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**Lifelong Learning Policies
in the Czech Republic**

LLL2010 SP1 Country Report

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO LLL

The development of the Czech Republic in the past few decades has mainly been marked by a fundamental socio-political change, which occurred in the year 1989 and which put an end to the communist government that had been reflected in all aspects of the human as well as social life.

In the realm of politics, the government of a single party has been replaced by democracy, in terms of economy, the value operation of market mechanisms replaced the previously applied central planning, in the social sphere, a general liberalisation of relations took place, and in the private lives of individuals, ideological and political manipulation has been replaced with decision for oneself and the responsibility of every individual for his own life.

This change has naturally also been reflected in the relation to LLL and in the system of education. As far as the LLL is concerned, until the year 1989 the concept of it was not conceived of, in any way, within the official policy of the state. The social attitude to education has altered fundamentally, and education has ceased to be the tool of indoctrination.

Initial education in the Czech Republic is now divided into the following: primary education (9 years), secondary education, which is further subdivided into vocational education with an apprenticeship certificate and secondary education with a high-school diploma (maturita), higher vocational education and university education (which it is now common to divide according to the structure of bachelor, master and doctoral degrees). There is access to all levels of education without any discrimination, including age discrimination; with the exception of education in private schools, tuition is covered by the state, including adult education in public schools. In order to facilitate accessibility, some educational programmes are also available in forms that do not require regular attendance, such as evening studies, weekend, distance education, and e-learning.

After the compulsory school education (primary school), approximately 90% of graduates continue with higher education. Secondary schools closing with an apprenticeship certificate have 180,000 students, with 50,000 graduating every year; secondary schools leading to a high-school diploma have 200,000 students, with 45,000 graduates every year. Tertiary education in the Czech Republic includes Higher Vocational Schools and Universities – the number of applicants to these types of schools is 120,000 per year on average, the number of accepted students reaching 55,000, which is approximately 50% of the applicants. Approximately one quarter of the number of applicants as well as of the accepted students attend distance education.

There are 300,000 students in public universities and 15,000 in private ones, out of which women represent 50%.

As far as graduation is concerned - 30% close their university studies with a bachelor degree, approximately 65% with a master degree and 5% conclude with a doctoral degree.

Further education is divided into further vocational education, civic (political) education and non-vocational (socio-cultural) education. Further vocational education is further subdivided into qualification, re-qualification (retraining) and normative education (this referring to education, which has been prescribed as compulsory by legislation). Further education has not been systematised, and it currently remains subject to the laws of supply and demand. The state has fully liberalised it and only feels responsibility for retraining, which it finances. Financing has otherwise been left to the responsibility of individuals and companies.

The problem of initial education is an unfavourable demographic development. The number of citizens in the Czech Republic in the course of the years 1991 to 2003 shows a continuous decrease in the percentage represented by children in the population, as a result of the decrease in childbirth rate, which contributes to a considerable aging of our population. In the year 1991, the group of 0-14 years of age represented 21.1% of the population, whereas in the year 2003 it was only 15.4%.

This unfavourable development is naturally reflected not only within initial education, but consequently also in further education and in a decrease of the rate of employment.

There is no discrimination in the accessibility of education, positive discrimination included. For this reason, certain problems ensue with immigrants, the number of whom has been increasing, but also in the education of certain groups with special demands (such as the long-term unemployed, persons above the age of 50, graduates, citizens with a physical or mental handicap, etc.). There are also problems with some ethnic minorities, mainly the Roma, both in terms of their education and employment.

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A number of publications have appeared in the recent years, which focus on further education and LLL, mainly in the adult education departments at the Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University, at the Palacký University in Olomouc, as well as by other authors.

Among the fundamental ones we could name the following:

- Bartoňková Hana, Foucaultovo andragogické kyvadlo, Praha, MJF 2004
- Beneš, M., Úvod do andragogiky, Praha, Karolinum 1997
- Beneš, M., Andragogika – filozofie – věda, Praha, Eurolex Bohemia 2001
- Kolektiv autorů, Lidský kapitál a vzdělávací marketing v andragogické pohledu, Praha, Eurolex Bohemia 2004
- Kopecký, M., Sociální hnutí a vzdělávání dospělých, Praha Eurolex Bohemia 2004
- Mužík, J., Didaktika dospělých, Praha, MJF 2002
- Palán, Z., Výkladový slovník – lidské zdroje, Praha, Academia 2002
- Palán, Z., Základy andragogiky, Praha, VŠJAK 2003
- Prokopenko, J., Kubr, M., Vzdělávání a rozvoj manažerů, Praha, Gradua Publishing, 1996
- Šerák, M., Zájmové vzdělávání dospělých, Praha, MJF 2005
- etc.

