

Report for DGVT on new initiatives in VET (Dealing with the second half of 2007) Czech Republic

Lifelong Learning Strategy

In June 2007 the CR government approved a document called the Lifelong Learning Strategy. The Czech Republic met the recommendation of the Council of Ministers of Education (MŠMT) which invited member states to evaluate the present state of lifelong learning and work out a strategy for the future. The document Lifelong Learning Strategy in the CR addresses both initial and continuing education. It contains, especially the present state analysis (including SWOT analysis) a sets out main strategic aims for lifelong learning development: recognition/permeability (including recognition non-formal and informal outcomes) equal access, functional literacy, matching educational opportunities to labour market needs, stimulation of education demands, education quality assurance and development of information and counselling services. Particular aims are described in all details and have a form of generally formulated measures which should be used for meeting these aims. In addition, the aforementioned document involves links of the proposed aims with priorities of operational programmes of the Czech Republic for the period 2007- 2013.

Currently, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports together with other ministries, institutions and social partners work on the implementation plan of the Strategy, which will specify steps and procedures that are to be taken to put individual measures into effect. The implementation plan should be submitted to the Czech government by the end of 2008. The implementation itself should be put in place in the period 2009-2015.

The document of the Lifelong Learning Strategy in English is available on the MŠMT web pages http://www.msmt.cz/uploads/Strategy_LLL_eng_final.pdf.

Approval of the Law on Recognition of Continuing Education Results and 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 came 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 regulates 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.

Main tool for the implementation of the law is the National Qualification Framework.

As per this Act it shall be represented by the National Register of Qualifications (NRQ), defined as “a publicly accessible register of complete or partial qualifications acknowledged, distinguished and recognised in the Czech Republic”. NQF will become an important link between initial and further/continuing education.

NQF specifies complete and partial qualifications, describes relations between them and specifies qualification and assessment standards for partial qualifications (arranged and structured descriptions of partial qualifications and methods through which acquisition of the appropriate knowledge, skills and competences of individuals shall be verified).

The developed NQF will enable social partners to “inform about their requirements” regarding aims and content of education. NQF will support comprehensibility, transparency and comparability of qualifications and the corresponding knowledge, skills and competences.

For the system to work, employers must trust it. To ensure this, sectoral councils (at present 18 sector councils) have been set up in various sectors, composed of representatives of employers' associations, trade unions and chambers of commerce. Their task is to discuss, assess and modify the standards being developed. Sector councils represent interests of employers in the process of verification. Their proposals are submitted to the authorising bodies, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Council for Qualifications.

The rules for awarding authorization are stipulated by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.; the assessment standard of a particular qualification stipulates all their details. In addition, their detailed specification is also in competence of awarding bodies. A key issue is the vocational competence of authorized persons. Assessment standards stipulate requirements for vocational competence of authorized persons as well as logistical support. The standards already developed specify requirements for the vocational competencies of authorized persons having, i.e. requirements for their level of education and length of practical experience. Awarding bodies have the right to determine further requirements.

Standards for 300 partial qualifications are currently being prepared. So far, 37 partial qualifications from the restaurant, hotel and food industry have been successfully approved. The first applicants are already requesting authorisation, and could soon be registering to take qualifying examinations in this field.

The aim (partial aim) of two MŠMT system projects was to propose the National Qualifications Framework as well as mechanisms connected with it.

The project on the Development of the National Qualifications Framework designed (apart from other things) qualification and assessment standards for 110 complete qualifications and 340 partial qualifications. Within approval procedures Sector Councils recommended 160 partial qualifications. In addition, authorising bodies approved 60 partial qualifications and MŠMT approved 57 partial qualifications. All approved qualification and assessment standards have been published in the NQF information system ([www.narodni – kvalifikace.cz](http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz)).

In compliance with the law on recognition continuing education results, authorising persons have been already nominated for 40 approved standards.

In 2007, the process of recognition of learning results (based on assessment standards in NQF) for more than 100 partial qualifications linked with seven fields of education (e.g. waiter hairdresser) was pilot tested within the project Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Results in the Network of Schools Providing Educational Services for Adults (UNIV). At the end of 2007, the first applicants were awarded by a certificate of successful passing the examination. This is in compliance with the approved assessment standard of partial qualifications. The National Qualifications Framework has already started to be applied in real life.