a further growth of entry rates to higher education while taking into account the quality of education and linking it with the needs of economy:

- increasing the accessibility of higher education by, among others, improving the accessibility of loans to less favoured people and increasing the effectiveness of the system related to granting non-refundable material aid to students;
- popularising of bachelor's degree studies;
- promoting Polish higher education abroad in order to increase entry rates to higher education also among foreigners;
- promoting linkage between university education and participation in the labour market by enhanced cooperation between academic milieu and economic environment;
- increasing attractiveness of higher education system by introducing diverse university studies/expanding educational offer;
- increasing autonomy of higher education institutions in developing the curriculums of university studies;
- expanding educational offer of higher education institutions addressed to people at all ages;
- popularising the idea of lifelong learning among candidates at all ages.

Certain major specific solutions are discussed below:

- it was diagnosed that unfair access to free-of-charge higher education (approx. 60% of students pay for their studies whereas 40% of state universities students study full-time free-of-charge and are additionally entitled to unlimited number of courses) constitutes an obstacle in increasing entry rates to higher education and improving access to such education; therefore, in the above-mentioned Reforming Act taking up more than one course will be reserved for 10% of best performing students; **the resulting vacancies**, approx. 40 thousand per year, will be made available to students who have paid for their studies so far but come from less favoured backgrounds;
- as for the **system of financial aid**, it is planned to modify the current proportions, which were much-criticised by, among others, the OECD and the World Bank, between funds allocated to social grants and benefits and to scholarships for outcomes in education or sports – from the current division "50% to 50%" to a new one "60% to 40%"; lifting by 30% the threshold of the minimum family income per capita entitling students to apply for a social grant will serve as a tool to implement these objectives, and that in turn will contribute to the increased availability of social benefits and will allow a greater number of students and doctoral students with low income to receive social grants from the same budget;

- the Reforming Act introduces provisions which are targeted at increasing the accessibility of higher education institutions to **disabled** – among the tasks of HEIs *full participation in educational process and scientific studies* was indicated; introduction of this provision refers to financing of HEIs' tasks related to education of disabled; the Act introduces a possibility to grant public funding for *tasks connected with providing disabled with conditions allowing for their full participation in educational process* performed by both state and non-state universities; it also introduces social grants for disabled doctoral students;
- the country also decided to **finance doctoral studies conducted in non-state universities** – as a result, it will be possible to take up doctoral studies free-of-charge also at the best performing non-state HEIs.
- in addition, in 2011 before the adoption of the Reforming Act significant amendments were introduced to the **system of preferential student loans**, as a result of which student loans became more accessible to students from the least favoured backgrounds. Since 2010/11 each student, whose family income does not exceed 600 PLN net per capita may apply for a 100% loan guarantee by the National Economy Bank (the same rules apply to persons without parental responsibility), if the family income per capita does not exceed 1000 PLN, the guarantee will amount to up to 70%; it is also worth mentioning that it became possible to suspend credit repayment for the period of one year if the borrower experiences financial problems; also procedures relating to the credit award and service were simplified. In the last two years, successful information campaigns concerning student loans have been conducted that have contributed to an 45% increase in popularity of this form of material support. Amendments to the loan system were made in cooperation with the **Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland**.

### **3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education**

Apart from a nearly 5-fold increase in the number of university students in Poland in the last two decades, there is also an important rise in the share of young people with higher education. With respect to one of the headlines targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy in the years 2000-2009 Poland recorded an increase in higher education among population aged 30-34, whose scale is outstanding on the EU level, namely from 12.5% in 2000, being then one of the lowest levels, to 35.3% in 2010, i.e. exceeding the EU average (33.6%).

Regardless of this fact there is still untapped potential of further growth in this respect. This is proved by a rather large share of people who enter higher education but do not complete their studies as compared with the OECD countries. According to the *Education at a Glance 2010* report containing data from 2008, this share amounted to 39% in Poland in comparison with the OECD average of 31% and the EU-19 average of 30%.

It is expected that the majority of measures within the framework of the above-mentioned Reforming Act facilitating the entry to higher education will positively affect the completion of university studies. In this respect it is worth underlining the projected modifications aimed at making education process more flexible, establishing stronger ties between HEIs and economic environment and promoting shorter than 5-6 years higher education cycles, including improving access to obtaining the bachelor's degree.

