



**OECD ACTIVITY ON
RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND
INFORMAL LEARNING**

COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT
CZECH REPUBLIC

National Institute of Technical and Vocational
Education (NUOV), Prague

**Prepared by RNFIL Project Task Force in Cooperation
with its Subcontractors**

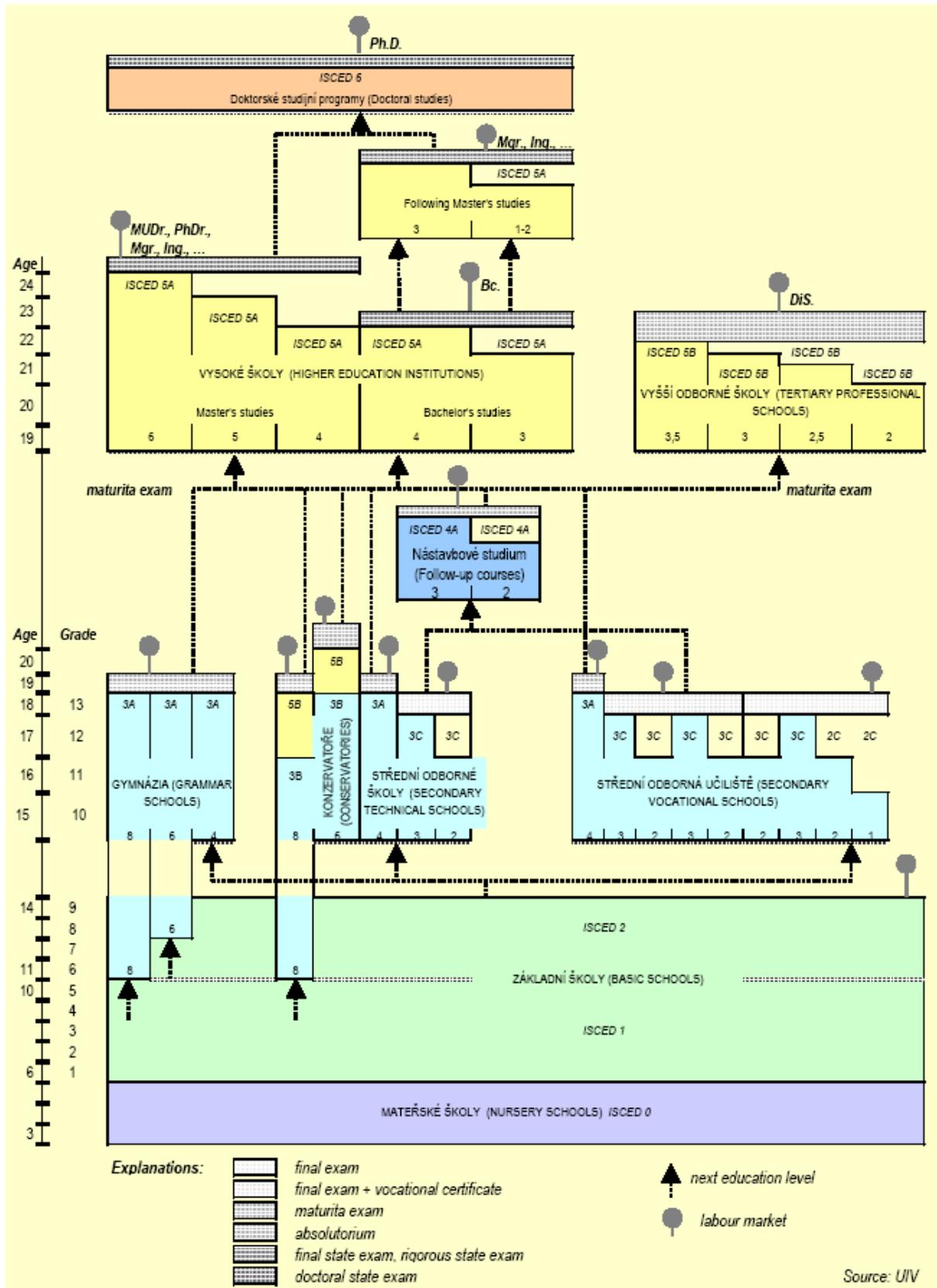
Prague, May 2007

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
Component 1. Contextual factors	7
Component 1.1. Demographic change	7
Component 1.2. Internationalization	14
Component 1.3. New ICT	16
Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch	18
Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements	30
Component 2.1. Political and legal framework	30
Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government	37
Component 2.3. Resources	45
Component 2.4. Others	46
Component 3. Description of technical arrangements	50
Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework	50
Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer	56
Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures	58
Component 3.4. Others	62
Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour	65
Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders	65
Component 4.2. Access	67
Component 4.3. Participation	68
Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives	69
Component 4.5. Others	72
Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers	76
Component 5.1. Economic benefits	76
Component 5.2. Educational benefits	77
Component 5.3. Social benefits	78
Component 5.4. Personal benefits	79
Component 5.5. Others	80
Component 6. Conclusion	90

INTRODUCTION

The overall architecture of the Czech educational system is shown by the following diagram¹:



¹ Revised version of ISCED 97 is used herein. The original ISCED version is not suitable for the CR situation.

As the investigation is focused on the results of individuals' learning and the appropriate performance of the education system (the results of individuals' learning in the population scale), there is a very substantial question, whether the initial entry to the labour market is already possible at the upper secondary level, or no earlier than at the post-secondary level². This actually determines both

- the lowest age of early school leavers and drop-outs from initial formal education,³ and
- their highest educational attainment.

The lowest age of such individuals is given by the upper level of compulsory school attendance (15 years of age), so in terms of demography the investigation should deal with the age group 15+. The highest attainment of early school leavers thus cannot be lower than known here as basic education⁴ (only ISCED 2A in general population, ISCED 2C only within special education for a very small population segment), however absolute majority of population continue in education. Drop-outs thus also have partial education in some of the three main streams of the subsequent education. However more than 90% of each population year complete ISCED 3 and thus gain general, technical or vocational secondary education with Maturita certificate (ISCED 3A)⁵ or vocational secondary education with apprenticeship certificate (ISCED 3C). All these outputs enable direct entry to the labour market and also continuing education at tertiary level, namely directly for ISCED 3A programmes and after completing follow-up education for ISCED 3C programmes. A substantial part of their leavers enter that, but quite a lot of them do not complete follow-up education forming thus another drop-out group.

The fact that post-obligatory education in all the three main streams at the ISCED 3 level also provides further general education is another substantial characteristic of initial formal education in the CR. All the ISCED 3 level programmes (ISCED 3A and ISCED 3C) together with the previous basic education at ISCED 1-2 levels thus provide their leavers with general education, forming a platform for lifelong learning and in both basic IVET streams also the initial vocational qualification in some field, enabling immediate entry to the labour market. The possibility of direct entry to the labour market however also applies to general education stream with no field specification at grammar schools (or also other wide-profile ISCED 3A type educational programmes), as there are no legislation barriers to that, and in fact leavers from grammar schools and other wide-profile ISCED 3A type educational programmes gain good ground (unemployment rate among them is not higher than among leavers from other ISCED 3 programmes). The curricula conception of parallel general and vocational education at the ISCED 3 level thus enables high vertical and also substantial horizontal transmissivity of initial formal education, and the high vertical transmissibility makes clear why participation in IVET at the ISCED 3 level is so high in the Czech Republic (pupils and their parents prefer the possibility to gain initial vocational qualification already here, although they do not lose the possibility of subsequent tertiary education directly or after completing follow-up studies to get a Maturita certificate).⁶

² The CR already has initial vocational education for workforce and similar occupations (ISCED 3C) and for occupations of secondary technicians (ISCED 3A) at the upper secondary education level (ISCED 3), unlike countries with Anglo-Saxon and partly Scandinavian type of education systems, where the education at this level is only general, and vocational education at all qualification levels and in all fields is post-secondary, as Further education (ISCED 4) or Higher education (ISCED 5).

³ If the OECD definition is applied on the term of formal education (see RNFIL Guidelines) CVET may also exist within formal education framework, and this is the case in the CR. More detailed information on functional types of formal education in the CR see Part 3 sub 3.4.a).

⁴ As there is no final exam in basic education, all pupils reach the basic education level (successful ones as well as the unsuccessful ones).

⁵ From legal point of view the Maturita exam achieved in any ISCED 3A type programme is equal and enables access to all tertiary education programmes (ISCED 5B and ISCED 5A types).

⁶ From the pedagogical point of view this conception brings an advantage that it enables pupils interested in studying or those successful at school to choose a Maturita educational programme (whether with wide or narrower profile), and those more practically focused to choose a field of practically focused vocational training of apprentice type (whether with a certificate of apprenticeship or with Maturita certificate) within choosing a study or professional career at the age of 15, while none of both the possibilities would disqualify

This is why including ISCED3 level to the description and analysis (i.e. to draw the border between obligatory and post obligatory education, and not between initial and further or secondary and post-secondary education⁷) is more adequate for the system applied in the Czech Republic.

As there is basically well operating initial formal education in the Czech Republic as well as IVET for all levels and fields of initial qualifications within its framework, further education is always a supplement here, either for providing a „second chance“ or for maintenance, development and updating or modification of initial qualification achieved before, provided generally within initial education.

Parallel conception of initial general and vocational education at the ISCED 3 level in the Czech Republic brings the following:

- there are no remarkable problems with illiteracy or functional illiteracy of the adults in the Czech Republic, and
- both “second chance” education and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic (i.e. for Czech Republic citizens and foreigners-residents) have particularly a compensational function (everybody enters the life with initial qualification and the basis for LLL),
- with the exception of regulated occupations and other regulated activities the choice of necessary input qualification and the choice of the method of its possible in-career extension or modification are left on employers (including self-employers), and individuals’ further education and learning thus runs to remarkable extent – according to the needs of the learners and/or the requirements of their present or potential employers – in all suitable forms (as practical informal learning and/or non formal education, in-company or external in other companies or in various educational institutions or as formally recognized CVET).

This overall situation as for the conception and implementation of initial and further education is in principle convenient, and if there is something to change, it is particularly in relation to the efforts for mobility of workforce or persons preparing for an occupation in European or wider international extent (the European concept of LLL and its tools and the corresponding tools at national level, i.e. EQF and NQFs, ECVET and ECTS with national equivalents as well as Europass, Ploteus, etc.).

The curricular reform being in progress since the early 1990s, generally focused on transition to a competence-based education and training and also to provision of an increased autonomy to schools and other providers of formal education (and particularly VET) of all non-tertiary levels,⁸ is thus at present linked to the development and implementation of the NQF and other tools necessary for integration of the Czech Republic into the arising European area of lifelong learning in both its

the other one in further development of educational or professional career. For example grammar school leavers do not have to continue studying at tertiary level, but may train in a vocational field and those who originally did not choose a studying path can decide for that later.

⁷ Particularly the latter specification is not suitable for systems like the one operated in the CR. The ISCED 4 level includes here besides the follow-up study for ISCED 3C programme leavers, see the diagram above, also regular programmes of continuous vocational education and training (CVET) for maintenance, development and updating or modification of already achieved initial qualifications of the same level (i.e. ISCED 4C type programmes for ISCED 3C type programme leavers, and ISCED 4A level programmes or various different ISCED 4 level programmes for ISCED 3A type programme leavers).

⁸ This reform is a part of changes that had to be done particularly in the field of education and its functional links to qualified work and employment in connection with the overall transformation process after 1989. On the other hand the – basically pragmatic – functional approach to initial and further education as preparation for assertion in the whole complex of individual’s roles is older and has characterised long-term development of education at least since the reform pedagogy era in the first half of the 20th century. The initiatives to establish equivalence between the VET and the general (academic) education at both ISCED 3 and ISCED 5 levels, completed in the 1940s and 1950s, also have their origin in that period. Vocational education itself has more than 200 year tradition at tertiary level and 150 year at non-tertiary level as it corresponds with the industrial character of the Czech countries already in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy times.

dimensions (LLL and LWL). Nevertheless, due to the described overall situation in the Czech Republic, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning has above all the character of enabling for learners to be offered other and shorter pathways to the same formally recognised qualifications (learning outcomes) as in the programmes of regular initial and continuous vocational education.

Component 1. Contextual factors

Component 1.1. Demographic change

1.1.a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

As mentioned above in the Introduction, focusing on individuals as old as at the age of post-secondary education is not suitable for the situation in the Czech Republic. It is necessary to start with individuals at the age of completing obligatory basic education (i.e. population 15+) and their subsequent education or other learning (whether in the formal or informal education or only in the form of informal learning). It was also mentioned that an absolute majority of them continue in education at the ISCED 3 level, being so offered

- a basis for LLL and – at least within both the main VET streams – also an immediately applicable qualification for occupation performance
- as well as – in all streams – the possibility to access the tertiary education, directly in ISCED 3A type programmes and after passing ISCED 4A type follow-up education also in ISCED 3C programmes.