The literature focusing on the development of human resources and LLL is very rich. Among the main issues of future prospects it focuses mainly on:

- how to draft a system of education that could face the future
- the place of further education in the education system
- the specific nature of adult education from the perspective of a fundamental change in the educational paradigm
- the place of information and communication technologies and hypermedia resources in the creation of new, interactive environment of adult education
- a new conception of adult education in the post-modern social environment
- etc.

Besides literature, there are a number of official documents focusing on the conception of an approach to human resources and thus, by extension, on LLL. These include mainly:

- Conception of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic (April 1999)
- Human Resources in the Czech Republic (NVF, 1999)
- Action Plan of Employment for the year 2001 (March 2001)
- Vision of Development of the Czech Republic until the Year 2015 (December 2000)

- National Development Plan of the Czech Republic (January 2001)
- National Plan of Education Development in the Czech Republic – White Book (February 2001)
- Adult Education as Part of Lifelong Education – analytical study (November 2001)
- Long-term Intention of Development of Education in the Czech Republic (2002)
- Human Resource Development Strategy for the Czech Republic (March 2003)
- Long-term Intention of Educational, Scientific, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities for Universities in the Czech Republic (2006-2010)
- National Action Plan for Employment for the years 2004-2006
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2004-2006
- Operational Programme Human Resource Development – including amendments (February 2003)
- Single Programming Document for Objective 3 Prague (February 2003)
- National Programme of Reforms 2005-2008
- Strategy for Economic Growth of the Czech Republic (November 2005)
- Programme for Implementation of the Human Resource Development Strategy (December 2005)

The main problems included in these documents can be summarised as follows:

- The issue of the number of available competent human resources
- The issue of the number of available talents and working with them
- The issue of the preference of education as the main national factor of economic growth
- The issue of harmonising the democratic, economic, methodological and existential literacy
- The issue of general information literacy
- The issue of vocational excellence, professional and organisational stability and ethnic integrity
- The issue of internationalisation of managerial knowledge and skills
- The issue of the strategy of lifelong education at all stage, on all levels and of all types,

etc.

2. INFLUENCE OF CONCEPTUALISATIONS & DRIVERS ON LLL POLICY AND PRACTICE

In the past three years, the government of the Czech Republic adopted two important documents, which are to considerably alter the LLL policy and practice: in the year 2003, it adopted The Human Resource Development Strategy for the Czech Republic, and in the year 2005 it adopted the Strategy for Economic Growth of the Czech Republic.

The Human Resource Development Strategy for the Czech Republic evaluates the current situation in the development of human resources as unsatisfactory and proposes the basic strategic directions and recommendations for changes in this field. It stresses the necessity for a system solution of an improvement in the so-called transferability of knowledge and skills, relating to all citizens and their personal development. This includes drafts of programmes and measures, especially in the realm of raising the information literacy, civic literacy, economic literacy and linguistic literacy for all age groups. Despite the fact that the above-mentioned recommendations have ensued from a number of analyses and reflected the objective blank spots in terms of shortcomings in the knowledge and skills of the Czech population, no national policy has been prepared to this day, which would begin to implement the above-mentioned recommendations. Personal development continues to remain a matter of every individual, programmes for personal development are mainly being offered by private institutions for adult education, or by universities, without any state involvement.

No national policy for strengthening active citizenship exists. Educational programmes in the field of civic education and further community education are being offered by private institutions of adult education, various non-profit organisations, regions and cities, or schools.

One of the few exceptions can be seen in the support of information literacy. The IT Ministry launched a National Programme for Computer Literacy in the year 2003, with the aim of enabling the wide public to learn the basics of using computers and the Internet, and overcoming the fear of new technologies. The programme is based on practical two-hour courses, during which the attendants, lead by experienced tutors, gradually master the use of computers, connection to the Internet, the basics of searching the Internet and using electronic mail. Unlike similar courses, which are being offered by commercial subjects, the National Programme of the IT ministry offers courses at an available price intended for the wide public, especially the elder generation, which does not have easy access to computers and the Internet.

Since the year 2003, when the National Programme for Computer Literacy was launched, 131,861 people have already attended the courses. The most frequently visited courses are The Basics of Using a Computer (34 %), Texts on the Computer (29 %) and Internet and email (28 %). The age of a typical attendant of these courses is between 51 and 60 years. The courses are mainly attended by women, who represent 62 % of attendants.

In terms of social inclusion, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for the policy of social inclusion and the coordination of preparing a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. A number of subjects participate in the creation of educational

opportunities and programmes for groups in danger of social exclusion. These subjects include: labour offices in cooperation with educational institutions, non-profit organisations, towns and municipalities. The social inclusion policy is based on strategic directions of the EU. To carry out these general intentions, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs uses the Operational Programme Human Resource Development, financed by ESF and the EQUAL Initiative. These support a number of projects, which develop and test various tools and approaches to removing barriers in education for disadvantaged groups of people. After the projects have been concluded, the output will be integrated in the national policy.