## MOBILITY

### QUESTION 4

**Which measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?**

#### **4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)**

The following programmes promoting learning mobility are being carried out in Poland:

- The **Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)** including: **Erasmus** targeted at improving mobility of HEI students – approx. 70% of Polish HEIs and over 14 thousand students took part in the programme in 2009/2010, also the number of incoming students is increasing: 5.5 thousand in 2009/2010 (over 10% more than in the previous year); **Leonardo da Vinci**, supporting mobility in the field of vocational education and training – over 4.1 thousand participants took part in the programme in 2009/2010, an increase to 4.7 thousand was observed in 2010/2011; **Grundtvig**, supporting mobility of about 500 adult participants annually; **Comenius**, in two previous years Polish schools were involved in over 470 partnerships annually, in 2011 Poland joined the new action of the programme: Individual Pupil Mobility, which gives the secondary school pupils the chance to spend between 3 and 10 months in a host school and a host family abroad, promoting Comenius actions is based on the participation in the **eTwinning**.
- **Youth in Action** – the programme tailored economically to the possibilities and needs of the youth community, over 11 thousand of young people participate in it annually.
- Programmes regulated by bilateral agreements: **Polish-German Youth Cooperation**, supporting approx. 3,5 thousand common projects annually, with approx. 135 thousand participants; **Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund**, **Polish-Israeli Youth Exchange**, and a pilot programme of the **Polish-Russian Youth Exchange**.
- Regional cooperation programmes: the **Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, CEEPUS**. This programme does not include money transfer i.e. every participating country secures an appropriate pool of scholarship months, covers the travel costs of its grantees and the cost of stay of the foreigners. 670 scholarship man-months on departures and 651 on arrivals are being implemented in 2010/2011; **SALTO-Youth** supports cooperation between youth organisations of Eastern Europe and Caucasus.
- In terms of promoting long-term incoming educational mobility, an important role is played by the Polish Government's Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme, which has been developed since 2006. It is Europe's largest **assistance program for young Belarusians** who cannot study in Belarus because of their political views.

Within the framework of the above mentioned initiatives, regular activities promoting learning mobility are carried out, which comprises using media, publications, newsletters, films, as well as launching actions promoting mobility and initiating agreements with regional partners. The following examples of such actions and agreements can be indicated:

- a nationwide debate on the initiative 'Youth on the Move' involving young people and key policymakers aimed at promoting the programme's objectives;
- a nationwide promotional campaign on the benefits of LLP-Erasmus transnational exchange and issues concerning the quality transnational exchange;
- the International Volunteering Forum (launched in January 2011), which initiated, among other topics, debates on the educational value of volunteering mobility;

- 11 agreements signed with regional educational authorities in 2010 within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, as well as 15 agreements with crafts chambers and with the Regional Labour Office in Warsaw.

In terms of promoting mobility of young people involved in vocational education, the Ministry of National Education **disseminates examples of good practices**. A special survey on international cooperation between schools offering vocational training in bilateral or unilateral student exchanges is helpful for this. To date, information was collected from schools for the period 2005-2010. It is anticipated that this initiative will be continued annually.

The question of recognition of the effects of tuition acquired during the exchange or foreign work experience is an area of particular interest. The information obtained will also be used to implement the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in Poland.

#### **4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)**

Within the Comenius programme actions enabling mobility of teachers and other education staff are carried out. An increase in the number of schools partnerships involving Polish schools was noted in 2010. This was followed by an increased interest in performing an action for teachers' mobility. Number of submitted applications rose by 34% comparing to the previous year and the number of completed departures rose by 19%. Comenius assistantships for student teachers become more and more popular among the students of the Teacher Education Faculties, which is reflected in a significant increase in the number of submitted applications.

Poland still has a reasonably low level of outgoing/incoming mobility of academic staff. The exception is short-term mobility, the level of which has decidedly increased as a result of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the LLP-Erasmus programme. Increasing numbers of Polish academics participate in the Erasmus programme. The number of their trips has increased from 359 in 1998/99 to 2,974 in 2009/10. 3,079 trips of academic tutors from 186 Polish universities took place in 2008/09. Poland then occupied first place among the countries participating in Erasmus in terms of the amount of mobility of academic tutors, which is evidence of the activity of our lecturers and the high quality of classes conducted by them.