This overall situation in the initial formal education at ISCED 0-3 levels is the starting point for all the tertiary programmes of both non-university and university type (ISCED 5B and ISCED 5A) and the programmes of regular continuous vocational education and training, as well as various formally certified and informal educational programmes provided outside the systematic formal education (see the diagram of the formal education system as well as the outline of functional types of further education in part 3 sub 3.4.a)). We may say that not much has changed on the overall structure of this complex of educational opportunities in the long term run. The compulsory school attendance was only shortened and then again prolonged after 1989 (from the age of 6-16 to 6-14 and then 6-15), the non-university tertiary level (ISCED 5B) was introduced, including its institutions (tertiary professional schools), and the university tertiary education was structured into three output levels, i.e. Bachelor, Master and Doctoral studies in most of the fields. VET fields (branches), their system structures and their internal arrangement (curricula and specification of outcomes in terms of competences, with corresponding methods of formative and summative assessment) are on the other hand going to change. Attention is recently being drawn to lifelong learning, which is dealt with by parts 2-5 hereof in more detail. As the education system in the Czech Republic is in general conceived functionally (as a system of preparation for a whole complex of roles) it is prevailed by efforts for objective specification of demands put on everybody by these roles, while individual specifics are understood as secondary in this context (they are to be respected later by appropriate individualisation of preparation in the execution stage). This particularly applies on VET, where objective qualification requirements are so decisive that they decide whether particular individual's personal characteristics are suitable for a particular VET field at all. This is why – especially for VET – only the age and possibly the sex are relevant from within the general demographic characteristics while other individual or group characteristics (personality specifics of learners, their and their families' socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, etc.) may only be relevant within the limits given by qualification requirements. However there is general effort to integrate learners with such various specifics into common educational programmes (by means of individualization) in the Czech Republic whenever possible, and to separate individuals with special educational needs to adapted special educational programmes only in the instances where the integrating approach is impossible or might bring more

negatives than positives. This is why the following demographic data particularly apply to the age and gender issues in the Czech Republic population (both inside and outside education).

In the post-revolution period, more pronounced demographic changes started to reflect in education in the Czech Republic, particularly the population decrease caused by both the dynamics of the previous demographic development and the new socioeconomic situation in the country. A dramatic birth-rate drop occurred, younger population cohorts postponed establishment of families to higher age, and the average number of children per woman also decreased. The drop of pupil numbers caused by these changes first showed in the pre-school, then in the basic, and subsequently in the upper secondary education. In near future this population decrease will gradually reach the post-secondary and tertiary education age.

Reflection of demographic changes in education outputs

Birth rate decrease in the past had direct influence on the total drop of children in pre-school education, as the participation in pre-school education is relatively high in the Czech Republic. The birth-rate situation has been slowly improving in recent years, particularly thanks to immigration of foreigners to the Czech Republic. However the increase of the number of newly born children is not rapid and birth rate as high as in the pre-revolution years cannot be expected at all.

The decrease of the respective age group in population has direct influence also on the total number of pupils in basic education (ISCED 1-2) where everybody has to participate, thanks to the 9-year compulsory school attendance (at common age of 6-15 years), be it completed entirely at basic schools (single structure) or partially at grammar schools or conservatoires which can offer also programmes starting already on the lower-secondary level (ISCED 2).

The situation is different at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3). The size of the respective age group in population is just one of the factors affecting the total number of secondary education students. Another one consists in students' choice of study programmes, i.e. whether they choose⁹ two- or three-year long VET programmes with certificate of apprenticeship without direct access to tertiary education, or whether they choose programmes with Maturita exam, which are mostly four years long and enable the students directly to continue studying at the tertiary level. Since the demographic changes have caused a decrease of potential applicants for upper secondary education, and schools thus have available capacities, they can offer particularly the longer programmes to larger extent and may admit far more students to the secondary programmes finished (directly or after consequent follow-up course) with Maturita exam. Although the extended offer has of course brought higher number of pupils who do not complete these programmes, the overall number of Maturita certificate holders within graduates of the initial education has risen (formerly a comparable part of population used to extend their education with Maturita exam and then possibly higher levels, but considerably later, within adult education). The Ministry of Education's efforts to increase the total number of Maturita certificate holders already within initial education (and thus enable a larger number of young people to achieve a post-secondary or tertiary education to which it opens access) also plays an important role here. Nevertheless the overall structural change of the economy and, consequently, the needed labour force was a far more important factor in long-term run (until 1989, the proportion of pupils admitted to the general and technical education programmes completed with Maturita exam had been artificially reduced through numerus clausus, while the proportion of pupils preparing for worker and similar professions in VET programmes without Maturita, with certificate of apprenticeship or without it, had on the contrary been increased this way).

Regarding the gradual increase of total number of Maturita certificate holders the interest in post-secondary and particularly (both non-university and university) tertiary education naturally increases as well. The decrease in the younger population has not resulted in a decrease of number of students at tertiary level, as a result of (still not sufficient) increase of tertiary educational opportunities, increase of the total number of school leavers with Maturita certificate and also by relatively high interest among applicants with known here as postponed demand, i.e. those who attained their Maturita

⁹ Either deliberately prefer or have no other choice for not having been admitted to other programmes.

certificate earlier and were not admitted (or did not apply for admission) to tertiary education or started studying but dropped out or left their studies in halfway for various reasons.

Post-secondary or out-of-school education naturally also includes non-tertiary programmes – e. g. in language courses at schools with the right to provide state language exams or follow-up studies and various adult education courses, e.g. re-training (see Part 3 sub 3.4.a)). Numbers of students are interested in the follow-up study, enabling leavers from programmes with apprenticeship certificate to complete their upper secondary education with Maturita certificate and subsequently to continue studying at tertiary level, forms a considerable part of post-secondary within the formal education providing an educational level. The total number of students in its various fields is more than by demographic changes affected by the overall number of its potential applicants (i.e. leavers from programmes with apprenticeship certificate) and by decision of the Ministry of Education on limitation of numbers of students to be funded from the government budget, as it was the case in the past years.

Comparison of demographic changes with foreign countries

However the decrease of inhabitants at the age typical for the initial formal education is not specific for the Czech Republic. It is a problem affecting most of the developed countries. This issue is covered by one of the indicators published in the 2006 edition of the OECD's annual publication "Education at a Glance". It signalsises a drop of the size of population of those 5-14 years old during the following 10 years in 23 of 30 OECD countries, among which the Czech Republic also belongs, with estimated rate of about 18 %. A drop is also expected in the population between 15 and 19 years of age and the Czech Republic ranks to one of the countries with the highest drop, namely by at least 30 % (Poland and Slovakia are the other ones). Subsequent drop of potential tertiary education applicants threatens these countries. Their governments will have to solve an unenviable task to change this situation – one of the possibilities is to increase participation rate in tertiary education, and particularly in programmes enabling to continue at the tertiary educational level. A drop of total population size is also expected at the age typical for tertiary education students (i.e. 20-29 years of age), average drop within OECD countries is estimated to 3%. The Czech Republic again ranks among the countries with the highest drop, namely at least by 20%.

Influence of demographic changes on the number of post-secondary education students

The influence of demographic changes will particularly show in formal education and moreover in the full-time education and training programmes. The development of the situation in part-time, distance or combined programmes is hardly estimable.

Other than full-time study forms are not much used by primary and secondary education students, but the situation in post-secondary and tertiary education is different. Relatively high participation in other than full-time education is seen in non-tertiary post-secondary programmes, i.e. (besides CVET) esp. in follow-up studies (namely 52 % of students, and as a consequence of relatively high drop out, 35 % of graduates from follow-up studies). The reason is mainly that those who enter the labour market as skilled workers with apprenticeship certificate later find that a Maturita certificate would improve their chances in work, so they try to attain it through a follow-up study, but do not want to leave their jobs.

The situation in tertiary education, particularly at university level, is more field-specific. Globally, except for fields where only full-time study is possible, the proportion of students in part-time and combined courses had been considerable during the second half of the 20th century and, after a drop in 90ties, has been increasing again during recent years. The proportion of these students has increased from 18 % in 2001 to 24 % in 2006 and we may expect further increase of these proportions in the future.

However individual's educational route does not end in formal education. Lifelong and life-wide learning is important in modern society, whether in non-formal education courses or through informal learning.

Demographic characteristics of students in post-secondary and tertiary education

Within the formal education, the post-obligatory education programmes were affected by the new School Act of 1995, when the compulsory school attendance was prolonged from eight to nine years.

As a consequence upper secondary schools actually had not admitted new students to full-time courses in 1995/96 and there was one grade missing during the consequent 3-4 years. At the same time, the students of these institutions have been one year older, typically between 15 and 18 or 19 years of age. This situation consequently showed in the numbers and the typical age of applicants, students and graduates of post-secondary and tertiary education.

Schools providing post-secondary non-tertiary education (i.e. esp. follow-up study) suffered from the lack of applicants for full-time study in 1999/2000 and the situation had subsequent effect on the total number of leavers in 2001/02. The typical age of students participating in full time form of follow-up study has shifted to 18-21 years, whereas no age shift occurred in the other forms of study (mainly used by 18-40-year old people). From the gender point of view the follow-up study is mostly chosen by males (they form about 60-65 % of all full-time students and 55-60 % of students in the other forms).

The number of students of and, despite the relatively high drop-out, also the number of leavers from follow-up study has been growing in the past five years (both in the full-time and the other forms of study). Nevertheless, a decrease is to be expected in further development, because of the decrease of overall number of potential applicants (i.e. leavers from programmes with apprenticeship certificate).

Language studies in one-year post-Maturita courses at schools with the right to provide state language exams may also be included in the post-secondary system. This post-Maturita type of study is mostly attended by leavers from secondary courses with Maturita certificate, usually immediately after the Maturita exam (they enjoy all advantages pertaining to students and have the student status). About 8 thousand students are attending these courses in recent years and no substantial changes of the number are expected.

More and more students have been entering tertiary education in recent years, and tertiary education has gradually been becoming a precondition of a good position on the labour market and requirement of many employers. The age of tertiary students has been growing gradually, which was also partially caused by the prolonged compulsory education. However the changes included in the School Act of 1995 have not particularly affected the interest in universities or the total number of students. There was no remarkable difference in the number of newly admitted tertiary students in 2000/2001, only their structure changed – newly admitted were mainly those not admitted in previous years or those who had studied different courses than suited them and wanted to change them. However the situation was different at tertiary professional schools.

The number of students of tertiary professional schools has been in fact stable in recent years. This is caused by stagnation (or slight decrease) of the total number of newly admitted students. There is a slightly growing trend in the number of graduates, which is expected to change to stagnation within a few years. Tertiary professional schools are mainly attended by applicants immediately after Maturita exams, in some cases a tertiary professional school is understood more as a “last resort” in case of failure to get to a university, rather than as an equivalent variant. As the typical age is concerned, young people of 19-22 mostly study at tertiary professional schools in full-time courses (there has also been the age shift of one year due to the prolonged compulsory school attendance), people of 20-36 in part-time ones. Mostly women study at these schools, which is given by their offer – there are mostly health care, economic and pedagogical courses, which are a traditional domain of women at this educational level. This situation is also backed by the shift of courses providing health care qualification from the secondary to the tertiary education level, mainly to tertiary professional schools, and by a similar change in the field of pedagogical education for nursery school teachers. In the future, a stagnation of the total number of students at tertiary professional schools is to be expected or even its decrease (caused by wider accessibility of university education, which may result in lower interest in tertiary professional education).

The number of university students in formal learning mainly depend on measures implemented by the Ministry of Education (e.g. their effort to increase the number of leavers from secondary courses with Maturita certificate, the level of financial normative per university student, etc.) and on the capacities of universities in our background. The demographical changes will probably affect universities later, after satisfaction of the demand for education by a supply of educational opportunities.

The number of university students has been still growing in recent years, due to both the increase of newly admitted students and a slightly negative phenomenon, which is prolongation of study by students themselves (e.g. parallel studies, change of field of study, transfers from one school to another, etc.). This naturally brings changes in age structure of students, caused by both the longer

compulsory school attendance and the above facts. An increasing number of students in part-time and combined courses, usually attended by students of higher age, also plays its role. The age structure of university students has changed substantially during the last five years – in 2001 students under 20 formed 12 %, students of 20-24 62 %, students of 25-29 17 % and older students 9 %. Students have relatively “grown older” in five years and the proportions of the same age groups have changed to 8 %, 60 %, 19 % and 13 %.

The gender structure of university applicants has also changed during last years. There are more women than men entering university education in the last two years.

Even if the overall number of newly admitted university students is still growing, the overall number of graduates is growing more slowly. This trend is particularly affected by prolongation of attendance by students, and by a relatively high drop-out rate. As drop out is concerned, the situation seems to be better in recent years, mainly thanks to the switch to the two-stage model of tertiary education (in fields where this is admissible), i.e. bachelor courses and continuing master courses instead of the “long” master study.

Apart from standard bachelor, master and doctoral courses universities also organise programmes of the continuous education designed for a wide range of students – either for secondary school leavers with Maturita certificates, or tertiary professional school graduates or bachelor course graduates or master course graduates. A remarkable part of these students is formed by attendants of courses designed for complementing or extending a pedagogical qualification – approximately 11 thousand students (29% of students in courses of the continuous education provided by universities).