The Strategy for Economic Growth of the Czech Republic sets five priority areas for development of the competitive ability of Czech economy, one of these priorities being the development of human resources – education and employment. To implement this priority, the Programme of Implementing the HRD Strategy was prepared and approved by the government in December 2005, which, however, lacks any compatibility with the original government documents from the year 2003, and the proposed measures do not reflect the real needs of Czech society in this field.

3. UNDERSTANDINGS & OPERATIONALISATIONS OF LLL

In the Czech Republic, LLL is fully conceived of in the sense of the Lifelong Learning Memorandum of the EU, as education that includes learning throughout life – from the cradle to the end of life. This conception is more or less theoretical, however, and is not being implemented in practice, just as there is no policy for LLL implementation.

In the year 2001, the Final Report on the Consulting Process in the Czech Republic was published. It has not been elaborated into particular measures and has remained a mere proclamation. The consequent document of the European Commission „The Europe – Area for LLL“ has not been translated into Czech and no one has dealt with the document.

In the Czech Republic, there is still a problem with unclear competencies of the central authorities. In theory, it is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Education that should deal with coordinating the LLL policy. It does not deal with this coordination, though, and only sees LLL as an activity of schools in further education. For example as in the so-called School Act from the year 2004, which at its very beginning (article 7) states that „the education system consists of schools and school facilities“. In its article No. 60, which is entitled Lifelong Learning, the law on universities from the year 1998 only mentions course of further education at universities.

The fundamentals of LLL policy ought mainly to be set in government documents. At present, the National Development Plan for the years 2007-2013 has already been adopted by the government, which includes as one of its measures „the creation of a complex system of lifelong learning“, which would be in order, but this measure consists in an „inclusion of the non-formal and informal education in the school system ... and a opening of the school to all, who are interested in lifelong learning,...“. Although according to a survey from the year 2005 schools represent only six percent in further education, all measures in further education on the part of the ministry of education are directed at supporting schools in an attempt to resolve the current surplus of school offers and the shortcomings in school financing.

It can thus be said that no policy of lifelong learning exists in the Czech Republic, and therefore there can also be no mechanism for its coordination and assessment.

There are various systems accreditation and certifying systems in the Czech Republic. In the field of primary and secondary education, accreditation takes the form of an entry in the school register, which is managed by the ministry of education (this applies to private schools as well). In order to set up a university, the minister needs to issue a state approval, which depends on an accreditation of educational programmes at the University Accrediting Committee, an advisory body for the minister of education, in which the leading experts from universities are represented. A similar committee exists for higher vocational education as well. The accreditation committees also have a right of supervising adherence to the conditions of accreditation.

In further education, retraining programmes are accredited at the ministry of education, and programmes for education of employees in public administration are accredited at the ministry of interior. Other programmes are not subject to accreditation, and further

education is a „free trade“ in the Czech Republic, so that it can be provided by anyone, without any limitations.

There are several certifying systems in further education. Thirty institutions own a certificate according to the ISO 9000 norms. Approximately the same number of institutions owns a Q-FOR certificate. The Association of adult education institutions has brought the certifying system of „Field certification of institutions for adult education“, a system of „Certified lecturers' training“ and „Certified courses for education managers“ to the education market, which are based on the ISO 9000 norms. The problem of all certifying systems consists in the fact that they are not enforced by any legal regulation or any political document of general validity. For this reason, the interest in them is very low among institutions.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF KEY CONCEPTS IN LLL POLICY

Concepts such as learning citizen, learning city, learning organisation, learning society, made their way to the Czech Republic soon after the revolution in the year 1989, and their dissemination was facilitated mainly by various programmes and projects of international cooperation and pre-accession help from the EU, for example the programmes Phare, Leonardo da Vinci, programs of bilateral cooperation. The above-mentioned concepts also appear in various strategic documents and discussion materials of the government, but unfortunately they have to this day not been filled with real content and supported by moves that would lead to their realisation in practice.

In the already mentioned Strategy for Human Resource Development for the Czech Republic, whose aims include the creation of a society of knowledge, recommendations and directions are contained, which the Czech Republic should take and how it should reflect the previously mentioned concepts in its LLL policy. But there have so far been no measures adopted for a realisation of this document. No body of the public administration has a responsibility for development of a society based on knowledge.

No national policy for development of citizenship and civic communities exists. Educational programmes in the field of civic education and other community education are being offered on the free market by private institutions of adult education, various non-profit organisations, or schools.