Mobility of tutors and other educators in the area of vocational education and training is supported by the LDV programme. Incentives are being developed under this programme for tutors and other educators to participate in VETPRO projects on sharing experience. Approximately EUR 1.8 million is assigned each year for these activities. In order to promote mobility of this kind, the National Agency works closely with national networks of continuing and practical education centres.

#### **4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility**

The significant barriers to outgoing/incoming mobility identified in various areas of education (general education, vocational education, higher education and adult education) still include **language skills**. The actions which can reduce the significance of this obstacle in the future include the introduction of a compulsory external examination in a modern foreign language (English, French, Spanish, German, Russian or Italian) from 2008/09 (from 2012/2013 also

Ukrainian), as a part of the lower secondary school examination. Since 2009/2010 compulsory teaching of one modern foreign language starting grade 1 of primary school and of two modern foreign languages starting grade 1 of the lower secondary school was introduced. Prospective teachers are required to achieve level B2 of language competency specified in the CEFR during their studies. Furthermore, in the response cited above to question no. 3, the Act reforming the higher education system in Poland takes into consideration the learning of foreign languages as an important criterion for evaluation by the State Accreditation Committee (evaluating the quality of higher education).

Furthermore, **the following additional barriers:** financial, recognition of learning outcomes and curriculum differences are identified in the outgoing mobility of Polish students. In the incoming mobility of students, the main obstacles are the lack of programme offering in foreign languages, mainly in English, and curriculum differences. The outgoing mobility of academic staff is primarily obstructed by the recognition of the period of working abroad and the heavy schedule of activities. In incoming mobility of academic staff, the main obstacles are inconsistency in social security systems, recognition of the work period abroad and staffing minima at state universities.

These barriers should be **progressively eliminated by the solutions** of the above-mentioned Act reforming higher education, among which are the abolition of central standards of education and support programmes of the National Qualifications Framework, the introduction of the recognition of equivalence of diplomas obtained abroad in the EU, EEA and OECD countries; the specification of the rules by which foreign universities can set up affiliate offices in Poland; the inclusion of the number of foreign students in the algorithm on the award of grants to state university activities; enabling the dean to decide on the employment of a professor extraordinarius and visiting professor not only from among the foreigners and Polish citizens who have gained a doctoral degree abroad, but also Polish citizens who gained a doctoral degree in Poland and, while working abroad for a minimum of five years, have independently managed research teams and have significant scientific achievements.

The implementation at national level of the principles of cooperation developed in the areas of EQF, EQARF, ECVET and EUROPASS will be important for the reduction in the barriers to mobility in learning.

## NEW SKILLS AND JOBS

### QUESTION 5

**What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?**

#### **5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010)**

A project co-financed by the ESF, coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on the **diagnosis of the demand for qualifications and skills** on the regional and local labour market was implemented from July 2008 to July 2010. Studies were conducted in this project by labour offices into the methods, tools and procedures used for diagnosing the demand for

jobs and skills, their suitability to the training plan was assessed, appropriate methods, tools and procedures were developed and these were tested in 5 labour offices and their final versions were prepared.

In addition, work arising from the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions adopted in April 2004 is continuing. According to this Act, the development of analyses of the labour market, including the **monitoring deficit and surplus occupations** (*monitoring zawodów deficytowych i nadwyżkowych - MZDiN*), are among the tasks set for regional self-governments and county self-governments. MZDiN has been conducted at national, regional and county level since 2005.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is currently planning to **improve the MZDiN methodology**. A thorough review of the current methodology, the identification of available data resources and the indication of new sources and methods of determining the deficit or workforce surplus by occupation and skills are planned. After developing the new methodology, the information system will be streamlined to facilitate monitoring by the labour office staff, including with the use of appropriate data sets and reporting system. There are also plans to train staff of labour offices involved in analysing the situation on the labour market in terms of a new monitoring methodology.

