

Report for DGVT on new initiatives in VET (Dealing with the second half of 2006) Czech Republic

Approval of the Law on Recognition of Continuing Education Results and the Preparation of its Implementation

Law No. 179/2006 Coll. on verification and recognition of continuing education results as amended by later regulations (Law on recognition of continuing education results) was approved in 2006 and will come into effect on 1.8.2007.

The law is conceived in such a way as to motivate adults in the Czech Republic to take part in continuing education, acquire a new qualification, improve chances for success on the labour market and enhance the reaction of the educational system to the needs of the labour market. In addition, the law lays down the National Qualifications Framework, stipulates and regulate especially the following fields

- the system of verification and recognition of continuing education results;
- qualifications;
- qualification standards for partial qualifications;
- assessment standards for partial qualifications;
- rules concerning authorisation and authorised person;
- the rights and duties of participants of the system of recognition (verification) of continuing education;
- responsibility for recognition of continuing education results.

After the approval of the law preparation activities aiming at putting the law into effect took place. Key activities focused on the determination and partial generation of the National Qualifications Framework which will be a main tool for the implementation of the law. At the same time, the preparation of surroundings for the practical implementation and application of the law took place, especially intensive communication among all interested partners. These activities resulted in the preparation of necessary regulations for the application of the law and other statutory instruments.

MŠMT system projects (activities in 2006)

Since 2005 two significant projects have been implemented in the Czech Republic. They are targeted towards the determination and partial generation of the National Qualifications Framework. These projects are the system projects govern by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) and funded by the EU and the ČR.

- a) The project focused on the development of the National Qualifications Framework that enables desired interconnection between initial education and continuing education (NQF project www.nsk.nuov.cz).
Based on a broadly conceived cooperation with the representatives of the world of work the resolution of the project progressed especially in the following areas:

- the concept and overall architecture of the National Qualifications Framework;
 - the generation of the NQF from qualification and assessment standards for lower qualification levels (up to the level corresponding an apprenticeship certificate, ISCED 3C);
 - NQF information system (which is being prepared with an access to the Internet)
- b) The project focused on recognition of non-formal and informal learning results in schools providing adult education (UNIV project, www.univ.nuov.cz). In 2006 the project focused on setting up prerequisites for meeting one of the project goals: to design, set up and implement (in a pilot project) the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results within boundaries stipulated by the law on recognition of continuing education results.

A new final examination in the Kvalita I system project

The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NÚOV) is responsible for the reform of the final examination in the fields providing secondary education with an apprenticeship certificate. This task is being solved within the Kvalita I project which is funded by the European Social Fund and the ČR. The project started in May 2005 and was resolved during school years 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. Unlike the current state of play when the content of the final examination is in responsibility of school heads a new final examination is based on uniform assignments which are common for students of the particular field of education. Schools, employers, experts and NUOV cooperate on the development of assignments.

In the school year 2005/2006, the number of assignments increased and amounted to 19. 135 schools and 6014 students participated in the pilot verification.

A questionnaire research was used for finding out views of pilot schools and experts from the world of work (which are members of examination boards) on the new final examination. The research showed that fundamental approaches to the innovation of examinations are supported by almost all respondents. More than 90% of respondents agreed on uniform examination assignments. There are no differences in views of the representatives of the school sphere and the world of work. When verifications in pilot schools took place no considerable problems have been found out and that is why we suppose that this concept of examination will be successfully implemented.

In the school year 2006/2007, the cooperation of schools, employers and NÚOV experts resulted in 41 uniform assignments. More than 200 schools applied for pilot verification. About 12 000 students will be sitting for the new final examination - that is 30% of all apprenticeship graduates 2006/2007.

Pilot verification of two-tier curriculum development within the PILOT-S system project

Since 2005 the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education has been cooperating with 30 schools on pilot verification of the VET curricular reform. The system project Development and Verification of Pilot School Education Programmes in Selected Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools is governed by MŠMT and funded by ESF and

the ČR. All regions of the Czech Republic (except for the capital of the ČR Prague) have been participating in pilot verification which involves 24 fields of education.

The aim of the project and the reform is to assist schools in developing their own school education programmes which will correspond to specific conditions of the particular school, educational needs and prerequisites of students and the specific needs of the labour market in the particular region. In addition, the project objective is to set up innovated school educational programmes which could be used by not only by schools participating in the project but also as an example for other schools which are going to develop their own education programmes.

Besides school education programmes, the project focuses on training of pilot school teachers and strengthening cooperation with social partners of SOŠ (Secondary Technical Schools) and SOU (Secondary Vocational Schools) in the particular region. Schools carried out labour market analysis and found out labour market success of their graduates. They started to cooperate with selected employers in the region which can influence school education programmes. Moreover, these employers can contribute to a better quality of education, especially practical training.

At the end of June 2006, 52 pilot education programmes for VET was completed. Since September 48 of them have been verified in pilot schools.

Knowledge gained in this project will be used in the development of methodical and supporting materials, examples of good practice and the dissemination of experience in other SOŠ and SOU. All these steps should facilitate the progress of the VET curricular reform.

The preparation of a consultancy process on ECVET

The consultancy process the European Credit Transfer in Vocational Education and Training was prepared on the basis of the call of the Commissar of the European Commission for Education and Culture. This process is within the purview of MŠMT. The preparation took into account requirements for involvement of all ministries, regional offices and social partners dealing with education, employment and lifelong learning for the consultation process.

In the preparation period (until January 2007), supporting materials and tools for result processing were prepared for the participants in the consultancy process.

The Czech translation of the consultancy document i.e. a working document of the EC on ECVET with questions for the consultancy process was prepared for all nominated experts (addressed partners were nominated on the basis of the letter of the MŠMT deputy minister). All nominated experts were provided with additional information on ECVET: accessible files on the Internet, which explain in more details technical specifications of ECVET, make clear some terms, provide different views on these issues or refer to other information sources. Internet questionnaire for the consultancy process (drafted on the basis of the consultancy document) was a part of information (as an alternative for answers to questions contained in the consultancy document).

Generally, at the end of 2006 very good conditions for the participation of all relevant partners in the project, a smooth progress of the consultancy process in the Czech Republic and correct and reliable assessment of its results were established.