No national policy focusing on communities, towns, or regions exists. Some towns have participated in international projects, focusing on a development and transfer of know-how in this field, but these only represent a negligible number.

In the years 2001-2002, the National Training Fund (NTF) prepared the basic methodology for strategic management of human resource development on the regional level, and since the year 2002 it has been developing a system of support of strategic HRD management on regional level. In the year 2003, NTF began the realisation of a development programme for HRD managers on regional level, which consists of organisation and leadership of regular work meetings (consulting, exchange of experiences, benchmarking), in the creation and development of an Inspirational databank – the Internet portal Topregion.cz (an information and methodical tool for strategic HRD management), in the initiation of short-term study stays in other countries of the EU as part of the Leonardo da Vinci mobility programme , and in a continuous transfer of know-how from European programmes. NTF finances this activity through various grants, for which it applies to various national and European resources.

The most widely disseminated concept with the greatest effect in the Czech Republic is the concept of a learning organisation. In the course of the past years, a number of initiatives took place, promoting the principle of learning organisation in various sectors. Employers and mainly private institutions for adult education took active part in these initiatives, for example the Association of Adult Training Institutions announced a contest for companies active in education of employees and awarded the title of „Learning Company“ to the winners. The initiative of the government agency CzechInvest of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, presented the British standard Investors in People to the

wide entrepreneurial public as part of the Phare programme in the years 2003 – 2005, has also significantly contributed to dissemination of the concept of a learning organisation. The implementation of the standard Investors in People has successfully begun and continues at a much larger scale with financial support from the European Social Fund, as part of the Operational Programme Human Resource Development.

5. LEGISLATION & POLICY

There is no single law in existence in the Czech Republic, which would deal with LLL, adult education or further education. If we see LLL as education throughout life, then the key laws are:

- act No. 561/2004 on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the act on education)
- act No. 111/1998 on tertiary education (the act on university education)

Both of these acts deal with education at the types of schools mentioned, but also with further education that can be attended at these schools.

A law on further education as an established part of the education system does not exist and never has existed. The only legal regulation in this area is the act on verifying and acknowledging results in further education, which was approved by the Parliament of the Czech Republic in March 2006. This act is based on the national system of qualifications, which is currently being created, and therefore does not yet exist at present. The act specifies the forms of complete and partial qualifications, the forms for carrying out exams at authorised bodies, it institutes a government committee for the field of qualifications etc. The act does resolve the issue of a system of further education or any of the system elements.

There are some provisions, which are part of other legislative measures, such as for example:

- the labour code, which postulates that employees should continually raise their qualification and gives employers the right of prescribing their employees' attendance in training for the purpose of raising their qualification
- a decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs about retraining of job seekers, persons interested in jobs and employees, issued in the year 2004, which specifies the forms of retraining and the forms of payment for retraining
- a decree of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Education on accreditation for carrying out retraining of job seekers and people interested in jobs, issued in the year 2004, which specifies the conditions for obtaining accreditation, as well as the conditions for accreditation of educational programmes
- a decree for the act on trades about carrying out qualifying exams, replacing vocational aptitude for operating some trades, issued in the year 1996. The decree specifies the form of taking exams, setting of committees, contents of exams for the individual trade professions, etc.
- there is also legislation concerning the professional ability of employees in the public and the state administration, the professional ability of employees in the segment of labour safety and for servicing some technical devices

- there are also legislative regulations concerning the education of some specific groups, such as school teachers, school graduates, education of asylum holders, the education of persons in detention, etc.

In general, it can be said that no complex policy exists in the Czech Republic in the field of LLL. There are policies in initial education, but none for further education. Despite the fact that a number of documents exist, which speak about further education, none of them has resulted in any realisation of the statements proclaimed. In the year 2001, for example, the National Programme of Education Development in the Czech Republic – White Book – was adopted by the government. This document speaks about further education, too, and set three main goals. The creation of a legal framework for adult education, the preparation and implementation of a system of financial and non-financial incentives for employers, employees and all citizens, and the foundation of mechanisms for system development of adult education, focusing mainly on quality, an information system, research and methodical and consulting services. Over the past five years, no one has returned to this issue, the White Book has not been evaluated and neither of the goals, that had been set, has been fulfilled in further education.

The problem in LLL implementation consists in the unclear competencies and responsibilities between the central authorities among themselves, between central authorities, regions and cities, and also in the relations of central authorities, representatives of employers and employees' representatives. There is an absolute non-clarity in competencies, especially between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Education, where competition for powers is reflected more than endeavour for real solutions. A solution was sought in entrusting a deputy chairperson of the government with resolving the issue of human resources development. A government committee has even been set up, whose competencies include the solution of basic strategic problems in the HRD and LLL fields. Unfortunately, the commission fulfils its mission to a minimal extent only. These commissions work much better in the regions. They have by now been set up in all 13 regions, but even their activity reflects the non-clarity of competencies between the sectors of labour and education; instead of unifying these areas, they are more and more frequently being viewed illogically as opposites.