Apart from conducting the obligatory MZDiN, labour offices will take action on their own to forecast the demand for skills. An example of such activities is the creation of **the Regional Labour Market Observatories** (*Regionalne Obserwatoria Rynku Pracy - RORP*) under projects co-financed by the ESF. RORPs are operated by the regional labour offices, whose job is to conduct research into and analysis of the situation on the labour market. The RORP's tasks include conducting research and determining the needs of employers for jobs, qualifications and skills; analysing factors affecting the success of people on the labour market; studying the effectiveness of vocational adult training and the need for such training and; improving cooperation between educational institutions and labour market institutions. Nine RORPs are currently operating in the Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Opole, Warszawa and Szczecin regions. Work is underway to launch RORPs in the remaining 7 regions.

As a part of the preparation for the reform of the higher education system in Poland, as described in the response to question no. 3, a series of studies was conducted on the structure of education, as well as **the demand of employers for university graduates to have of greater skills**. Analyses were prepared by experts from the academic environment and employers using the diagnoses of international organisations, especially the World Bank and OECD.

The analyses confirmed the poor match between the structure of higher education and the needs of the labour market. Students in Poland are currently studying on more than 200 courses of studies, including unique and macro courses. Most students study economic and administrative courses - 23%, social sciences - 13.9%, teaching - 12%, the humanities - 8.8%, engineering and technical - 6.8%, medicine - 5.8%, IT - 4.9%, services - 3.7%, legal - 3.1% and environmental protection - 1.4% (16.4% fall within the category of "other courses"). These preferences suggest that the segment of humanities and social sciences is excessively developed. Consequently, the poor structure of education reduces the added value of higher education in Poland. This is because Polish employers primarily need engineers and ICT specialists, as well as graduates in construction and transport and specialists in the physical sciences and mathematics.

## 5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance

Reports of the monitoring deficit and surplus occupations described above are being developed in half-yearly and annual cycles. The monitoring reports on the national level are posted on the website [www.psz.praca.gov.pl](http://www.psz.praca.gov.pl). Apart from indicating the occupations with the greatest shortages and surpluses at national level, the national reports also contain tables providing information on the occupations with the highest level of deficit and surplus in each region. At regional level and local level, the monitoring reports are made available to directors of post-lower secondary schools, training institutions, county heads and heads of regions. The results of the monitoring are used to **plan education and training and improve educational and vocational guidance**, with particular emphasis on the needs of the unemployed and job seekers.

The analyses, recommendations and forecasts described in point 5.1 which are prepared by the Regional Labour Market Observatories are used to determine the strategic directions in the development of regions with regard to education and the labour markets. In particular, they are used to **modernise education and training offerings** and adjust them to the identified and forecast needs of employers. A model of educational vocational guidance is being prepared under an ESF co-financed project since 2009, which is to be implemented in every school. The project also comprises an internet portal for sharing VET information.

The analyses of the demand of employers for graduates with greater skills mentioned in point 5.1 have supported the **government programme of ordered courses of studies** initiated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education since 2008. They have the objective of increasing the number of mathematics, technical and natural science students. These are the strategic directions for the development of the Polish economy. The third edition of the ordered courses of studies was announced in February 2011. PLN 610 million has been allocated to 57 universities to date for this purpose. It is expected that PLN 1 billion will be allocated to the implementation of the programme of ordered by 2013. The implementation of the programme of ordered courses of studies is bringing quantifiable results. The popularity of courses of studies regarded as a priority to the development of the economy is increasing among candidates. The top twenty most popular fields of study include as many as seven from the list of ordered courses of studies, where the largest increase was recorded in construction, which occupies second place among the most popular courses of studies in Poland. Courses at technical universities become more popular than universities. Technical universities have 3.9 candidates per place, while the universities have 3.5.

Furthermore, the Act reforming the higher education system referred to in the response to question 3 introducing new instruments to support the development of guidelines tailored to the needs of a developing economy and reducing the number of courses of studies the graduates of which have difficulties in finding a job. The Act increases the autonomy of the university curriculum on the basis of the National Qualifications Framework agreed upon with employers. It introduces measures to foster the participation of employers in education - the opportunity to study with the participation of the employer, as well as education on the employer's instructions. An important legislative instrument, in terms of matching the higher education system to the needs of the economy, will be the appointment by the minister responsible for higher education, of the **Graduate Rights Ombudsman**. The Ombudsman's task will be to monitor the extent to which curricula are matched to the needs of employers, as well as to examine the level of access to specified professions.

