

## **Reformed matura examination became reality**

Attempts to reform the matura examination<sup>1</sup> and implement the so called “state matura” in the Czech Republic have a long history. However first changes were legislatively anchored in the New Education Act in 2004. Due to prolonged discussions, the start of the new state matura was postponed to 2011. This delay was a subject of criticism, but on the other hand- it enabled Czech Republic to learn from some mistakes in other former eastern block countries. There was a nation wide vivid discussion on the state matura examination, its quality, necessity and relevance. The new matura scheme aims at securing comparability, enhancing prestige and objectivity of the *matura* examination. It is also expected that the *matura* thus will be more relevant for the higher education institutions as well as for future employers.

The new *matura* examination consists of common (general) and profiling (vocational) parts (with possibility to select difficulty level at most examinations). School leavers from gymnasium take the common part, while school leavers from all other types of secondary schools take both the common and the profiling part. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (*Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy – MŠMT*) is responsible for the centrally prepared, standardised common part for all school-leavers. The profiling (vocational) part is set by individual schools, which are also responsible for its implementation and evaluation. In October 2010 the pilot testing of the matura exam took place at schools with the aim to provide an opportunity for practicing the organisation of written exams of the common part of *matura* and to test the logistics, organisation and reliability of the technological infrastructure for the new *matura*. Feedback provided from schools helped to detect and remove technical problems. The regular state matura was launched in the beginning of May 2011 by the written exams, followed later by oral exams. It took place at 1264 schools in the Czech Republic. Almost 100 000 students enrolled for the exam and about 20 % of them failed.

The module tested in 2011(will be used also for 2012) allows students to take in the common, standardised part two obligatory exams. The first obligatory exam in Czech language and literature and the second one is upon their decision- they can decide between mathematics and foreign language. Except obligatory exams students can take maximum three non obligatory exams (e.g. in mathematics, chemistry, biology, other foreign language or civics). As far as obligatory exams students also have to decide for the level of difficulty (basic or more difficult).

The profiling part of matura exam consists of 2-3 obligatory exams and max.2 non obligatory exams. Content of the profiling part of matura examination is specific to each school and is set by its director, in accordance with national and school curricula.

The range of knowledge and skills which can be tested in the standardised part is set out for all relevant programmes of study in so called catalogues of requirements. The catalogues are published by the Ministry in electronic forms at least two years in advance of the examination date.

There is still ongoing a public discussion marked by controversies around the state matura. Matura exam was continuously monitored by the Czech School Inspectorate and schools received results of this procedure. List of the most successful schools was published, deliberately not a comparison of all schools. Remarks of teachers were analysed in order to bring an easier, less administrative, less stressful and smooth course of matura exam in 2011/2012. The Czech School Inspectorate has monitored the development and progress of matura exam since 2006. This exam will become a basis for the system of evaluation and quality assurance in the future. It is also expected that directors of less successful schools will provide information and results of discussion with the school council on the improvement. This above described module will be valid also for 2012, changes approved by government in October 2011 will appear in practice first in 2013 when three exams within the common part will be obligatory.

More information is available, in Czech only, at <http://www.novamatura.cz>

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<sup>1</sup> Examination that completes the ISCED 3A (or ISCED 4A) general and vocational programmes.