1.1.b) What are the demographic change (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training

For general information related to this question see sub 1.1.a). There are of course, in the Czech Republic, various edification and educational programmes focused particularly on seniors (e.g. the third age university) as well as on other age groups (children of various age, adolescents or young adults) and also various edification and educational programmes organised by foreigners (both asylum seekers and residents from various EU or third countries; in this sense we may say that parallel education in various foreign languages exists in the Czech Republic) or organised for them by the Czech side or by various international organisations, and focused on them as target group (for the purposes of both their naturalisation in the Czech Republic and preservation of their cultural and ethnical specifics). This however particularly applies to education for pleasure and personal growth or for “functional literacy” in the field of personal, family or general citizen roles, see part 1.5.

If the question is especially focused on whether the Czech Republic is willing to face the demographic changes by supporting later retirement or by supporting immigration or by combination of both, and whether any modifications of vocational education occur or are intentionally performed in this context, the question about modifications of VET may be generally answered negatively. This is linked with the situation in the field of labour as well as with the overall character of initial and continuous VET in the Czech Republic, which mostly enables relatively good adaptability of workers during productive age, see the Introduction and part 3, particularly sub 3.4a).

The labour market is legally as well as factually open for seniors in the Czech Republic, if employers (incl. self-employers) are interested. The upper limit of productive age has been completely removed and the retirement limit after it becomes effective depends on contractual relations between particular partners: if an employer agrees an employee may choose between continuation of employment and working “on per cent” (a delayed retirement increases the old-age pension), or retirement and going on working according to the employer’s needs and his/her own abilities as a working pensioner. Retirees have also open access to any CVET or on-the-job training, however in the existing situation in the field of employment education improving employability is no efficient protection against ageism (like against any form of discrimination in general, as this is always difficult to evidence in a particular case, and such procedure has no statistical importance on the population scale).

The overall situation in terms of our labour market openness for foreign workers has been legally and factually different so far: Their legal labour integration was in principle bound to work permit and

residence permit, and the same has applied to foreigners from third countries (and to persons without nationality) since our accession to the EU, while citizens of the EU countries have free access to work in our country (partially unilaterally, our citizens only have it in some instances). We may say in general that the Czech Republic is not particularly inclined to active policy of covering workforce by opening the labour market to foreign workers and that work and residence permits are only provided on strictly selective basis to people from non-EU countries (which also applies to politic asylum, economic asylum is not granted at all): relatively strict language and general civilian as well as professional and qualification requirements for granting a work permit are posed to persons having long-term or permanent residence permits, whether they are residents or applicants for citizenship; the approach to applicants for permission for temporary stay for work purpose is subject to the situation in the labour market in the particular industries and/or occupations/positions and to the respective legal regulations in case of regulated professions and other regulated qualified activities and/or forms of their practising. For more details see also Act No. 435/2004 Coll. (on employment) and Act No. 18/2004 Coll. (on recognition of professional qualifications¹⁰), see also 1.1.d).

1.1.c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

Especially the National Action Plans for Employment (NAPEs)¹¹ and Government Resolutions on NAPEs of consequent years (as follow-ups) deal with these problems from the employment point of view; the topic is also a part of the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAPSI) for the period 2003-2007¹². Special problems of population ageing (but not migration) are dealt with by Government Resolution No. 485 of 15 May 2002, upon which the National Programme of preparation for ageing for 2003-2007¹³ was elaborated. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the administrator of the programme and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for the tasks linked to education. For the next period 2007-2013, both the issues are dealt with by the National Development Plan of the Czech Republic for 2007-2013 and the related National Strategic Reference Framework and Operational Programmes.¹⁴

The Act that should enable recognition of non-formal and informal learning (179/2006 Coll.) was elaborated to support the implementation of the recognition of learning results – the possibilities brought by the Act relate to both the Czech Republic inhabitants and all other persons interested in having their prior learning acquirements verified and certified. Support is thus applicable to everybody, without difference. However we may suppose that the Act would bring substantial chances to immigrants having the necessary knowledge and skills, but not the necessary certificates. Regarding the fact that these people usually perform worker professions in the Czech Republic, the Act may facilitate their access to a qualification certificate, as standards for qualifications are developed and shall be implemented starting with the lower ones (up to the ISCED 3C level).

1.1.d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change.

¹⁰ In this translation used by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, „professional qualification“ (in Czech „odborná kvalifikace“) means occupational qualification independently of qualification level, i.e. includes occupational qualifications of skilled workers, technicians as well as professionals sensu stricto. As usually the term „vocational qualification“ is used in this general sense (e.g. NVQs 1-5), this latter is generally preferred in this report (except for quotations).

¹¹ Now NAPE for the period 2004-2006 (approved by Government Resolution No. 696 of 14 July 2004). For the full-text in English see http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/1994/plan_2004-6.pdf.

¹² For text in English see http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/1103/NAPSI_eng.pdf.

¹³ For text in English see http://www.monitoringris.org/documents/strat_nat/Narodni_program_2003-7_AJ.pdf.

¹⁴ See <http://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz/regionalni-politika/narodni-rozvojevy-plan-ceske-republiky-2007-2013-prvni-pracovni-navrh> (in Czech only).

In general (without limitation to levels of both non-university and university tertiary education) the recognition of prior learning outcomes operates in three ways in the Czech Republic:

1. recognition of vocational qualifications of all levels pursuant to Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Other Competencies of Nationals of European Union Member States and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications), as amended;
2. recognition of education achieved in a non-EU country (whether by foreigners or citizens of the Czech Republic) upon assessment of documents certifying this education (mostly formal, if appropriate also non-formal), pursuant to the School Act (Act No. 561/2004 Coll., § 108) and the Directive of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports No. 12/2005 Coll. for levels of basic, secondary and tertiary professional education are concerned, and to a lot of special regulations for various fields of university tertiary education;
3. recognition of prior learning at the level of partial qualifications – however only up to the Maturita certificate level, thus excluding tertiary education – pursuant to Act No. 179/2006 Coll., which shall come into effect on 1 August 2007.

In the first and the second of the three mentioned ways of recognition, equivalence of formally recognised certificates issued in foreign countries is assessed from the point of view relevant for recognition of particular vocational qualification and/or for access to subsequent education and training but not automatically from both the points of view. A particular certificate may thus be only recognised for the purpose of access to subsequent education (with or without exemptions from its parts, subjects or study years etc., recognised as acquired within prior learning) but not for the purpose of vocational qualification recognition (where length of service or experience in general and other requirements relevant for practice of the respective occupations are assessed).

As mentioned above in the Introduction and also sub 1.1.a), there is in principle no reason to limit the field of interest to tertiary education, especially when moreover no recognition of prior learning in system extent exists in the Czech Republic¹⁵, and will be introduced as a system for all levels, including tertiary education, in relation to the development and implementation of the NQF and the LLL concept. If we draw attention separately to tertiary education, there has ECTS already been introduced, indeed, and our universities are involved in the European Area of Higher Education, however no recognition of non-formal and informal learning is operated there¹⁶, and not a bit in admission procedures, whether in relation to demographic change or not. Except for art schools, Maturita exam and success in admission proceeding remain the main prerequisites for admission to universities and tertiary professional schools. Regardless of ongoing debates on admission requirements (i.e. whether Maturita exam should enable access to tertiary education without admission procedure, or whether an aggregate of Maturita exam and admission procedure is still to be decisive), nothing should be changed – at least according to the existing legislation – on the requirement of passing Maturita exam (theoretically in any type and field of ISCED 3A/4A programmes) as prerequisite for access to both non-university and university tertiary education (theoretically regardless the field of study again).

Under the described conditions, recognition of non-formal and informal learning only has space as an alternative path to achievement of Maturita exam in the shortest or for an applicant most convenient way (that should be a combination of granting exemptions from what may be recognised to an applicant as provable result of prior learning, whether formal or non-formal or informal, and complementary preparation, again regardless its form, necessary for an applicant to be admitted to Maturita exam in the respective field of study or follow-up course leading to Maturita certificate).

This general situation is related to the fact that Maturita certificate has not only the function to provide access to tertiary education, but also qualification function for direct entry into the labour market,

¹⁵ Except for recognition of qualifications achieved abroad (see items 1 a 2 here above) and recognition of prior learning in relation to transfers from one educational programme or institution to another (see 2.1.d)),

¹⁶ But only exchanges as per ECTS with related recognition of study elements passed abroad upon arrangements between particular partner institutions.

explicit in VET fields of ISCED 3A type, implicit in grammar school outputs. Just this double function of Maturita certificate is responsible for necessity of treating each of its two functions separately within the recognition of prior learning (see above to the difference of assessment criteria used in recognition of documents certifying prior learning acquirements for purposes of access to subsequent education on one hand and direct entry into the labour market and carrying out the respective occupations or other qualified work activities on the other hand).

The same is true for recognition of prior learning in relation to qualifications with this double function in all fields of study at all qualification levels (i.e., in the Czech Republic, in any field of study at levels ISCED 3 to 5 in study programmes of the types ISCED 3A or ISCED 4A as well as ISCED 5A). This is why recognition of prior learning aimed at obtaining a full qualification in the respective field of study or vocational branch with the corresponding level of education is subject to the requirement of passing moreover the same final examinations as within the initial formal education and training (which is not required for obtaining a partial qualification without the corresponding level of education pursuant the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).

This general situation as to obtaining or recognition of full qualifications in the Czech Republic has closer link to demographic changes (if any) only in relation to international mobility and recognition of vocational qualifications obtained abroad, whether to foreigners or Czech citizens. Access to the tertiary education could be more opened, of course, by enabling admission of applicants without Maturita certificate, on the basis of admission procedure only (as it is possible as exception in art schools). However, such a measure is not feasible under the existing legal conditions and a respective change is not intended or even discussed by now.

Component 1.2. Internationalization

1.2.a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

See sub 1.1.d) above for application of ECTS and further Bologna Process results in the Czech Republic, and sub 1.1.b), 1.1.d) and 2.1.d) for recognition of foreign vocational qualifications and educational attainments to both foreigners and Czech citizens and recognition of prior learning results in transfer between schools and/or educational programmes during studies as the only situations of practising recognition of prior learning in our country. Even these cases cannot be represented as a part of some integration strategies of migrant population, and recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a system measure is not routinely practised at all now. The RNFIL issue has thus no closer particular link to the issues of migration and social integration, although it is, of course, implied in more complex strategies and action plans focused on national development in general and education or learning, employment and social inclusion in particular (such as esp. NAPes and NAPSI, see sub 1.1.c) above).

The Czech Republic has not faced substantial increase of migrants yet. However the question of integration of refugees and other immigrants or residents will gradually become more relevant with regard to the increase of new minorities from non-EU countries and to possible increase of residents from EU countries in relation to the admission of the Czech Republic to the EU and mainly with its prepared admission to the Schengen area. Nevertheless, there is, to our knowledge, no detailed strategy of their integration taking into account also problems related to increased immigration, e.g. a probable growth of number and proportion of inhabitants or even citizens characterised by illiteracy or functional illiteracy in various life spheres as well as by different cultural patterns, which may contribute to both their difficult employability and difficult integration into the majority society, or even to disintegration of former majority society (mainly according to ethnics and/or religion).

In dealing with the integration issue, its wider sociocultural and narrower socioeconomic aspects should be distinguished and dealt with separately both as to identified integration problems and integration conceptions, strategies and operational measures. Within the majority society living in the

Czech Republic, no serious problems have been felt as to sociocultural dimension of integration of the society and into the society as a cultural community (multicultural conception vs. assimilative acculturation),¹⁷ and focus has been mainly on problems of socioeconomic integration of the society and into the society.¹⁸ If we leave aside the sociocultural dimension with the mentioned problems (multiculturalism vs. assimilation) and their reflection in education/learning, we may say that the most important in the second, socioeconomic dimension in the Czech Republic is not – at least so far – poverty and related or independent backwardness of a substantial part of population or some specified groups,¹⁹ but delevelling and related polarisation in attitudes and in responses to this fact in groups that are loosing or on the other hand gaining materially and/or in terms of their status-role importance. With regard to free and relatively well conceived and implemented education and training and its accessibility to all Czech Republic citizens as well as foreigners, immigrants and residents (see above in the Introduction and sub 1.1.b)), the socioeconomic issues still reflect in the education sphere more or less implicitly through wider impacts of the mentioned polarisation, particularly the following ones:²⁰

- substantial changes in subjective perception and attribution of importance and attractiveness to various fields of work and social engagement (including particularly generalised drop of prestige of worker and similar jobs and non-critical overestimation or even idolisation of higher managerial positions and similarly unreal underestimation of primary and secondary sectors and overestimation of tertiary or quaternary sectors of economy), and simultaneously
- growing discrepancy between high ambitions and demands and low frustration tolerance of considerable part of the adult and young population regardless the socioeconomic status as a part of changes in personality development characteristic for our time under the influence of multigenerational process of family disintegration and related massive upbringing mistakes of parents and other persons of key importance, and massive occurrence of unfavourable formative influences in practically all settings of direct social relations as well as in distant action of culture (particularly through its identification models and behaviour and acting patterns distributed by various media channels as standards).

If recognition of non-formal and informal learning (or recognition of prior learning) has then any more generally distinguishable importance in the Czech Republic, it is mainly in relation to the “second chance” education, and for the target groups and the purposes for which this education type is here (see the Introduction for its mainly compensational character in our country and for its target groups), whether the individuals in question are or will be Czech citizens, immigrants or foreigners-residents²¹.