## EDUCATION BUDGETS

### QUESTION 6

**How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?**

The situation of the Polish economy has been favourable throughout the economic and financial crisis which has lasted several years. According to estimates of GDP in 2010, Poland, with GDP growth of 3.8% compared with 2009, was one of the fastest developing countries in Europe. Similarly, the Polish economy has demonstrated a great deal of resistance to the influence of external disturbances and is developing in a sustainable manner. This is confirmed by estimates of GDP growth in Q1, 2011 of 4.4% compared with same period in the previous year. However, because of the high deficit and the need to balance public finance, Poland needs to increase its spending discipline in coming years, without simultaneously stifling the economy.

In such a situation, the economic and financial outlay on the main areas of formal education, i.e. the education system (including the portion of the tasks related to adult education, i.e. schools for adults to the level of ISCED 4 and continuing education institutions), as well as higher education, has not been reduced because of the crisis.

*The school education system (including adult education in schools)*

The total expenditures from the state budget, local government budgets and the budget of European funds on school education in 2010 amounted to PLN 56.6 billion, which was 6.2% (PLN 3.3 billion) more than the corresponding expenditures in the previous year. The ratio of expenditure on educational measures financed by the state budget to total state budget spending was 12.6%, which was an increase of 0.6 of a percentage point compared with the previous year.

The ratio of budget spending (state budget and local government budgets), incurred in 2010 for financing measures in the area of school education to the estimated value of GDP in 2010 was 4.0%, i.e., it remained at the same level as in 2009. In 2008, this ratio was 3.9% in 2007 - 3.8%. Furthermore, teacher salaries increased in 2010 by 7%, which, together, with the increases in previous years gave an average salary increase of 30% compared with 2007. This data suggests that the **financial crisis has not affected spending on school education.**

*Higher education*

In the Budget Act for 2011, expenditures on higher education (including budget spending allocated to the co-financing of projects with EU funding and expenditures from the budget of European funds) have been planned at PLN 12.5 billion. Compared with actual spending on higher education in 2009, in terms of amounts planned, expenditure in 2011 is increasing by around PLN 0.87 billion, i.e. by 7.4%. Therefore, it is clear that the **economic and financial crisis has not adversely affected the financing of higher education.** Furthermore, the increase in spending on higher education recorded since 2007 (in terms of four-year growth at a level of 16.8%) was maintained. The ratio of total spending on higher education contained in the Budget Act for 2011, at the amount of PLN 12.5 billion, compared with the GDP forecast for this year (PLN 1,496.3 billion), stands at 0.84%.

In the resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers in April 2011 on the amendment to the Long-Term Financial Plan for 2011-2014, the planned budget spending on education

(including higher education) was increased significantly. Expenditures for 2012-2014 are planned at the amount of PLN 44.9 billion compared with the outlay planned for the period 2011-2013 (in the previous Long-Term Financial Plan for the years 2010-2013) of PLN 40.8 billion.

Moreover, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education has the objective of rationalising spending on higher education. The amendment to the Law on Higher Education introduces a **system of pro-quality financing**. This means that, while maintaining the rate of growth in the level of financing of universities, an additional grant for entities will be activated in order to finance pro-quality measures. The pro-quality grant will be addressed, *inter alia*, to the best organisational units of state agencies and private colleges which receive the status of National Leading Scientific Centres (*Krajowe Naukowe Ośrodki Wiodące - KNOW*). The units, which in the contest procedure are awarded the KNOW status, will be able to assign the funds from the pro-quality grants, for instance to the financial support of the payroll of their employees. The grants for entities for co-financing pro-quality measures can also be assigned for financing an increase in the level of PhD scholarships for 30% of the best PhD students, both in state and non-state schools, in order to create the best conditions for scientific work. It is expected that approx. PLN 230 million will be allocated for this purpose from 2012.

#### *Training for the unemployed and job seekers*

In contrast with the schooling and higher education system, training for the unemployed and job seekers is experiencing financial constraints. PLN 379.7 million, financed from the funding of the Labour Fund, which was the highest amount in 2005-2009, will be earmarked for such training in 2009. In 2010, spending on training was limited to the amount of PLN 306.9 million. Despite fewer resources spent on training in 2010 compared with the previous year, labour offices sent over 182 thousand people, namely more than 14 thousand people more than in 2009 (growth of 8.3%), on training.