The situation is similar with implementing important documents of the EU in national policy. Here, too, a positive approach is being achieved in the field of initial education (from pre-school to university), but the area of further education remains quite neglected. Or more precisely, neglected in practice, because in terms of theory, a number of documents speak about further education – these including government documents (for example the Strategy of Economic Growth of the Czech Republic), school documents (for example: the Long-term Intention for Development of Education in the Czech Republic) or in documents from the field of labour (for example the National Action Plan for Employment for the years 2004 to 2006). Nevertheless, no change for the better has occurred in practice in the past few years.

An example is the Lisbon Strategy, which is being mentioned in all recent documents, but more or less only as a proclamation. There is much less talk about its particular aims within the field of LLL, such as active cooperation between all institutions interested and all training institutions, such as the creation of flexible forms available for everyone

throughout life, such as information systems and active consulting. All this is noted without address and without any attempt at solutions and implementation.

6. MAIN PATTERNS OF PROVISION & PARTICIPATION

The information about LLL conceptions only began to be accepted in the Czech Republic after the social and political change in the year 1989. At first, they were mainly reactions to the social change in the field of further education, where there is even talk of an educational boom. Its causes are mainly in the new civil roles – many citizens have had their property returned, many people left the posts they previously held, many people find themselves in new posts, the property that was nationalised by the communists is being returned, the discrimination of some scientific fields has ended, such as for example political science, sociology, social psychology, cybernetics, the economic disciplines have been changing, same as banking, law etc. The opening of borders has led to the necessity of education in languages, personal computers have arrived, a number of new laws and other legislative regulations are being issued, etc. In the field of further education, old structures have more or less been cancelled, and at the beginning of the 1990s, nearly 3.000 commercial educational institutions were established. Further education operated more or less on the principle of a balance between supply and demand, regardless of the actual needs. This was simpler for the state, because it did not have to deal with financing this field, which remained within the responsibility of individuals or companies. An exception was the retraining, on which the state focused, because it was part of a new social phenomenon – unemployment. From the very beginning of this period, LLL was seen as education throughout the duration of life. Although at the beginning, this understanding focused on a small part of experts, and only at the end of the 1990s it made its way into some government documents, which are specified in part one of this report. The problem consisted mainly in that the entire management of further education was left to the market relation between supply and demand and thus only those, who had demand, entered in further education. These were mainly people with higher education, and all of the more problematic groups of the population, which did not have this demand, remained aside. Only at the end of the 1990s, partially under pressure from the EU as well, demand began to focus more on the needs of specific groups (that is not only on the offers). Only at that time did the conception work begin, which entailed groups in danger of social exclusion, ethnic minorities, those unemployed in the long-term, graduates, mothers after maternity leave, employees above the age of 50, the Roma, etc.

In the Czech Republic, work with the above-mentioned groups is very varied.

As for equality between men and women, there are no special problems in the field of education. Women represent 51.3% in the Czech Republic. According to a statistical yearbook of the Czech Republic ČR (ČSÚ, Prague 2005) the proportion of girls studying in universities is 50.1%, in secondary vocational schools they represent 56%, in grammar schools it is 59.5%, and in higher vocational schools it is 68%. Boys only prevail in secondary vocational apprentice schools, with 65 percent. As for the teachers at all schools (with the exception of universities), women represent 64%. In terms of the inclusion of citizens in further education, no data are available. Three universities provide bachelor programmes in Gender Studies.

According to Eurostat (2004), 90.5% of young men and 91.2% of women achieved a completed stage of education in the Czech Republic (compared to 73.8% and 79.6%, respectively, in the EU).

In the rate of unemployment of elder people, too, the Czech Republic is above or at the average of other countries of the European Union.

The problem of education persists for immigrants and some ethnic groups, in terms of education it is mainly with the Roma ethnic group. Although the situation has improved in terms of primary school attendance, it is not as good on higher levels of the school system or in the field of further education. In further education, a number of measures and particular education programmes have already been adopted, but there can be no talk of any mass success. The Roma minority does not have education fixed in its value system in any way.

The financing of LLL is varied. All public schools are financed by the state, private schools (with the exception of universities) receive state subsidies. In terms of further education, the state finances retraining to the full extent, and also the education of state officials. According to a survey carried out by the ministry of education (2004), further education was financed in the following way: 45% were financed by the attendants themselves, labour offices finance 13%, companies and institutions pay 33%, and the rest consists of various forms of financing.