¹⁷ The latter more likely applies in the CR nowadays as a consequence of relatively high extent of ethnical and cultural homogeneity of the majority in the Czech countries after the Second World War, and thus relatively low political importance of minorities as well as xenophobia demonstration against them from the majority or mutual xenophobia between them, although there are considerable local and regional differences in this aspect.

¹⁸ Where the socioeconomic differences in classification according to ethnics or cultures have no substantial weight in this aspect either, with regard to low ethnical and cultural heterogeneity, but mainly those inside the majority of the native or naturalised society with their long-term present ethnically and/or culturally defined groups. What seems to be felt most important here are the increasing wage difference (delevelling) and further sources of difference in socioeconomic statuses of individuals and families (across the majority and the ethnical and cultural minorities), in contrast to lower difference under the former regime and the still recent and unaccustomed change of regime in the CR and other post-communist countries, particularly the neighbouring ones (i.e. Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and so-called new federal states in Germany).

¹⁹ As it is the case on global scale particularly in some known here as third-world countries, and similarly in immigrants from these countries, but also in some developed countries with very high differences in socioeconomic positions of various strata.

²⁰ Let us pass over the influence of the above mentioned polarisation on policy polarisation in the sphere of education and labour as well as wider social integration and participation.

²¹ This is a wrong distinctive viewpoint, at least for the CR, as immigrants either have (will have) some definable education and vocational qualification and then the Act on recognition of further education results and further regulations on recognition of attained education will apply to them, or do not (will not) have functionally necessary education, and then the possibility of recognition of prior learning results including non-formal and informal education will apply to them the same way as to the CR citizens, as a part of professional and social (re)orientation and (re)integration process based on diagnostic of their overall situation and assessment of their

1.2.b) Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

See sub 1.1.d) above for application of ECTS and further Bologna Process results in the Czech Republic, and sub 1.1.d) and especially in Parts 2, 3 and 5 for the development and implementation of NQF and other instruments and tools of the LLL concept at levels corresponding to VET within the Copenhagen Process. However, as mentioned above in the Introduction and also sub 1.1.a) and 1.1.d), there is in principle no reason to limit the field of interest to tertiary education, i.a. also in relation to the issue of local cross-border or wider international mobility. Unqualified or low qualified workforce is probably of the highest importance in the local cross-border mobility in our country and the neighbouring ones, and from qualified workforce there is mainly demand for qualified workers than for middle or higher technical-administrative staff or professionals, i.e. persons with university qualification for performance of regulated professions *sensu stricto*, doctors, lawyers, architects, etc. On the European or wider international scale, the demand for skills surely covers all qualification levels and fields (branches) according to current needs at particular labour markets, but for the highest qualifications also according to brain drain target destinations. The Czech Statistical Office presents in the migration materials that the brain drain has not occurred massively in the Czech Republic yet. This is as regards supply and demand. As recognition of prior learning itself is concerned, the distinction between regulated occupations and other regulated activities on one hand and non-regulated activities on the other hand is above all relevant in both cross-border and wider international mobility, and thus the above quoted Act No. 18/2004 Coll. (the Act on Recognition of Professional Qualifications) and its requirements for recognition of a particular qualification or a qualification of a special type included in the regulation by this Act.

Component 1.3. New ICT

1.3.a) Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

At least some universities and tertiary professional schools have probably introduced such a registration system within the implementation of ECTS, and numerous secondary schools have probably introduced such a registration system for their internal use in formative assessment of pupils' learning results (whether along with modularisation and application of credits to at least some programmes, or without the former or the latter or without either). Something like that might also exist within in-company training in larger companies or their networks, particularly international ones. And most likely also – at sectoral level – in occupational further education applying some forms or variations of credits (like for example in health care).

1.3.b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.

ICT qualifications in the Czech Republic may be classified into 5 basic groups according to job content:

- ICT technicians
- Programmers
- Operation system and network administrators
- Application administrators
- ICT operators

personality and/or situational possibilities and resulting in the labour sphere in an attainable labour market integration, directly or after completion of the necessary qualifying education and training. In this context only, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning gains a specified importance.

Each group involves qualification levels ISCED 3, 4 and 5. For example:

Group “ICT technicians” includes: ICT Technician (ISCED 3), Senior ICT Technician (ISCED 4), ICT Engineer (ISCED 5) and Control System Engineer (ISCED 5).

All these qualifications are achieved in initial vocational education, which is still dominant in expert preparation. The Czech Republic participated in the EUQuaSIT project in 2001 through 2004 – (European Qualification Strategies in Information and Communication Technology), co-ordinated by BIAT Flensburg – Germany, which resulted in a cross-analytical classification of ICT qualification profiles (defined with focus on interconnection of initial and further education):

- ICT Marketing, Consulting and Sales
- ICT Business and Project Management
- ICT Systems and Application Development
- ICT Integration and Administration
- ICT Infrastructure and Installation
- ICT Support and Systems Service

These qualification standards were proposed upon a large survey performed in the ICT sector (ICT companies and ICT departments of big enterprises). The content of these standards serves to Czech initial and further education providers as a starting point for development of their education programmes.

Comparison of weight (value) of special ICT certificates and academic qualification: The above survey performed within the EUQuaSIT project as well as consulting with experts showed that managers in the ICT sector and managers of ICT departments prefer academic qualification, as ICT technology is changing rapidly so each certificate is completely useless after three years, and on the other hand academic qualification represents evidence of better acquisition of new knowledge and better adaptability to new requirements.

1.3.c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or ‘learning assets’? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?

E-portfolio (a set of information describing in detail an individual’s educational career or even his/her job career, which is in his/her exclusive possession because of personal data protection) A proposal of pupil’s personal portfolio (personal file) is being prepared in the Czech Republic at present within a system project called QUALITY I. Development of pupil’s personal portfolio is linked to the reforms of the Czech school system in progress, which among others also require a new conception of pedagogical assessment and evaluation. The pupil’s personal portfolio is a part of the Ministry of Education project SPECTRUM, where the preparation of pupil’s personal portfolio is linked to development of a set of diagnostic tools by teachers taking part in further education in the field of assessment and evaluation.

The spheres entered into the pupil’s personal portfolio:

1. National evaluation exam
2. Final evaluations of individual years (reports)
3. Progressive didactic tests (with topical focus)
4. Progressive evaluation in classes, projects, out-of-school activities
5. Identification data

What has been achieved:

Pupils’ results are being investigated by means of national evaluation exam

A proposal of a pupil’s portfolio as a diagnostic tool has been developed

A proposal of supporting systems for a pupil’s portfolio has been developed (proposal for further teacher education, medial support system)

What has been disputed:

Compilation of school rate charts
Suppression of school creativity
Drill and preparation for tests as the only sense of classes
Overestimation of testing against other assessment and evaluation methods
Establishment of a mechanism of a single trial that would decide about pupil's future

Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch

1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?

The legal framework and thus also the current policy including all strategic documents is dealt with in part 2, sub 2.1.a). Legal Framework (The Act on Recognition of Further Education Results accepted in 2006) is a result of numerous strategic documents resulted in a conclusion that acceptance of this legal framework is necessary for further education support.

As mentioned below in part 2, the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Recognition of Further Education Results, was conceived to a large extent with the aim of supporting employability of inhabitants. The conditions for the Act implementation (the National Qualifications Framework including except others also qualification requirements for the respective partial qualifications) are developed in close co-operation with employers, particularly so as the qualification requirements are relevant and subsequently demanded by employers. Contents of partial qualifications are directly linked to the respective occupations or type positions; this means that who achieves a certificate of partial qualification should be capable of performing the respective occupation. We are convinced by the above reasons that the Act will enable larger flexibility of workforce and enable quicker achievement of qualifications for the occupations that currently offer getting a job. With regard to the fact that the Act presumes recognition of achieved knowledge and skills regardless the way of their achievement (courses, home preparation, experience etc.), a particular method of preparation (participation in a course) is not a necessary precondition – and it is thus not necessary to spend money (course fees) and to spend specific time in courses. The Act is thus economical from both time and financial points of view.

Regional dimensions:

Decentralisation of government administration has recently taken place and regions have taken a lot of activities over to their competencies.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports issues the Long-term Programme of Education and Education System Development in the Czech Republic every four years. It is a middle-term perspective of educational policy from the Ministry of Education's point of view. Regions use this document as the base for their own long-term programmes, in which they formulate the key educational spheres in their regions (regarding local specifics and priorities) in compliance with the basic priorities mentioned in the Ministerial document.

Regions have now great opportunities for (both initial and further) education support in relation to ESF drawings. Regions have also often money for education support, e.g. in the form of grants.

1.4.b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

This question is not much relevant for the Czech Republic in the present situation for two basic reasons:

- the relation between initial education (and VET within its framework) is not too tight with regard to its above described conception, which enables both performance of a job learners prepared for and relatively easy later modification of achieved qualification or re-training,
- despite some efforts to regulate the labour market to higher extent in the Czech Republic there are still large opportunities of finding a job outside the field an individual has formal qualification for; this particularly applies to the tertiary and “Maturita” qualification levels, where the qualification profiles are considerably wide and non-specific in terms of specialisation, and to various partial qualifications, for which either specific preparation is not prescribed or such preparation is performed outside the formal educational system, see esp. so-called normative education in part 3, sub 3.1.a) and 3.4.a).

As mentioned in the Introduction hereto this situation is considered quite acceptable, and so it should not be substantially modified for the future (as a consequence of the reforms related to the development and implementation of EQF and ECTS or ECVET and their national correlates and to the introduction of recognition of prior learning results).

In spite of calls for harmonisation of qualification preparation outcomes as a workforce supply with the labour market needs as demand for them, particularly from industrial and professional associations, the policy programme documents generally hold the view that the efforts for closer link of initial VET outcomes and the (quantitative) labour force structure in the labour market are wrong. The efforts for harmonisation of workforce supply and demand is neither applied to regulated professions and other regulated activities, see for details in part 3, sub 3.1.a) and 3.4.a). It does not mean that skills mismatch/shortage do not occur in the Czech Republic, but that efforts to solve the relations between the supply and demand in the labour market through recruiting policy at the national level is not considered reasonable (their solution is considered the matter of each individual on one hand and the regional situation in the labour market and regional development and/or industrial recruiting policy on the other).

1.4.c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

For more elaborated answer to this point in general see sub 1.2.a). It is difficult to present summarising characteristics of the issue of economic and social inequality and marginalisation or even exclusion of various groups of the society in the Czech Republic, so we are going to focus on the problems of poverty and the social policy for prevention of social exclusion as a consequence of poverty on one hand and on marginalised groups and the possibilities of their socioeconomic (re)integration to the society by means of education/learning including RNFIL on the other.

As per the European Council definition of 1984, “The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live”.²² In relation to the monitored policy goals of development of individuals and society and to prevention of socioeconomically conditioned social exclusion, actually the demonstrations of and reasons for poverty that might (or possibly do) threaten fulfilment of the goals of equal chances for everybody and to cultivation and application of their dispositions and abilities, their human potential, are particularly important.

As mentioned sub 1.2.a.), high poverty rate and exclusion of a substantial part of population as its consequence is not the basic problem of the Czech Republic (Czech Republic belongs to relatively

²² EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1985, 85/8/EEC:

Council Decision of 19 December 1984 on specific Community action to combat poverty. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=31985D0008&model=guichett

rich countries with considerable high living standard of inhabitants in global as well as European comparison), but rather the problems connected to income delevelling after 1989 (as a new phenomenon opposite to the previous situation)²³. The delevelling is not very high anyway, nor it has lead – at least so far – to substantial inequality increase in the society. GINI co-efficient was 0.197 for adjusted incomes in the mid-1980s. It grew actually in the other hand in the late 1980s and then after 1989, but not rapidly (1988: 0.20, 1992: 0.26, 1996: 0.26, 2002: 0.25) and still remains below European average (2002: EU 15, i.e. “old countries”: 0.28, EU 10, i.e. “new countries”: 0.28), as well as the income inequality co-efficient S80/S20²⁴ (2002: Czech Republic: 3.4, EU 25: 4.4, EU 10: 4.1).

Under the socialism, the situation of full employment, extensive income levelling and relatively generous help to families with children caused a low number of really poor people. Even though the economy transformation after 1989 changed and has still been changing economic situation of most individuals and households, various measures of social policies, like introduction of subsistence minimum, minimum wages, introduction of social benefit partly compensating the price level increase after price deliberatization, adjustment of retirement pension with regard to advancing inflation and payment of unemployment benefits, helped to keep the situation under control. The efficient “cushion” of relatively low unemployment in the first transformation years and continuously modified social security systems thus have not let the Czech Republic become a country with mass occurrence of socially disabling poverty.

However the society has differentiated socially and economically quite considerably since 1989, the numbers of richer and poorer people have risen. The relative position of households with the lowest income has actually remained unchanged, incomes of the richest households have risen considerably and mainly households with about average incomes have experienced the consequences of economic reform on decrease of their incomes (and particularly buying power). The rank of the poor and threatened by poverty thus does not only include people with low incomes, but also a part of household with inconvenient ration between working and non-working members. Young families interrupting earning activities for caring about children and inhabitants with lower education are threatened by poverty as well. If thus poverty was previously linked to the temporary stage of family cycle (particularly to its beginning and in unfavourable constellation to its end) in Czech society in the past, now it threatens to become a permanent characteristic of living conditions of some individuals and families. While mostly pensioners appeared below the poverty line before 1989, the transformation of economy and social system brings larger threat to families with children without income, the unemployed, those marginalised in labour market and then of course to families and individuals incapable of adapting to the changed situation.