According to the Budget Act, the Labour Fund's financial plan for 2011 sets the expenditure on active forms of counteracting unemployment at the amount of PLN 3.2 billion. Compared with the plan for 2010 (PLN 6.5 billion) this amount is over 50% less. Consequently, spending of PLN 181.7 million is planned on training in 2011, which will enable training to be financed for only about 75.7 thousand unemployed. The decision on the level of spending by the Labour Fund was made by the Council of Ministers in connection with the need to rationalise state budget expenditures. This is because Poland is subject to the excessive deficit procedure and, according to the recommendation of the Ecofin Council of 7 July 2009, this obligates the adjustment of the government and local government deficit, which also includes the Labour Fund, to below 3% of GDP until 2012 in a reliable and sustainable manner.

However, it should be added that that finding for the activities of labour offices can also be obtained from sources other than the Labour Fund, including in particular from European funds. Their receipt depends on activity in the preparation of comprehensive measures supporting the unemployed.

The same applies to other areas of education and training, in which measures may be significantly enhanced by effectively applying for **programmes co-financed with European funds**.

## LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

### QUESTION 7

**What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?**

#### **7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down)**

The implementation of elements of the strategy of lifelong learning in Poland has so far been based on the *Education Development Strategy for 2007-2013* adopted by the Government in August 2005. This strategy encompassed education from pre-school level, through general and vocational education in schools to higher education and continuing education for adults. It focuses mainly on formal education and, to a lesser extent, applies to the identification and use of the potential of non-formal and informal learning. Additionally, in the diagnosis and the proposed directions of development of formal education, this strategy focuses on input and process and not on an approach based on learning outcomes.

In November 2009, the Government adopted a *Plan for putting an order to the national development strategies*, in which it was decided that, in the context of consolidation of public finance and better coordination between various government agencies, **the number of strategic documents adopted by the Government would be reduced**. The decision applied to 42 of existing strategies, including the above *Education Development Strategy for 2007-2013*, which largely had an excessively narrow, departmental coverage. The number of strategies was reduced to 9 ones concerning: (1) innovation and efficiency of the economy, (2) human capital, (3) transport, (4) energy security and the environment, (5) efficient state, (6) social capital (7) regions, (8) national security; (9) rural and agriculture.

At the same time, the Council of Ministers took the view that lifelong learning and its effects - the competence and qualifications of people - **constitute a horizontal issue**. This is because the level of skills and qualifications is important for all the strategies, as one of the essential conditions for the proper achievement of their objectives.

In order to meet its international commitments arising from the establishment of a European area of LLL and for the comprehensiveness of the LLL policy and its coherence, it was decided that an additional strategic document would be prepared named *Perspective for lifelong learning* as a supporting document for the 9 integrated strategies. For this purpose **an Interdepartmental Team** for lifelong learning, including the National Qualifications Framework, was created by Order of the Prime Minister on 17 February 2010. The Team consists of representatives of the Prime Minister's Chancellery and the ministries responsible for education, science and higher education, the economy, labour and social policy, regional development and foreign affairs. The Team's Chairman is the Minister of National Education. The Team's objective is not only to develop a policy document on the assumptions to the LLL policy, but also to monitor the process of implementation of this policy and its effects. The **Steering Committee** on the National Qualifications Framework was formed within the framework of the Team, which is chaired by the Minister of Science and Higher Education. Work on the development strategies is to be completed in the summer of 2011. The *Education Development Strategy for 2007-2013* remains in force until the new 9 integrated strategies are adopted. The document named *Perspective for lifelong learning* was adopted in March 2011 by the European Committee of the Council of Ministers and the Standing Committee of the Council of Ministers. It will be addressed to the Council of Ministers after being supplemented with the action plan, which should take place within several months.