7. BROADER SOCIAL POLICY & LLL

The employment policy, social policy and community policies relate closely to LLL, which is even supported by laws and government decrees. In theory, everything is alright, in practice it is worse.

The employment policy is being carried out based on the Action Plan of Employment, which has at present been prepared for the years 2004-2006. This plan makes it its goal as part of LLL to ensure that in the year 2010 there would be 85% percent of people in the Czech Republic with secondary school education at minimum, and that 12.5% people at the age of 25-64 would participate in further education. According to this programme, the ministry of education will reserve financial means for the education of elder citizens, will prepare a bill on further education, a conception of career and vocational counselling in the Czech Republic, will ensure the removal of educational disproportions among the regions etc. Based on this, the government has even adopted a Programme for Removing Disproportions in the Educational Offers of Regions, which is to optimise educational offers in connection to the labour market. The problem is that in the Czech Republic such documents are not trusted among the citizens, because the measures they contain are subject to no supervision, and thus are mostly not carried out.

The fact is that retraining is one of the priorities of active employment policy. Approximately 10% of the unemployed undergo retraining programmes every year. According to the labour code, which was passed in the year 2004, the right to retraining relates not only to registered job seekers, but also to registered people interested in jobs. The realisation of retraining programmes depends on accreditation of institutions and programmes at the ministry of education. At present, approximately 3.000 educational programmes have been accredited at approximately 2000 educational institutions. Among these institutions, 76% are private companies, 11% are public training providers, 7% are various associations, and 6% are retraining programmes that are carried out by schools.

The ministry of labour and social affairs is responsible for the state policy of employment, and part of this policy is to prepare conceptions for employment and human resource development on the labour market, to prepare and carry out programmes and projects for labour application.

An important thing is the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, which in relation to the rate of education states that there are 0.4% people in the Czech Republic without education. This plan sees much importance in education, which is to become one of the basic support elements for resolving the fact that there are 3.3% percent of households below the level of poverty (that is below the level of income assuring a living minimum) in the Czech Republic, that is nearly 400,000 (4% of the citizens). 36% of the unemployed, 13% of other economically inactive, 30% of incomplete families with a child and 20% percent of families with 3 and more children are in danger of social exclusion. Besides this, people with a medical handicap (10% of citizens) and people from a socially disadvantaged environment are also at a disadvantage. There is also a problem with approximately 300,000 Roma, 45,000 homeless people, with senior citizens and immigrants. A solution in the field of education is being sought in assuring the access of children with special needs to education, in the attempt to find ways and for respecting

individual needs, in support of Roma students, in the education of persons, who work and educate vulnerable groups of citizens.

The National Plan of Support and Integration of Citizens with a Medical handicap for the period of 2006 – 2009 is also linked to LLL.

The ministry of labour and social affairs is responsible for the policy of inclusion as well. A number of subjects participate in the creation of educational opportunities and programmes for endangered groups: labour offices in cooperation with educational institutions, non-profit organisations (NGOs), towns and municipalities. The policy of social inclusion is based on strategic directions of the EU. For the realisation of these general intentions, the ministry of labour uses the Operational Programme Human Resource Development, financed from ESF. Within these, a number of projects are being supported, which develop and verify various tools and approaches to removing barriers in education for disadvantaged groups.

The Law on Employment from the year 2004 specifies the care for persons with a medical handicap. These people are entitled to work rehabilitation, which includes mainly counselling, theoretical and practical preparation for employment. This is ensured by the labour office, which also covers the expenditure relating to this activity.

With the creation of 14 regions in the year 2001, the Association of the Regions was also founded, at which a committee for social affairs is working, which is in charge of harmonising social policy on the level of regions.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is also a national coordinator of gender policy. This activity is based on the government decree number 236 from the year 1998, with which the programme document „Priorities and methods in promoting equality of men and women“ was adopted. A government Council for equal opportunities of men and women has been set up. Any discrimination depending on gender is also eliminated by the labour code, in the version from the year 2000, which is still in operation. Priorities in this field were set up by a government decree from May 2005. At all central offices, there is now an employee focusing on this issue.

8. EFFECTIVENESS OF LLL POLICIES

It is first of all necessary to note that there is no policy in the Czech Republic for LLL as such. There is a policy for education, a policy for universities, but there is no policy for the field of further education. For this reason, it is also very difficult to give any examples, let alone any proof, of whether LLL policy achieves the goals that have been set. The principal documents, which determine school policy, include the already mentioned:

- National Programme for Development of Education in the Czech Republic – White Book (February 2001)
- Long-term Intention for Development of Education in the Czech Republic (2002)

The problem is basically the same as with all other government documents, in that rather than a solution for their realisation, they seek a justification for not fulfilling them. Neither of these principal documents has ever been assessed.