Education and learning width in general, including RNFIL, have among others close link to the situation of individuals of all the threatened groups, but on differentiated basis per the threat character and on a case to case basis with regard to the possibilities and limits of prevention or compensation of

²³ Income levelling was huge in the Czech Republic before 1989. On long-term basis, the communist regime in Czechoslovakia was much more rigorous in administrative regulation an re-distribution of financial resources (both labour and social) than in most communist block countries, even in comparison with Poland or Hungary, not mentioning the former Soviet Union countries. The Gini-co-efficient characterising income distribution to families per capita (the higher value the higher inequality) was 0.197 in Czechoslovakia, 0.209 in Hungary, 0.253 in Poland and 0.278 in the Russian Federation in the mid-1980s. The proportion of people under the social limit threshold reached 6-7% on long-term basis in the CR. The proportion of poor families with children grew slightly in the eighties (from 7.05% in 1980 to 7.66 in 1988), while the proportion of poor households without children dropped substantially during the same period (from 8.71 % to 5.22 %). However, there was an important fact that the economic levelling was not at the simple sustainability level, but at the level of fairly good average living standard characterised by GDP between 2500 to 6000 US dollars per capita and year (the estimates differ in dependence on chosen conversion methods of then unchangeable domestic currency). This situation was one of the decisive factors enabling the political representation to implement radical economic reforms. Vast majority of citizens had some economic reserves in late 1989 and a numerous segment of extremely poor people did not exist.

²⁴ The ratio of total income of 20 % of inhabitants with the highest disposable incomes (highest quintile) to the total income of 20 % of inhabitants with the lowest disposable incomes (lowest quintile). Its value was 2.6 in Czechoslovakia in 1988, 3.2 in the CR in 1999 and 3.4 in 2002.

this threat in each particular case. In other words, poverty or poverty threat only have mediated relation to fulfilment of the goal of equality (equal chances) of all in cultivation and application of their dispositions and abilities, their human potential. We may say that complex personality development of everybody in all backgrounds relevant to development and upbringing is substantial here, and poverty or poverty threat or socioeconomic status in general have here a mediated role of just one of the situational conditions, which are reflected differently in the process of personality development and creation of one's own life career, and with the exception of extreme poverty, they are impossible to be generalised within this complex. The case work related to individual's development, his/her support by key important persons in his/her integration into the environment (formatively relevant non-formal as well as formally institutionalised backgrounds) has thus key relevance. On the other hand all-society programmes based on macro-approaches and related analyses have just limited importance, as they only work with generalised indicators and data, not with what is really formatively relevant in the given individual cases. Such a complexly approached case work in the field of education and learning in general in its lifelong and life-wide dimension can however scarcely (if at all) be conceptualised and there are actually no statistic data available for that in the Czech Republic.

As for commonly monitored trends we present the survey of the situation in the Czech Republic taken from the National Action Plan on social inclusion 2004-2006 elaborated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2004.²⁵ This extract from the above document (part 1, The Main Trends) is at the end complemented with a summary of statistic data according to the Laeken Indicators (tab. 12 of the Statistical Annex).

The Czech Republic is a country with low level poverty rate. The following data and findings are based on results obtained by the 2002 Microcensus, a research survey conducted by the Czech Statistical Office. This research survey collected information on households' and people' income in 2002. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold (the income poverty threshold) is, according to EU methodology, defined by 60% of the national median equalised income per equivalent adult. In accordance with the results of the research survey, this definition corresponded to a yearly income of CZK 73,900. 8 % of people had income below this threshold.

Poverty in the Czech Republic has increased moderately (the relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap²⁶ was 15% in 2002, compared with 13% in 1996). Nevertheless, poverty levels were still below the EU-25 average. However, in contrast with other countries, the Czech Republic had a high concentration of people just above the poverty threshold. Between the 60 and 70 % of the national equalised median income there were 8% of people representing a group of the potential future poor. On the other hand, the group of people with income under the 40% at-risk-of-poverty threshold was very small (only 1% of the total).

Women are at higher risk of poverty than men (9% and 7%, respectively). The difference between genders tends to increase with age. Considering the 65+ age group, the percentage of women below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold was 6% compared with only 1% of men.

Employment has a decisive impact on poverty rate. In respect of the group of employed and self-employed people over 16 years of age, only 2% of the salary/wage employees and 7% of the self-employed were at risk of poverty. In contrast to this, a high proportion of poor people could be found among the unemployed (36%), and other economically inactive people, except retired (13%). The relatively low proportion of poor non-working pensioners (4%) can be attributed to regular revaluation of pensions, the value of which mostly exceeds the relative poverty level calculated in accordance with EU methodology.

Considering individual types of households, poor households are prevalent among those with children: 15% of children under 15 years of age lived in at-risk-of-poverty households. So-called "child

²⁵ The whole text (in Czech) see http://www.esfcr.cz/files/clanky/1281/NAPSI_cz.pdf. Recently an English version of this text was published, see http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/1103/NAPSI_eng.pdf, http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/2830/NAPSI_tisk_eng.pdf.

²⁶ The difference between the median equalised income of people with income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the threshold itself, expressed as percentage of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

poverty” is mostly to be found in single-parent families with one or more dependent children. In 2002, a full 30% of people living in these households were poor. These households were mostly headed by single mothers. The share of poor people living in the countryside was 9% and 8% in cities.

Income differentials continued to be relatively low. The volume of income earned by the richest 20% of the population was 3.4 times higher than that of the poorest 20%. 14% of Czech Republic inhabitants lived in the group representing 10% poorest households. Corresponding to this low degree of inequality was the Gini coefficient of 25.

Social transfers played a significant role in overall poverty levels in the Czech Republic. Without pensions and other social transfers 39% people would fall under the poverty line. Pension payments managed to reduce this percentage to 21% and other social transfers to the final 8%. All these indicators are above the EU-25 average. In total, social transfers managed to reduce poverty rates by 31 percentage points. Most significant in this respect were pensions, other benefits and allowances paid in accordance with Act on state social support, sickness benefits and unemployment benefits. If pensions are included in the category of incomes, other social transfers reduced poverty rates by 13%.

In the Czech Republic, the poverty line is defined by the minimum subsistence amount. Thus, the percentage of poor households is higher when measured by the EU methodology than the percentage of those below the minimum subsistence amount. In 2002, only 3.3% households (133,200) had income below minimum subsistence amount. 391,900 people (3.9% of total population) lived in these households.

These relatively low poverty rates may increase in the near future, if unemployment continues to grow. The impact of measures to be implemented within the proposed public budget reform of (which involve savings in certain mandatory expenditure) is difficult to estimate. A possible adverse factor for poverty trends may result from the slowing down of incomes in the public sector. Young families with children, which are usually dependent on one source of income, might become still more vulnerable, as might single-parent families with two or more dependent children. Considering the practice of regular revaluation of pensions there will be probably no dramatic increase in poverty rates among people of post-working age.

The groups of people who are most at risk of classification as poor (quantification in accordance with the research survey referred to above)²⁷ are:

- unemployed people (36%);
- other economically inactive people (13%);
- single-parent families with at least one dependent child (30% of all people living in these households, mostly lone, divorced and single women with children);
- households with three and more children (20%)²⁸.

The social protection system has proven to be successful in protecting various population groups from falling below the poverty line. The system consists of three pillars - social insurance, state social support and social assistance (social care). The pension system in the Czech Republic is a universal one and, essentially, provides coverage to all economically active people. At present, no larger group of older people is at immediate risk of significant poverty.

The minimum subsistence amount (or its multiples) is the decisive criterion for granting social assistance (care) and state social support benefits. Through state social support, the Government provides assistance mainly to families with dependent children, which find themselves in officially

²⁷ Figures in brackets show percentage rates of those at risk of poverty (with a disposable income under 60% of the national equivalised median income per equivalent adult) in the total number of people living in the respective type of households.

²⁸ The typology of groups who are at the biggest risk of exclusion is based on Microcensus 2002. This research did not detect as groups at risk of poverty households from other socially and culturally disadvantaged environment and the homeless, who are at extreme risk of poverty.

recognised social situations which cannot be dealt with by the families concerned. State social support benefits and allowances are granted to 1.6 million families. These transfers prevent many of these families with dependent children falling below the poverty line. Social assistance is provided by public administration and other organizations, especially by NGOs, to help people whose basic needs are not sufficiently covered by income from work, pension, sickness benefits, or other income, or people who are in need of such assistance by virtue of their adverse state of health, or advanced age. Those who are unable to deal with difficult one-off or persistent life situations without public assistance are also eligible. Social assistance (care) is implemented by means of social assistance benefits and social services.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) stated that in December 2003, there were 243,900 recipients of recurrent social care benefits who meet the conditions of social need. This figure included, in particular, childless beneficiaries (64.0%), of which nearly all (97.9%) were unemployed people registered by Labour Offices. The rest (2.1%) were older people and people with serious disabilities. In this group, nearly 90% of childless beneficiaries were those whose applications were dealt with as a separate case. Families with dependent children constituted 36% of the total number of benefit recipients. Within the group of families with children, single-parent families were most prevalent (64.3%). 90.8% of lone parents were not gainfully employed. A similar situation was found in respect of two-parent families with children to whom these benefits were paid: 81.2% of parents in these families were not gainfully active.

In this area a major problem emerged – those who became permanently dependent on income from social care benefits. Dependence on social protection is positively caused by unemployment, in particular long-term unemployment, because the period of payment of material support (unemployment benefit) to job seekers is relatively short and thereafter the clients are transferred to the social care system. In accordance with data supplied by the MoLSA, 171,9 thousands recipients of recurrent social care benefits, or 70.5% of the total in December 2003, were in receipt of these benefits for more than 6 months. Considering separately the groups of families with dependent children and older people and people with serious disabilities, these long-term recipients represented together nearly 80% of their total.

The Czech educational system guarantees equal access to education for all people. The overall situation is favourable and there is practically no illiteracy. In accordance with data obtained by the Population and Housing Census (2001) only 0.4 % of inhabitants were without education and the percentage of people who did not complete basic education, was also very low. In 2003, the rate of early school leavers²⁹ (18-24 years of age) in accordance with the Laeken indicator, was 6% - 5.2% for men and 6.8% for women. The average duration of school education was estimated at 16.4 years of age in 2002 (EU-15: 17.3).

In addition to school education there is a system of (voluntary) extra-curricular education which includes centres for leisure activities for children and teenagers, school clubs and school centres. In 2003 an estimated 240,000 children and young people participated in these activities regularly and a further estimated 2.5 million participated in selected activities. The overall trend has shown that parents and young people are becoming more and more interested, in particular as regards occasional participation, in short-term and spontaneous activities. Also the supply of various forms of education for interest groups has expanded. This system is unique and cannot be compared with an EU equivalent.

The area of further education is essentially identical with the term “adult education” which is used in this country. In accordance with a Eurostat survey (2002) 6% of people between 25 and 64 years of age participated in further education in the Czech Republic (EU 8.4%). Included in this category are retraining measures, social education/ training courses, on the job training, stimulation courses, etc. The most commonly undertaken courses are training and retraining courses aimed at performance of a

²⁹ The early school leavers indicator expresses the percentage of people with max. lower secondary education (ISED 2 and less) who do not continue with further education or training at the age between 18 and 24 within the total of people in this age group.

specific job (approx. 35%), courses aimed at improved employability (33%) and supplementary retraining courses (15%). When considering the participation according to age, we can see that young people up to 25 years of age are most represented (32%), followed by people between 25 and 40 (30%), and those between 40 and 55 (25%). Older workers (55+) are represented only by 2%. The number of women in retraining courses is around 60%. Educational patterns of job applicants entering into training activities are represented by three groups: secondary technical education (apprentices) 35%, secondary general education (with a leaving examination) 29%, and basic education 14%.

Considering access to education, two disadvantaged groups can be specified as being at risk of social exclusion: children/pupils/students (hereafter pupils) with disabilities and pupils from socially and culturally disadvantaging environments.

Regarding children with disabilities, 2001 pupils were integrated in standard kindergarten classes, 53,550 pupils in mainstream basic education and 4,006 pupils, of the total 64,598 registered pupils with disabilities at secondary schools in the school year 2003/2004. The main reasons impeding further progress in the integration of these pupils into mainstream education include lack of investment for enabling access to schools (barrier-free access, special compensatory aids, etc.) and specialised training of staff (further specialised training of teachers, educational assistants).

Most pupils in the category of socially and culturally disadvantaged environments are Romany origin. However, the situation is slowly, but steadily, improving. In order to improve educational results of these pupils, the Czech Republic introduced a system of preparatory classes (from school year 1997/98 onwards), and established a position of teacher's assistant³⁰. In addition, special educational plans and teaching materials have been developed with a view to improving the educational results of Romany pupils. In the school year 2003/2004 the number of children attending these preparatory classes increased by 335 compared with the previous year. Also the number of these classes increased, particularly those included in the system of primary schools. In 2003, a team of experts at Charles University prepared a study entitled "Monitoring effectiveness of preparatory classes for children coming from socially and culturally disadvantaged environments". The conclusions of this study revealed that around 13-15% of the total numbers of children from these environments of the corresponding age category attended preparatory classes. The total number of children attending these preparatory classes was 1489 of which 72.5% successfully completed the course and started their mainstream education.

