

Digital Education in the Czech Republic: Challenges and Actions



In December 2017, the Czech National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition celebrated its first year in operation. Its formation was initiated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) following the example of other EU countries in order to fulfil the vision shared across the European Union in the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition. It represents one of the ten key initiatives proposed under the new Skills Agenda for Europe. Its aim is to support digital skills that are quickly becoming a basic requirement for the performance of most occupations in line with the requirements of Industry 4.0.

The formation of Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition fulfils one of the goals of Digital Education Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020. The Coalition seeks to support, connect and inspire organisations whose ambition is to foster digital education for the labour market. The 67 members include the representatives of state institutions, entrepreneurs and non-profit sector. The Czech National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition contributes to the development of digital literacy of the population through synergies of co-operating organisations, their targeted activities and specific commitments of individual members. Commitments of coalition members include: e.g. provision of obligatory one semester practical training at a faculty of informatics, setting up of a digital education centre focused on elderly citizens, or a municipality where local employers and representatives of schools aim to foster foreign languages and digital education through purchases of IT equipment for schools and provision of internships in companies.

The Czech National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition organizes panel discussions, roundtables, workshops and other joint meetings to create space to debate and discuss selected topics. It provides support for conferences, seminars and campaigns promoting IT fields and digital skills.

The Czech National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition faces multiple challenges requiring to find consensus of various parties – such issues include, for example, the preparation of pupils and students in formal as well as non-formal education for a digital world; teachers' training; the impact of digitalization on interpersonal relationships in the contemporary world; how to address the topic of digital literacy and computational thinking in the framework of primary and secondary schools curricula, the issue of big data in education, the need for pedagogical research on use of digital technologies in teaching or the position of network administrators in Czech schools.

While the current way of teaching in general education focuses primarily on user approach to technology, in future, emphasis should be placed on the development of computational thinking. Digital literacy should become an integral part of all other disciplines. Currently, MŠMT has announced projects under the ESF in which all Czech pedagogical faculties participate while developing support teaching materials for the new approaches and topics. The intention of MŠMT is for this trend to be reflected in the currently prepared update of more than 10 years old curricula for all the schools ranging from pre-school to upper secondary education. In mid-2017, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports provided support also to tertiary professional schools that will be engaged in the development of digital teaching material of foreign languages and vocational subjects and creation of massive open online courses (MOOC). One of key priorities of Czech digital education is to promote greater

applicability of Creative Commons' licences in education, particularly when it comes to resources and teaching materials paid from public sources. Within the action planning in individual regions, the goal is to create and build human resources – lecturers, network administrators and ICT professionals to avoid just buying digital devices.

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