Within the tertiary segment, the Strategy for Development of Tertiary Education (2000 – 2005) from the year 2000 can be seen as the principal document. Although its validity expired in the year 2005, this document has not been officially assessed, but already in the course of its operation it was noted that „....A realisation of the goals set, including an increase in performance, is bound to an increase in resources input in the tertiary sector of education. This means that instead of the declared targets of the government of the Czech Republic of spending 6 % of GDP on the school system and 0.7 % of GDP on research and development, only 3.45% of GDP will be spent on education, while the expenditure on research and development will remain only on the level of the year 2001.“ For this reason, too, a number of measures have not been realised, such as for example minimising the disproportion between demand for university education and its supply – a measure, which expected to ensure the study of 10,000 unsatisfied applicants per year; or the intention of assuring maximum support for the mobility of students/pupils and teachers (with the long-term vision that every student could spend a minimum of one year of his study at a foreign educational institution), in keeping with the idea of the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué - the basic idea being that by the year 2005 approximately 10,000 students from the Czech Republic could study on foreign universities every year. The declared support of 6,000 talented students/pupils in the form of motivating scholarships, or other measures have also not been realised.

This document also focused on policy concerning higher vocational schools, anticipating a quantitative and qualitative development of higher vocational schools with the aim of creating the conditions for participation of approximately 30,000 pupils of the relevant age group in higher vocational studies, including post-secondary vocational studies, by the year 2005, and other measures, such as for example a support of organisation of educational programmes in modules, support of information infrastructure, preparation of educational programmes in cooperation with universities and social partners, support of international cooperation, which have again been neither assessed nor fulfilled.

The field of further education remains unresolved in terms of conception. For this reason, too, the task of the government to prepare an act on further education could not be fulfilled

either. After efforts that were in vain, this intention was reduced to the act on certifying and acknowledging results of further education. A bill on further education has not been prepared, mainly because no conception material has been prepared for this issue, and thus the fundamentals of a government policy are not clear, either. Further education remains aside any interest, mainly due to the fact that at the beginning of the 1990, the market relations of supply and demand were set, and this situation basically persists, because for the agents responsible, this is the most comfortable way.

And thus the statement of whether LLL in the Czech Republic has been achieving the goals set can only be assessed on the basis of the requirements of international documents, such as for example the Lifelong Learning Memorandum. But even here, the answer is not a clear one, because while a number of experts lead by the ministry of education had dealt with the Memorandum, no one has dealt with the consecutive document, which ensued after a discussion about the Memorandum – „The Europe – area for LLL“, and this document has not even been translated into Czech.

Although the five principal ideas stated in the Memorandum have been further elaborated, no one dealt with them consecutively. Some of these ideas are being resolved in the field of the school system, such as for example the basic skills for all or an increase of investment, but again not in the area of further education. The idea of innovations in teaching and learning is currently mainly being resolved by the fact that the institutions for adult education are being forced into innovations by the market, by the necessity of competitive ability. Although, thanks to the Association of Adult Training Institutions in the Czech Republic, the project of an „Innovation centre for development of further education“, whose intentions will partially fulfil the conclusion of the Memorandum of the European Commission as well, is successfully beginning to operate at present, within the ESF – Operational Programme Human Resource Development. The idea of assessing is already being resolved by the previously mentioned act on acknowledgement and assessment of results. The problem is that the entire area of acknowledgement relates to a national system of qualifications, which does not yet exist at present. The idea of re-evaluating counselling is not being discussed. In education as well as at offices, consulting networks exist as well, but the ones in the school system focus on consulting relating to education in schools, and consulting at labour offices focuses on the purpose of securing employment. In the field of further education – career, work and educational consulting is not yet being resolved.

System solutions within further education are far out of sight. There were to be resolved within the system projects of the Operational Programme Human Resource Development, which have not been proclaimed due to the inertia of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

9. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the current situation, it can first of all be recommended that less decisions should be adopted on all levels, but that these decisions should always be concrete in terms of time and responsibility, and should be regularly assessed, adopting consequent (perhaps even restrictive) measures, so that confidence in political decision-making in the field of education would be restored.

In further education, it is mainly necessary to resolve its systematic inclusion in the education system:

- By respecting the specific mission of further education as part of the education system
- By respecting the increase of importance of further education
- By resolving the connection and links between initial and further education
- By stimulating the development of further education (through financial as well as non-financial incentives)
- By creating a more perfect legal framework for the realm of adult education
- By resolving accessibility of further education (local, temporal and financial)
- By resolving the quality and innovation in further education

In proposing of particular measures, it is possible to base them on the Analytical Study, which the National Training Fund prepared for the Ministry of Education in the year 2001 already, or possibly also on the final report on the project of Modern Society, relating to the system of further vocational education, which was also prepared by the National Training Fund in the year 2004.