The existing disproportion in the type of schools and distribution of educational branches in individual regions are essentially due to geographical conditions, parental preferences and expectations, and requirements formulated by representatives of the labour market. There are no major regional differences as regards needs and requirements in the area of voluntary education and participation in extra-curricular activities. The numbers of school clubs and school centres are comparable among regions. However, the network of centres offering leisure activities to children and teenagers is uneven between individual regions (for example the region of Southern Moravia has 35 centres, while the Liberec Region has 14). Reasons have to be sought in historical development, existence of major residential units and also unadvised liquidation of networks, which existed before 1990. A more rapid development of the existing network is hampered by lack of funding.

Overview of main statistic data from the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2004-2006 (tab. 12 of the Statistical Annex):

Laeken Indicators – Summary

Primary Indicators

	Total	Men	Women	Source	Year
Poverty threat rate by age and gender				CSO*	2002
Total	8	7	9		
0-15 years	15				

³⁰ Methodological instruction MSMT, No. 25484/2000-22.

16-24 years	9	8	10		
25-49 years	8	7	9		
50-64 years	5	5	4		
65+ years	4	1	6		
16+ years	7	6	8		
Poverty threat rate by economic activity				CSO	2002
Working people	3	3	3		
of whom:					
employed	2	1	3		
self-employed	7	7	6		
Not working	11	11	12		
of whom:					
unemployed	36	39	34		
retirees	4	2	5		
other inactive	13	11	15		
Poverty threat rate by household type				CSO	2002
households without dependent children in total	4				
individuals in total	13	13	13		
individuals below 64 years	16				
individuals of 65 and more years	9				
childless couples, both partners below 64 years	3				
childless couples, at least one partner of 65+ years	2				
other households without dependent children	1				
households with dependent children in total	11				
1 parent and independent children only	30				
parent couple with 1 dependent child	7				
parent couple with 2 dependent children	8				
parent couple with 3 and more dependent children	20				
other households with dependent children	9				
Income poverty limit (poverty threshold)- illustrative values				CSO	2002
household of an individual					
CZK	73878				
EUR	2398				
household of parents with 2 dependent children					
CZK	155144				
EUR	5036				
Income inequality co-efficient S80/S20	3,4			CSO	2002
Relative income drop				CSO	2002
Total	15	17	15		
0-15 years	15				
16-64 years	16	17	15		
65+ years	7	6	8		
16+ years	15	17	14		
Regional integrity	5,7	5,1	7	EU LFS	2002
Long-term unemployment rate (12 and more m.)	3,8	2,9	5	EU LFS	2003
Persons living in households without an employed person				EU LFS	2003
children (0-17 years)	8,4				
adults (18-59 years)	7,7	5,8	9,7		
School leavers not participating in further education				EU LFS	2003
	6	5,2	6,8		
Lifespan (in years)				CSO	2003

0		72,0	78,5		
1		71,3	77,8		
60		17,2	21,3		
Secondary indicators					
Variance near the income limit (threshold)				CSO	2002
40% of the median	1	1	1		
50% of the median	4	4	4		
70% of the median	16	14	18		
Poverty threat rate before and after inclusion of social transfers				CSO	2002
without social transfers					
Total	39	35	42		
0-15 years	35				
16-64 years	30	27	33		
65+ years	89	92	88		
16+ years	39	36	43		
after inclusion of pensions without other social transfers					
Total	21	19	22		
0-15 years	33				
16-64 years	19	18	20		
65+ years	9	6	12		
16+ years	18	16	19		
after inclusion of pensions and other social transfers					
Total	8	7	9		
0-15 years	15				
16-64 years	7	6	8		
65+ years	4	1	6		
16+ years	7	6	8		
Gini co-efficient	25			CSO	2002
Long-term unemployment proportion (12 and more m.)	50,6	48,1	52,5	CSO	2003
Long-term unemployment rate (24 and more m.)	2,3	1,8	3,1	CSO	2003

1.4.d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Recognition of Further Education Results was conceived to a large extent with regard to the labour market needs (see part 2). The main target was to give people the opportunity to obtain qualification preconditions for currently demanded jobs. The main aim thus is not achievement of education level requiring long and demanding preparation, but achievement of partial qualifications corresponding to performance of a particular job.

As RNFIL does not exist as system measure in the Czech Republic yet, no data about that may be available.

As for the problem itself to which the data should relate, see sub 1.4.b) above for the strategy of regulation of interrelations between VET and labour market demand and supply. As there is in principle no harmonisation applied here, recognition of prior learning results cannot have the function of a tool of focused re-distribution of human capital serving to national or even global economic development. It cannot have it also due to the limited extent of RNFIL applicability in the Czech Republic, see part 3, sub 3.1.a).

This question is not appropriate for the situation in the Czech Republic again,³¹ with regard to what has to be considered formal education/learning according to the OECD definition in the Czech Republic and to what extent it covers the core important needs of education/learning with qualifying function that requires formal recognition, see the overview in part 3, sub 3.1.a). If formal education/learning really covers these needs in principle for all areas where formal recognition is necessary, it is also true that non-formal and informal learning may only present alternative pathways to achievement of those predefined results, and that the rest of non-formal and informal learning presents the part of learning, the results of which need not be or even should not be destined for formal recognition as such for good reasons, whether the good reasons are

- excessive regulation of the whole sphere, in which qualifications perform or should perform their really necessary regulatory functions inside and/or outside the education sphere, or
- marginal social relevance or irrelevance or maybe also questionable value of qualifications that would be redundantly defined as further sets of predefined learning results that should be also formally recognized.

It is clear that under these conditions characteristic for the overall situation in our country (that should not change much in future, including the situation after development and implementation of the NQF) the recognition of non-formal and informal learning may become a way of focused re-distribution of human capital to a very limited extent (namely to the extent to which it will be the alternative path to achievement of qualifications otherwise provided by the respective existing types of formal education or will enable the path to their achievement to be shortened, and for regulated professions or other regulated activities to the extent acceptable by the respective special regulations, see again part 3, esp. sub 3.1.a) and 3.4.a)).

It is to be added that the “problem” of providing sufficient quantity of qualified labour force in a structure meeting actual labour market needs or even providing for the economic development drive is in fact a whole complex of problems, which are expressed non-analytically here, as one problem with a known solution, namely in the way of formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning results. As for the current labour market needs, there is an implicit assumption (inappropriate for the Czech Republic), that generally a respective formal qualification is prerequisite for carrying out a particular qualified activity or any form of its operation in the labour market (in brief, that all this is now regulated or should be regulated later in the whole labour field). This is not true in the Czech Republic and it is not expected to be true. Seen from the opposite viewpoint of “further destiny” of IVET graduates at all levels including tertiary, some remain in their original jobs, some do not (no matter, whether the regulation is very tough or looser), and for various reasons, that might hardly be expected to change through generations (or to submit in future to the ideas of strategies on what is necessary for harmonising the labour market situation and the economic development drive). A reasonable response is to accept this as an empirical given fact, which has to be taken into consideration.

The effort to achieve the situation when everybody has the best possible general education (general functional literacy and background for the best possible professional work ranking on the LLL scale) and initial qualification of the widest possible profile for immediate placement in the labour market, as it is the case in the existing concept of initial education and training in the Czech Republic (see the Introduction), corresponds to that comparatively well. As the profiles of overall (general+vocational) initial education are generally considerably wide, they give the graduates the possibility of immediate access to practice not only in a single occupation or even in a partial qualified activity, unless they and/or employers are prevented from that by a regulation in the sphere of labour. The method applied in the Czech Republic for solving functional interrelations between the spheres of qualified work and qualifying education and training on the other hand only regulates and should go on regulating what is really necessary to be regulated in the sphere of qualified work (for strictly qualification reasons). The

³¹ At least if the term recognition of non-formal and informal learning means formal recognition of predefined results of learning achieved through non-formal education and informal learning (or also results of prior learning in formal education in our country or elsewhere that have not yet been formally recognised in the appropriate formal recognition procedures).

degree of deregulation achieved in the the early 1990s became later somewhat more tightened again both within the training and the labour spheres, however it still remains at least at the level enabling graduates to find jobs in other occupations or positions than those they prepared for in the training sphere. This is actually an advantage and not a drawback of the present situation in our country, which **should be preserved for the future (and even strengthened at some reasonable points).**

1.4.e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly- skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

As RNFIL does not exist as system measure in the Czech Republic yet, this question is in fact not applicable and may only be answered speculatively (there would be individuals of all these groups in our country, provided they were internally motivated to participation in RNFIL procedure, and externally stimulated by the necessity to undertake it for some reasons practically important for qualification).

1.4.f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

As RNFIL does not exist as system measure in the Czech Republic yet, this point is in principle not applicable and we may just say that the link between RNFIL and non-formal and informal economies is always complementary. For example the fact that someone who “does not have papers” for running a regulated trade or performance of a qualified activity he/she masters sufficiently in practice has to work “on someone else’s papers” who “covers” his/her work this way may be seen from both the given point of view or the point of view of presumably optimum regulation degree of the forms of work operation or activity performance. In the first instance the above situation of somewhat “grey” economy will be partly a result of non existence of RNFIL, in the other instance a result of excessive regulation in the field (branch) in question. Seen from this point of view in relation to the NQF, the regulated forms of work and regulated activities should be revised, which the present legislation actually does not take into account, see parts 2 and 3, esp. sub 2.1.c) and 3.1.a).

1.4.g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that requires a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

Act No. 455/1991 Coll., on trading (The Trade Act) distinguishes three types of trades:

- 1) notified trades, which may be performed upon notification after meeting specified conditions and are then classified to crafts, bound trades and free trades;
- 2) licensed trades, which may be performed upon licence.

Obtaining a trade (except for free trades) is conditioned by evidencing qualification preconditions (§ 21, § 24, §27).

The list of trades (or trade occupations) including qualification requirements is attached to the Trade Act as an annex.

There are numerous further occupations including qualification requirements specified by special Acts, e.g. Act No. 95/2004 Coll., on conditions for obtaining and recognition of professional competences and specialized competences for performing the occupation of a physician, dentist, pharmacist, as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll., Act No. 96/2004 Coll., on conditions for obtaining and recognition of competences for performing non-doctoral health care occupations on performance of activities related to provision of health care and on modification of some related acts (Act on Non-doctoral Medical Occupations), as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll., Act No. 85/1996 Coll., on advocacy, as amended, Act No. 312/2002 Coll., on territorial administration units and

modification of some acts, as amended by Act No. 46/2004 Coll., Act No. 360/1992 Coll., on performance of occupations of authorized architects and on performance of occupations of authorized engineers and technicians operating in construction, as amended, Act No. 111/1994 Coll., on road transport, as amended, Decree No. 224/1995 Coll., on competence for ship driving and operation, as amended by Decree No. 295/2005 Coll., Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on public health protection and on modification of some related acts, as amended, etc.

Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

We may say in general that the sphere of further education and related recognition of non-formal and informal learning has only become a priority in recent years. Further education has become a subject of interest of several ministries (The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Local Development), there have also been numerous activities commenced by the Government Office and regional authorities, which have founded Committees for Human Resource Development. The development of the issue is also to some extent obvious from the strategic materials presented below. Further education has also become so interesting in relation to the possibility to implement projects within ESF. ESF has thus enabled implementation of costly projects of nationwide importance, which are substantially affecting the existing system or creating it directly. Some key spheres could hardly have been realized without such an important financial support

Key documents:

Human Resource Development Strategy and Implementation of the Human Resource Development Strategy

The Government approved the Human Resource Development Strategy in March 2003. Lifelong learning and further education form separate chapters there. (Chapter 4 – Specific Strategy Fields includes subchapters Lifelong Learning (4.1) and Further Education (4.4)). The material generally works with the terms formal education, non-formal education and informal learning, however the principle of recognition of the results of these learning forms does not appear in the whole text. The material emphasizes that all these forms have to be supported, nevertheless it does not mention a unifying principle of recognition of learning results.

The Human Resource Development Strategy was then elaborated into material called Implementation of the Human Resource Development Strategy, which was approved by the Government in December 2005. This document concretizes the Human Resource Development Strategy, details its individual chapters in the form of particular steps and tasks that have to be fulfilled in the following years, including allocation of tasks (competencies) for the particular government levels. The individual tasks thus also include deadlines, expected budgets and performance indicators apart from the responsibilities. The following Measures and Recommendations relate to the issue of recognition of non-formal and informal learning:

Measure 1.1.1.6 c

To develop framework and internal educational programmes at secondary schools. From these programmes the demands for extent and structure of general education proportion in the FEPs for the individual education fields will be derived. To unify, reform and complete the programme for known here as lyceum education field, to introduce recognition of non-formal and informal learning to the network of schools providing adult education services.

Recommendation

To reduce indirect costs of studies by introducing a non-formal education recognition system by means of accepting a draft act on evaluation and recognition of further education results, and its subsequent implementation.