## **7.2 Main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training**

The LLL policy pursued in Poland and encompassing the whole area of learning has been effective so far mainly in the area of formal learning. In the development of this learning, especially in the development of education from age 6/7 years to 18/24 years, Poland has **many outstanding results which are even among the best in the EU and the OECD.**

This applies especially to the reduction of early school leaving, a high percentage of young people with at least basic or secondary education; a high rate of growth of young people with higher education, a marked increase in the achievements of young people at the end of the period of compulsory schooling and the largest in the OECD reduction of the variance of student performance between schools, which was discovered in the PISA study. Furthermore, the most important major policies and achievements in recent years, which fall within the scope of the LLL policy, are strongly associated with the development of formal education. **These achievements include:**

- rapid progress in the participation in preschool education, including the most pronounced in rural areas - in 2006-2010, participation in pre-school education of 3-year-olds increased from 33.1% to 49.9%, 4-year-olds from 44.4% to 64.2 % and 5-year-olds from 55.9% to 81.1%;
- preparation and implementation from September 2009 of the reform of the pre-school and general education curriculum formulated in the language of learning outcomes, i.e. in line with the European Qualifications Framework;
- preparation of the reform of higher education, which will be implemented from October 2011 and which, *inter alia*, introduced an approach to higher education based on learning outcomes which is consistent with the objectives of the EQF (changes in this respect are described in the response to question 3);
- start of work since 2008 on the creation of the National Qualifications Framework cohesively recognising qualifications obtained in school and higher education systems and outside those systems, as well as the start of work on the reform of vocational education and training facilitating the implementation of ECVET in Poland.

Poland's success in providing education for young people is not affecting development of adult education. Poland is recording low participation of adults in education and training (measured by the European benchmark of people aged between 25 and 64 years who participate in education or training within 4 weeks before the date of the survey) - the stoppage at around 5%, has lasted for the past ten years. However, it should be pointed out that formal adult learning in Poland, measured by the above benchmark, as well as in the study named *Adult Education Survey*, does not differ from the average in the EU. The distance which separates Poland from the EU in this area mainly applies to non-formal learning, namely learning which is strongly associated with on the on-the-job learning.

In this situation, the above Interdepartmental Team for lifelong learning selected the following **main objectives of the Polish LLL policy**: (1) increase in creativity and innovation; (2) transparent and coherent national system of qualifications; (3) diverse and accessible range of forms of early education and care; (4) education and training tailored to the needs of sustainable economy, changes on the labour market and social needs; (5) working environment and community involvement supporting development of adult learning.

A special role has been assigned to the work on the **National Qualifications Framework**, which started in 2008, within the framework of a project co-financed by the ESF. As a result

an expert NQF model and preliminary guidelines for the NQF implementation were prepared, which was announced through a special website in January 2010. Since July 2010, the Educational Research Institute in Warsaw has been working on the next stage of the NQF development, also funded by the ESF, named *Development of the substantive and institutional assumptions to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and National Qualifications Register for lifelong learning*. This stage comprises: broad public debate with different stakeholders, which is to lead to the development of the final model of the Polish NQF; a national reference report; the draft of the National Qualifications Register; the institutional system for implementing the NQF. The final model of the NQF, which identifies 8 levels of qualifications in Poland, has been already completed. Work is on-going on the national reference report, which should be completed by the end of 2011, and on the creation of a map of qualifications in Poland, the draft of the National Qualifications Register as well as the institutional system for implementing the NQF. Current data on progress is published in the website ([www.kwalifikacje.org.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.org.pl)).

#### OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS

##### QUESTION 8

**What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2 – 7?**

The development of education in Poland in recent years has been **significantly supported by European funds**. Programming spending from the European funds is included in the so-called operational programmes (OP), several of which are particularly important for the development of schooling and higher education and adult education.

This primarily applies to the *Human Capital* (OP) supporting activities which effectively utilise labour resources, enhance the adaptability of workers and the development of the economy's staff, improve social cohesion, develop schooling, higher education and adult education and improve the efficiency of state administration; *Infrastructure and environment* OP (including the support of the development of the higher education infrastructure). Investments targeted at the development of science in the *Innovative Economy* OP (supporting research and development of modern technologies and support of the development of R&D infrastructure) are also important for the quality of higher education.