All these measures relate to what is also being proposed by the Lifelong Learning Memorandum. It is necessary to:

- Deal with the infrastructure of creating centres of lifelong learning, through including schools, supporting new forms and methods, supporting the organisation of educational programmes for adults in modules and stages, introducing stimulation on the side of supply as well as demand, supporting science and research in the field of further education, supporting international cooperation, verifying various 'forms of combination of work and education, creating a system of active career guidance and systems of information;
- Deal with financing in education, especially the fulfilment of the government declaration about 6% of GDP for education, and a raising of allocations for sciences and research, in the field of further education, through a different approach in the tax policy, introducing obligatory return in favour of education, creating national or

regional funds for support of further education, introducing a paid holiday for education;

- Deal with the quality of adult education by introducing a rounded, feedback system of accreditations of educational programmes, by introducing national systems of certification of training institutions and trainers (consultants), by support of the initiatives of associations operating in the field of adult education;

The creation of a policy within the entire scope of LLL is still hardly realistic. It would mainly require a resolution of:

- clarity of competencies and responsibilities of the central bodies in further education
- links of competencies between the central management and the regions
- a clear setting of duties of the municipalities, along with material provision
- the operation (duties, rights, competencies) of social partners
- respecting the specific nature of further education
- permeability of initial and further education
- clarity and simplification of recognition of further education.

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GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE LLL 2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

In March 2000, the then 15 European leaders committed the European Union to become by 2010 “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment”. The Lisbon strategy, as it has come to be known, was a comprehensive but interdependent series of reforms, which has significant implications for a whole range of social policies, including policies for learning.

As part of the Lisbon strategy, the European Union has set the goal of raising the number of adults participating in lifelong learning to 12.5% by 2010. However, the proportion of learning adults in Europe differs widely across countries. The project "**Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the contribution of the education system**", which forms part of the European Commission's 6th Framework Research Program, is dedicated to identifying the reasons behind these differences and to studying the policies and practices related to adults' participation in and access to lifelong learning in a number of European countries (see project's web-page <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>).

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia.

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

- Show to what extent the countries differ in terms of patterns of lifelong learning.
- Reveal how these differences depend upon specific institutions and policies of each country.
- Assess the contribution of each country's education system to the development of lifelong learning.
- Trace the ways institutional and policy prerequisites for lifelong learning have been developed in European countries.
- Identify the barriers to participation in lifelong learning in terms of policies, educational institutions, enterprises' practices and potential learners' motivation.
- Identify the best solutions and most successful practices in terms of participation in lifelong learning and to decide to what extent these would be applicable in other countries.
- Propose changes, which would enhance adult participation in lifelong learning and decrease social exclusion.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.



Potential impact

Project is expected to contribute both to competitiveness and cohesion of the EU by (a) developing and carrying out a joint agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of enlargement of the EU and globalisation, (b) identification of best practices and suggestion of ways for implementation in order to reach the objectives for lifelong learning. The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

The plan for disseminating the knowledge

The project aims to examine and report on national differences in approaching formal lifelong learning, but also to assist policymakers and practitioners in learning appropriate lessons from contrasting practice in other countries. Therefore, disseminating knowledge to relevant audiences – individuals, institutional actors and policymakers – is of the core issues within this project, and so dissemination activity will take place throughout the life of the project.

The preliminary results will be discussed in the workshops and conferences and introduced to national as well as international audiences. The results of the different research projects within LLL2010 will be presented in five comparative reports – one per subproject – and a final report, and two books will be published as a result of the project. A Conference “The Contribution of the Education System to Lifelong Learning”, scheduled in the end of the project, is aimed at discussing findings, conclusions and expert opinions on a European level.

To contribute to scientific discussion and enhance comparative studies in the field, further analysis of the results of the research will take place in articles published in specialized and interdisciplinary journals. As LLL2010 will undertake a number of original studies, the data, questionnaires and codebooks, and all the other relevant materials generated in the project will be made available to the scientific community at large.

Results achieved

The present summary covers the findings of the team during the first Sub-project, ‘Review of Literature and Policy Documents’; the full comparative report of the results of this Subproject will be made available on the project website by the end of 2007. The Subproject undertook comparative research on lifelong learning policies and practices. The aim was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Purpose & Methodology of Sub-project 1

The purpose of the first Sub-project was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. The nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing, were investigated. The report considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union’s thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each



country. It also considers how far actions of different areas of policy and government support lifelong learning, or hinder its development.

The Sub-project applied a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning, through analyzing national policy documents and addressing lifelong learning in participating countries.

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