Measure 1.2.1.3

Development of a system of recognition of education obtained outside tertiary education institutions, including non-formal, and practical experience for further education purposes.”

Concept of the National Development Plan for the Czech Republic 2007 – 2013

The Concept of the National Development Plan for the Czech Republic for 2007 – 2013 presents „Development of the complex system of lifelong learning (integration of non-formal and informal education) and opening of the education systems to the public“ as one of the specific goals in chapter Education Operation Program.

National Employment Action Plan for 2004 - 2006

The Government has ratified a measure to the National Employment Action Plan for 2004 - 2006, point 7.6 of which appoints the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to work out a „proposal of recognition of non-formal and informal learning for achievement of education grades for adult population in the sense of the EC Memorandum on lifelong learning“.

Legislation

Both the above strategic materials mention the necessity of introducing the recognition system for non-formal and informal learning. They also include one more key task: to elaborate an Act on Recognition of Further Education Results, which would thus form the necessary framework for the system operation. The act was elaborated in 2004-2006 and was ratified as Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results).

2.1.b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.

Yes, it is Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results) – hereinafter referred to as the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. The Act was issued in the Collection of Act of the Czech Republic in May 2006, but comes into effect no earlier than on August 1, 2007. This is why we are not yet able to provide statistic data or examples of good practice.

2.1.c) Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?

The act enables all those who are interested to have the outcomes of their learning background assessed regardless the way they have gained those vocational knowledge and skills, i.e. regardless the fact whether the learning process was formal, non-formal or informal.

The Act specifies the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for these purposes – a publicly accessible register of all complete and partial qualifications³² confirmed, distinguished and recognized³³ in the territory of the Czech Republic.

³² Full qualification means professional competence of an individual to perform duly all works within a particular occupation (the National Occupation Framework being simultaneously developed is a register of these occupations). Partial qualification means professional competence of an individual to perform duly particular work or a set of works in a particular occupation, possibly in two or more occupations to the extent mentioned in the qualification standard. Partial competences will be approved as partial qualifications, although they themselves do not necessarily certify professional competence to performance of an occupation, however they do enhance, deepen, extend, renew and maintain or partially implement such professional competence. Partial

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) involves specification of relations between full and partial qualifications and their relations to occupations³⁴ and qualification and assessment standards of partial qualifications.

Qualification standard of a partial qualification is a structured description of capability of an individual of due performing particular work activity or a package of work activities in a particular occupation or in two or more occupations.

The assessment standard of a partial qualification is a set of criteria, organizational and methodological procedures and material and technical conditions specified for assessment of achievement of professional competence to perform particular work activity or a package of work activities in a particular occupation or in two or more occupations.

These standards are binding in the process of further education result recognition – they include criteria and requirements that have to be met in the recognition.

As we have mentioned, the Act distinguishes between full and partial qualification. Full qualifications are usually already achieved in the initial education³⁵ – i.e. within the formal education systems, where the assessment of learning outcomes is based on the Education Act and the Higher Education Act. Achieved education level (as distinguished for example within ISCED classification) is the input and a formalized certificate (e.g. school report) of nationwide force is the proof of education level. The Act is not aimed at full qualifications, as this matter is dealt with by other acts. It is aimed at partial qualifications, their achievement (obtaining) and the possibility to assemble partial achieved qualifications into full qualification (under legally defined conditions). The possibility to assemble partial qualifications into full qualifications is the basic feature enabling links between initial and further education. There is no dual system of qualification achievement being introduced. Achievement of full qualification in the initial education system requires demonstration of the same professional competencies as achievement of full qualification upon assembly of partial qualifications pursuant to the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. Only the paths to their achievement differ, the requirements for the outcomes (professional competences) are identical in both the instances.

We should nevertheless add that the process of assessment of existing education achievements itself and a proof of achieved partial qualifications are not sufficient for obtaining a certificate of full qualification and/or education level pertaining to that qualification in the formal educational system. It is moreover necessary to pass the particular exam applicable to completion of initial education (or

qualifications will be specified in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as parts of full qualifications, in exceptional situations also separately. Usefulness of a particular partial qualification on the labour market is the criterion of adequacy of defining competence for work activity or set of works as a partial qualification registered in the NQF.

³³ Not all the qualifications differentiated in the Czech Republic and registered in the NQF may however be recognized pursuant to the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. Only those with no restriction set by special regulations on regulated occupations or working activities, or forms of their performance and/or regulations of accepted paths of full qualification achievement and/or conditions for awarding or recognition of formal certificates with national or international applicability) officially confirming their achievement, may be recognized this way.

³⁴ As for the relation to occupations (as specified in the National Occupation Framework) the NQF should present with full as well as partial qualifications which occupation(s) they relate to and what requirements to health capability of workers and thus applicants for qualification exams are involved in performance of particular occupations and/or work activities. As for the relations between full and partial qualifications the NQF should present with full qualifications consisting of partial qualifications a list of all involved partial qualifications, achievement of which is a condition for obtaining full qualification.

³⁵ It is quite often achieved at later than usual age within known here as “second chance” education. Specification of difference of initial and further education in terms of age (as education of young people and education of the adults) would thus be confusing. See part 3.1, particularly questions 3.1.a) and 3.4.a) for more details.

“second chance” education) in that field. This is particularly important in relation to known here as ‘Maturita’ exam, as this enables access to tertiary education both in direct sequence or later, and thus it is also a condition for qualification extension to tertiary level (EQF 6-8) in further education in lifelong learning scope³⁶. The Act on Recognition of Further Education Results, as mentioned above, does not deal with full qualifications, however it assumes the paths to their achievement defined by legal standards applicable to initial formal education, which provides the extent of applicability of non-formal education and informal learning outcomes.

The acceptable paths to achievement of full qualification are obvious from the below sections of Act No. 179/2006 Coll.:

§ 4

Full Qualifications

- (1) Achievement of full qualification for a particular occupation is approved by
 - a) a document or a set of documents (hereinafter referred to as a “document”) on due completion of particular accredited bachelor, master or doctoral study programme listed in the National Qualifications Framework,
 - b) a document on achievement of particular education level or education level in a particular educational branch listed in the National Qualifications Framework and issued after completion of initial education.
- (2) Achievement of full qualification for a particular occupation is also approved by
 - a) passing a final examination, ‘Maturita’ examination or approval at conservatory pursuant to a special regulation in schools entered into the register of schools and educational facilities, and by a document of achievement of education level in a particular educational sphere listed in the National Qualifications Framework preceded by achievement of the appropriate partial qualifications lawfully approved, or
 - b) by a document on achievement of a particular education level listed in the National Qualifications Framework, issued after completion of initial education and gaining the appropriate partial qualification(s) approved by the law and listed in the National Qualifications Framework.
- (3) The list of full qualifications distinguished, approved and recognized within the territory of the Czech Republic are approved, modified and cancelled by the Ministry and published in the National Qualifications Framework. The professional competence achieved by obtaining an education level in a particular educational branch pursuant to the special regulation⁶⁾ is always listed in the National Qualifications Framework as at least one full qualification.

³⁶ This might have similar key importance in relation to the access to secondary education, if efforts of some stakeholders in educational policy for re-introduction of final exams at primary levels (ISCED 2) or even elementary education (ISCED 1), were pursued, passing of which would condition not only the advancement within formal education system to the next level (from ISCED 1 to ISCED 2 and from ISCED 2 to ISCED 3), but – unless otherwise defined by special regulations (i.e. the School Act in this situation) – also the access to education of the appropriate higher levels at any age within LLL, both through the “second chance” or through recognition of non-formal and informal learning results. As the compulsory school attendance (related to normal age of 6-15 years) is fulfilled by completion of basic education (ISCED 1+2) in the Czech Republic, only a small proportion of pupils in population years really enter the labour market after its completion (or non-completion) or even later (after reaching the age of 18). Similar situation may be for immigrants of all age groups over 15. They have thus full qualification of this level (ISCED 2 or even ISCED 1), i.e. levels 1-2 in EQF or even none) and they may only gain informally partial vocational qualifications of higher levels (usually EQF 3-4). To be awarded full qualification at the secondary or even primary level the domestic early school-leavers and drop-outs or immigrants in a similar situation would also have to pass the appropriate final exams, in other words to demonstrate required knowledge in some form of assessment and recognition of previous learning procedure. At present the School Act solves this problem by allowing exceptions to individuals to achieve complete education or its various parts – see below in the reply to question 2.1d). But there is a question to what extent it would be legally acceptable in the case of reintroduction of final exams completing basic education (ISCED 2) or even elementary education (ISCED 1). For detailed related systemic issues see part 3.1, particularly questions 3.1.a) and 3.4.a)

⁵⁾ sec. 113a through 113c of Act No. 561/2004 Coll., as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll.

⁶⁾ Government regulation No. 689/2004 Coll., on the framework of educational branches in primary, secondary and higher education.

§ 5

Partial Qualifications

(1) The list of partial qualifications distinguished, approved and recognized within the territory of the Czech Republic is approved, modified and cancelled by the Ministry upon the labour market needs, and published in the National Qualifications Framework.

(2) Partial qualifications are always parts of a full qualification in the particular educational branch as for sec. 4 par 2 point a). Partial qualifications do not have to be parts of a full qualification if such a full qualification is achieved by the procedure pursuant to sec. 4 par 2 point b). The Ministry accepts subdivision of full qualifications into partial qualifications on preparation of framework educational programmes as for the special regulation²⁾.

(3) Partial qualification achieved in further education system is verified under the conditions stipulated in sec. 17 though 20.

(4) Achievement of a partial qualification in further education system is approved by a certificate issued as per sec. 19.

²⁾ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll.”

CHAPTER V

RECOGNITION OF FURTHER EDUCATION RESULTS IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

§ 21

Partial qualifications achieved in further education system as per sec. 5 are recognized by a headmaster for the purpose of obtaining an education level in the system of initial education under the conditions stipulated by a special regulation²⁾.”

Obtaining a full qualification for a particular occupation upon assessment and recognition of outcomes from further education (i.e. partial qualifications) is obviously dealt with by sec. 5 par. 2, and sec. 5 par. 2. The possibility to assemble partial qualifications into full qualifications is obviously dealt with by sec. 4 par 2 point a). A full qualification may only be obtained this way if a field of education, which is preparation for performance of such an occupation (specific for that occupation or specific for that apart from others) exists in the education field framework. Instances in which such a field does not exist are dealt with by sec. 4 par. 2 point b). There is on the other hand a possibility to gain a particular partial qualification for an appropriate occupation or work upon the process of assessment and recognition of appropriate partial competence obtained in non-formal education and/or informal learning related to achievement of a particular education level in any field of education³⁷⁾. This way of gaining full qualification relates on one hand to the occupations for which the field of education is not defined in the National Qualifications framework (occupations not requiring systematic preparation in formal education system, like *school caretaker*, *diver*, etc.) on the other hand the occupations that do require systematic preparation, which nevertheless is not currently provided within the formal education system (as it is very rare or narrowly specialized occupation – e.g. various historical crafts in applied arts or in repair services etc.).

2.1.d) Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.

The need for legislation adjustment of further education sphere has been discussed for years (30 years) in the Czech Republic. There have been some measures performed, but only partial – the most important fields for legal adjustment became parts of other acts adjusting for example labour-law relations or tax relieves. The further education sphere was not dealt with its complexity.

³⁷⁾ Including the fields of education that are classified as general preparation fields providing basic education, generally vocational fields providing secondary education or generally vocational fields providing secondary education with ‘Maturita’ exam in the Government Regulation No. 689/2004 Coll.

Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the School Act) was passed in 2004. It includes a provision enabling a headmaster (at secondary schools) to recognize prior education of previous ten years to an applicant (both formal and non-formal education) and shorten studying time upon assessment of achieved knowledge level.

§ 70 – Recognition of achieved education

A headmaster recognizes achieved complex education of a student as per sec. 66 if it is demonstrated by an appropriate document or in another demonstrable way. A headmaster may recognize partial education of a student if it is demonstrated by an appropriate document or in another way, and if no more than 10 years have passed since achievement of such education, or if the student demonstrates his/her knowledge in the field in an exam set down by the headmaster. If a headmaster recognizes student's education such a student is exempt from classes and assessment to the extent of the education achieved.

The School Act also enables taking a partial exam of 'Maturita' or a partial exam of award examination (sec. 113). Successful passing of a partial exam is acknowledged by a certificate of a partial exam, which does not confirm education level.

Although the Act is relatively open to the further education, it does not describe the sphere to the sufficient extent. One of the reasons is that a lot of government conception materials had included the task to elaborate an act on further education for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (see the above documents, e.g. the National Action Plan for Employment, Strategy of HR development etc.) before the School Act passed. However the exact content of the act was unknown.

After close examination of the existing regulations and after numerous discussions that had shown how diverse the field of further education was, and that it could not be covered by a single act, the basic elements of the act were sought for, so as the liberal conception of further education is preserved, i.e. the function of supply and demand is not restricted, further education is supported and only those fields of further education, where it is necessary, are normalized. Focus on outcomes (i.e. learning results) and not inputs (as for example stress on accreditation of programmes or facilities) was the basic principle. The reason is that learning outcomes are relatively more objectively assessable than accreditation on the input, which is usually a matter of well written projects.

