

STRENGTHS

The Czech VET system has a number of strengths:

- The average academic level of 15 years-old measured by PISA is good.
- The majority of students complete their upper secondary studies; the dropout rate from this level of education is below the OECD average.
- The Czech Republic has a very impressive data base on education and labour market outcomes of education, one of the best the OECD team has seen.
- Many reforms have been launched recently, including: the setting up of a new qualification system; the introduction of a national standardised exam in apprenticeship programmes, the launch of a major new adult education initiative, and new tools to improve career guidance.
- The government is actively fostering stronger participation of social partners in VET. Sector Councils provide a good example of the co-operation between social partners and policy makers.

CHALLENGES

- The performance of students and the quality of teaching in apprenticeship programmes (*střední odborné učiliště – SOU*) is low in comparison to general and technical programmes (*střední odborné školy - SOS*) leading to the *maturita* exam.
- Governance of upper secondary VET at regional level lacks the transparency and accountability mechanisms that would ensure a match between labour market demand and student choice, and secure quality standards across the country.
- The provision of training is highly variable in terms of the number of students participating, length and quality; it depends on the sector and individual schools. Participation of companies in work place training provision is low.
- The institutional system for social partners' involvement in VET is fragmented. Not all VET related areas are subject to social partners' consultation.
- Initial and in-service education and training of upper secondary school counsellors focuses more on pedagogical and psychological counselling than on career guidance. School counsellors combine career guidance with teaching other school subjects, and providing guidance for personal problems and study difficulties.
- Career guidance is under the responsibility of two Ministries: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which might contribute to the fragmentation of the system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve teaching and systematically assess the quality of general education in VET programmes, particularly in the apprenticeship programmes. Targeted help should be directed at weak performers.
2. Improve the quantity and quality of career guidance in basic education by:
 - Splitting counselling from career guidance, which would become the responsibility of a 'career advisor'.
 - Introducing a focus on career guidance and more flexibility in the initial training of career advisors alongside better access to good quality in-service training for existing staff.
 - Diversifying forms of career guidance provision.

In the longer run similar reforms should be introduced in career guidance offered in upper secondary VET.

3. Establish clearer procedures and more transparent criteria covering the development of regional education plans. These should strengthen the involvement of employers and give more weight to student preferences in planning the mix of upper secondary provision.
4. Systematically enhance the quantity and quality of workplace training in both apprenticeship and technical programmes through the establishment of a national framework for workplace training. This should involve well-targeted incentives for schools, employers and students and the establishment of national workplace training standards, backed by effective quality assurance.
5. Introduce a standardised assessment covering the practical elements in technical programmes.
6. Employers and unions should be more engaged in VET. To this end there should be some simplification and rationalisation in the arrangements for social partners' involvement in VET with enhanced and clearly defined responsibilities for the bodies concerned.

FURTHER READING

Vocational education and training (VET) has a key economic function in up-skilling and integrating young people into the labour market and in providing high quality technical skills. But in recent decades, VET has been a neglected part of initial education: education policy research and reform have tended to focus primarily on school and tertiary education.

The OECD's policy review of vocational education and training (VET), *Learning for Jobs*, comprises a programme of analytical work and individual country reviews and is designed to help countries make their VET systems more responsive to labour market needs.

[Learning for Jobs, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Policies, Czech Republic](#) (OECD, 2010) was released in January 2010 and assesses the main challenges faced by the VET system and presents an interconnected package of six policy recommendations. For each recommendation, the report describes the challenge, the recommendation itself, supporting arguments, and issues of implementation.

Further information about the policy review and reports on VET systems in other countries is available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/learningforjobs