Following key actions conducted within the framework of projects financed with European funds are underway:

- preparing and implementing extensive changes in the education system - the reform programme regarding general education referred to in point 2.2 and implemented since September 2009, increasing the participation in pre-school education, the planned modernisation of vocational education and training, the reform of quality assurance in education and the consolidation of the system of supporting schools, including strengthening the system of teacher training, modernising the system of external examinations, including examinations for vocational qualifications, the modernisation of the Education Information System referred to in point 2.1, the dissemination of distance learning and educational and vocational guidance, the support for pupils with special educational needs and migrant students;

- preparing and supporting higher education reforms (described in point 3);
- supporting adult education outside the schooling and higher education system (including among others the development of human resources management, state administration staff, staff training to increase their adaptability to change, the training of the unemployed and job seekers, training in many areas of the economy and the civic society);
- supporting policy based on learning outcomes, including the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework.

Of the selected projects co-financed with European funds, not described at length in the previous sections of this report, it is worth mentioning the two described below.

In 2009-2011, **work continued on the modernisation of the vocational training system.** These activities were initiated by the appointment of a consultative and advisory team on vocational training by order of the Minister of National Education in June 2008. The result of this work was the preparation of legislative proposals relating to: (1) systemic link between vocational training and labour market; (2) increasing the availability and effectiveness of vocational training; (3) improvement of the external examinations; (4) inclusion of vocational schools in a system of continuing education. The achievement of the objective of obtaining greater efficiency in the vocational training system and harmonising it with the labour market, will be possible through the implementation of the following solutions in successive years: (1) the modification of the classification of occupations in vocational education, including the division of occupations into separately validated qualifications, (2) the implementation of modernised core curricula for vocational training, (3) the consolidation of vocational and continuing education in vocational and continuing education centres, (4) enabling adults to complete general education in a flexible formula, while guaranteeing the ability to acquire vocational qualifications in the forms of courses, (5) the standardisation of the examination system for acquiring vocational qualifications and opening it up to the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

Work has been ongoing since 2008 on the **system supporting the education of the children of Polish citizens abroad.** The objective of this system is to enable these children to develop skills in using their mother tongue, as well as supplementary education in selected subjects (Polish language, geography and history), facilitating the continuation of education after they return home. The core curriculum for Polish students studying abroad was prepared within the framework of projects co-financed by the ESF, which includes guidelines for the creation of local curricula in the Polish language and knowledge of Polish culture, history and geography; an on-line textbook named “Switch Poland on” (Włącz Polskę) has been prepared; a Polish School portal was established. Work is continuing on materials for students and teachers. The use of educational materials is free. The system operates through a network of Polish schools abroad, as well as through distance learning. Furthermore, Poland has a system of remedial courses aimed at students entering the Polish educational system, i.e. children of migrants and returnees from abroad. A project co-funded by the ESF named “Open School - Support System for Migrant Pupils” is being implemented at the Centre for Development of Polish Education Abroad. The project is addressed to Polish pupils living abroad, mainly in the EU, who follow compulsory education in local education systems and who do not have access to supplementary Polish schools.

## PROPOSALS FOR THE PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD

### QUESTION 9

**Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009-11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?**

#### **9.1 Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:**

- full implementation of comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategies (medium)
- ensuring high quality of qualifications and learning mobility (high)
- promoting on-the-job training as a primary form of adult learning (medium)

#### **9.2 Improving quality and efficiency of education and training:**

- enhancing effectiveness of policy in the field of developing competencies of the youth, especially in communication in foreign languages, intercultural competence, reading, mathematics and science with focus on low achievers and the most talented students (high)
- modernization of universities (high)
- forecasting the demand for qualifications (medium)

#### **9.3 Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:**

- developing good quality and diversified forms of early childhood education (high)
- promoting convergence of general and vocational education (medium)
- promoting best practices in migrants' education (high)

#### **9.4 Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:**

- implementing tools aimed at stimulating creativity and innovativeness, including entrepreneurship, at all education system levels (medium)
- developing assessment method of transversal competences and their identification and application in qualifications (low)

#### **9.5 Other comments**

Poland is interested in European cooperation in the field, which is the most challenging for its national policy and which may also be of importance for other countries. In spite of the good results in fulfilling educational objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and in numerous indicators of the European cooperation in the field of education and training, lifelong learning, lifewide learning as well as learning and qualifications' quality still remain a challenge.