The above fact led the authors of the Act to a conclusion that the key sphere that had not been regulated yet was recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning and that if such recognition was to work and be accepted on nationwide basis it had to be adjusted from the point of view of legislation. That was why recognition of learning outcomes has become the basic idea of the Act on further education, later called the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results.

We may say that the Act was more initiated by the government administration sphere than by social partners, however its development itself was continuously consulted with a wide spectra of social partners and gained their support. This fact is particularly important in relation to the fact that the Act is aimed at the opportunities of practical use, at the possibility to obtain qualification by all those interested and particularly to consequent quick use at the labour market. To ensure demand for people with qualifications achieved this way at the labour market, participation of employers in defining qualification requirements for the individual qualification is inevitable. That is why continuous consultation with representatives of employers was necessary.

2.1.e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/ to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (the author of the Act) plays the central co-ordination role in the process of recognition of education results.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport:

- a) co-ordinates the activities of the central administration bodies (ministries) performed pursuant to the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results,
- b) approves, modifies, cancels and issues a list of partial qualifications (i.e. approves the content and form of the National Qualifications Framework) including the content of qualification and assessment standards.

Other ministries – authorizing bodies (including the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport):

- a) participate in preparation of qualification and assessment standards,
- b) decide on appointment, extension and withdrawal of authorization,
- c) conduct a register of persons granted authorization,
- d) provide the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport with data of persons provided with authorization to the list of authorized persons included in the National Qualifications Framework,
- e) monitor the activities of persons provided with authorization
- f) conduct registration of examination by authorized persons they provided with authorization, including registration of issued certificates.

Note to the process of recognition of education results:

Recognition of further education results is performed by *authorized persons*. These may be any individuals or legal entities meeting the requirements stipulated by the law (except other qualification requirements). Authorization is granted to these entities by the individual ministries according to their competencies (e.g. the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs authorizes for the occupations in the labour law relations, safety at work, employment, old age pension schemes, social care etc.; the Ministry of Industry and Trade for the occupations in the fields of energy, heating industry, gas industry, metallurgy, machinery, electrical engineering etc.). These ministries are called *authorizing bodies*.

2.1.f) Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

Functional systems are defined by the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. The systemic part of the Act is described in chap. 2.1 c) and in a note to chap. 2.1.e)

The individual ministries (authorizing bodies) are responsible for a sphere of activities specified by the law (see chap. 2.1 e)); The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport have co-ordinating role in putting the legal framework into practice. This is a really hot issue at this moment as numerous meetings are being held where partial aspects of the Act are being clarified so as all the involved ministries proceed identically in the same processes, so as the criteria set by the individual ministries are comparable and so as the methods of data reporting and communication resulted from the law is clear and identical. This process is substantial and absolutely topical at this moment, as the Act has already been issued in the Collection of Law, but comes into force in from August 1, 2007 – to leave time for fulfilment (at least partial) of the National Qualifications Framework and for harmonization of all communication processes between the ministries (authorizing bodies).

2.1.g) Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.

Recognition of further education results is not in operation yet, the process should start on August 1, 2007 with coming of the Act into force.

2.1.h) Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

As mentioned above, the Act has already been passed, but comes into force in August 1, 2007. A large number of press releases were elaborated during development and approval of the Act, describing the content and the importance of the Act, and some of them were published in nationwide press of high circulation. They were both published in general as well as in professional press.

The content of the Act was also presented at all nationwide conferences dealing with education, organized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The authors of the Act present its content on various events, e.g. known here as ‘weeks of further education’ in the individual regions and also at meetings of education providers with the public.

The Act has also been presented on the main TV news and on the radio.

The publicity of the Act is also a part of a NQF (National Qualifications Framework) system project controlled by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and performed by an organization directly reporting to the Ministry, the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education. There are also numerous conferences, in which the National Qualifications Framework concept is presented, organized within this project. The relation between the National Qualifications Framework and the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results is always presented within this context. The project also includes publicity and has its website and information about the project and its background is published in the nationwide newspapers.

The Act content has also very close relation to the UNIV project – Recognition of the Results of Non-formal Education and Informal Learning in Networks of Schools Providing educational services for the Adults. It is a system ESF project controlled by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and performed by the organization directly reporting to the Ministry, the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV). This project is also based on the Act’s content and puts its mechanisms into practice. The project also involves numerous conferences, where principles of recognition of further education results are presented, including the other publicity forms resulted from the project assignment.

There are two main target groups in the sense of promotion:

- a) Professional public – including potential authorized entities which will perform their own assessment (e.g. schools, interest groups, professional associations etc.), but also employers who participate in specification of qualification standards for particular partial qualifications.
- b) General public – individuals interested in validation of learning results – this target groups particularly includes all those who want to extend or change qualification at the ‘Maturita’ level (leaving certificate level) inclusive.

Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g. government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/ professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g. recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed?³⁸ If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?

³⁸ See Component 4.1 for complementary data.

List of ‘who does what’ for non-formal and informal learning and recognition of such learning
(See chap. 2.1 e)

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-ordinates the activities of the central administration bodies (ministries) performed pursuant to the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. - Approves, modifies, cancels and issues a list of partial qualifications (i.e. approves the content and form of the National Qualifications Framework) including the content of qualification and assessment standards. - Funds activities of the National Qualification Council.
All ministries – authorizing bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant authorization to individuals or legal entities upon assessment of meeting the requirements stipulated by the law. - Extend and withdraw granted authorizations. - Check meeting assessment conditions. - Register statutory data and transfer them to the national Institute of Technical and Vocational Education for central registration. - Participate in preparation of qualification and assessment standards and their modifications.
Individuals or legal entities – authorized persons (i.e. schools, professional associations, companies, enterprises, further education providers – whether public educational organizations or private profit-making education providers, etc.)	Perform assessment of further education results (i.e. assessment of non-formal education and informal learning) upon granted authorizations.
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (or the National Institute of Vocational Education, organization authorized by the Ministry), MPSV, the National Qualification Council.	Propose qualification standards.
Chambers of employers, professional chambers, interest groups and professional associations, associations of legal entities running schools, registered in the register of schools, school facilities and university representation.	Co-operate on preparation of qualification and assessment standards.
National Qualification Council	Consultation body of the Ministry (of education) for qualifications.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negotiates the matters related to preparation of the National Qualifications Framework and its application in practice. - Assesses other matters related to qualification or further education presented to it by the Ministry (of education) and provides its opinion to them.
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2.2.b) Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes.

List of ‘who does what’ for formal learning and recognition of such learning

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • executes state administration in the school system • establishes or closes down school facilities, primary and secondary schools, and institutions for the further education of pedagogical staff • lies down in an implementing legal regulation details on the concept, content and course of final examinations, their dates, the subjects which the final examination shall consist of, the composition of the Examination Board, the manner in which pupils are evaluated, and repeat examinations and examinations to be taken on alternative dates • is responsible for preparing and managing school-leaving examinations in terms of methodology, and for maintaining files, applications and records of results of school-leaving examinations, • establishes the Centre for Gathering Educational Results as an organisational unit of the state • lies down in an implementing legal regulation details on organisation, procedures and the course of enrolment proceedings for education at tertiary professional schools including dates of admission examinations and admission to grades higher than the first grade, details on organisation and the course of tertiary professional education, conditions for organising vocational training, rules for evaluating students and for recognising their previous education, and detailed conditions on the completion of tertiary professional education by the absolutorium examination • accredits educational programmes in the relevant area of education for individual tertiary professional school
The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary military schools, tertiary professional military schools and relating school facilities are established or closed down by the Ministry of Defence. • Secondary police schools, tertiary police schools and relating school facilities as well as secondary fire rescue schools, tertiary fire-rescue schools and relating school facilities are established or closed down by the Ministry of the Interior. • Secondary schools for prisoners` service and relating school facilities and schools and school facilities for persons in custody and imprisoned

	<p>persons are established or closed down by the Ministry of Justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary schools at embassies and consulates of the Czech Republic are established or closed down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Czech School Inspectorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draws up strategic objectives for inspection activities and systems for evaluating the educational system • acquires and analyses information on the education of children, pupils and students, on the activities of schools and school facilities registered in the Register of Educational Facilities, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the educational system • determines and assesses the conditions, course and results of education in accordance with relevant school educational programmes
A region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is obliged to ensure conditions for secondary and tertiary professional education of pupils and students as well as disadvantaged in terms of health condition. For such purposes a region establishes and closes down: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ secondary schools; ○ tertiary professional schools; ○ nursery, primary and secondary schools and school facilities for disabled children and pupils; ○ special educational needs schools; ○ schools connected to health care facilities; ○ school educational and boarding facilities and school canteens for children, pupils, and students of schools established by the region; ○ secondary schools with the instruction in the language of a national minority conditional upon Section 14; ○ language schools authorised to organise state language examinations; ○ art schools; ○ school facilities for developing personal interests; and ○ care homes.
A Regional Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoints the Chair of the Examination Board (with regard to areas of education completed by attaining an apprenticeship certificate the headmaster shall appoint a member of the Examination Board a practical expert) • creates conditions for organising and evaluating the common part of school-leaving examinations within their respective regions and participates in the organisation of their course
A headmaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decides on all matters concerning the provision of education and school services unless stated otherwise by a rule of law • is liable for the school or school facility providing education and school services in compliance with this Act and educational programmes • is responsible for the professional and pedagogical quality of education and school services • creates conditions for the further education of pedagogical staff and for the work of the School Board if such Board is established hereunder; • recognises comprehensive education achieved by a pupil under Section 66 if it is justified by a document on such education or by any other provable manner. The headmaster may recognise the partial education of a pupil if it is justified by a document confirming such education or by any other provable manner and not more than ten (10) years have elapsed since its finish; or if a pupil proves the knowledge achieved

	<p>through such education in an examination specified by the headmaster. If the headmaster recognises the education achieved by a pupil he/she shall excuse such a pupil from school lessons and evaluation within the scope of the recognised education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may admit an applicant to a grade higher than the first grade of the tertiary professional school. After assessing the documents of the applicant proving his/her education to-date the headmaster may within the enrolment proceedings determine as a condition upon which an applicant may be admitted that he/she take an examination, and specify its content, date, form, and evaluation criteria in compliance with the Accredited Educational Programme of the relevant area of education. Provided that the headmaster decides on the admission of the applicant he/she also shall specify the grade to which the applicant shall be assigned • recognises comprehensive education achieved by a student provided that it is justified by a document on such education or by any other provable manner. The headmaster may recognise the partial education of a student if it is justified by a document confirming such education or by any other provable manner and not more than ten (10) years have elapsed since its completion, or if the student proves the knowledge achieved by such education in an examination specified by the headmaster. If the headmaster recognises the education achieved by the student he/she shall excuse fully or partially such a student from school lessons and evaluation in the scope of the recognised education • announces at least one (1) date for absolutorium in the school year (<i>Absolutorium shall be conditional upon successful completion of the last grade of education. An absolutorium examination shall consist of vocational subjects, an examination in a foreign language and the defence of a graduate thesis. A graduate thesis may be elaborated and defended by several students, however each student shall be evaluated individually. A graduate thesis and its defence may also contain a part verifying practical skills</i>) • establishes an Educational Board as their advisory body, discuss with them all fundamental educational documents and measures concerning educational activities of the school. In his/her decision-making the headmaster shall take into account the opinions of the Educational Board. All pedagogical staff of the school shall become members of the Educational Board
<p>Secondary schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organise shortened courses for acquiring an apprenticeship certificate for applicants who have acquired secondary education completed by a school leaving examination
<p>Legal persons carrying out activities of secondary or tertiary professional schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal persons carrying out activities of secondary or tertiary professional schools may, in addition to education provided in accordance with the educational programmes stipulated in Section 3, organise specialised courses, courses in individual subjects, or other comprehensive parts of the syllabus or post-secondary specialised courses. • Specialised courses and courses of individual subjects or other comprehensive parts of the syllabus at secondary or post secondary school are determined to supplement general as well as a special knowledge and skills required for performing professions or work activities. • A post-secondary specialised course are determined for acquiring special theoretical as well as practical knowledge and skills which shall follow up, with respect to their special objectives, previously completed

	<p>education and shall extend qualifications for performing professions or working activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-training not organised within the official educational system are organised under special legal regulations, further education for performing medical professions shall be carried out under special legal regulations within the scope of activities of the Ministry of Health.
Accreditation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues its opinion on educational programmes within accreditation proceedings and further it shall also assess other matters concerning tertiary professional education submitted to it by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
Public higher education institutions	<p>Self-government competencies of public higher education institutions include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stipulation of the number of applicants admitted to studies, conditions of admission to studies and decision-making during entrance proceedings; ○ Design and implementation of study programmes; ○ Organisation of studies; ○ Decision-making re students' rights and duties; ○ Objectives of scholarly, research, developmental, artistic or other creative activity and their organisation; ○ Definition of legal terms between an employer and an employee; stipulation of the size of the academic staff and the number of other personnel; ○ Performing procedures for obtaining "venium docendi" (habilitation) and procedures for the appointment of professors; ○ Co-operation with other higher education institutions and legal entities; international relations; ○ Constitution of independent academic bodies at a higher education institution if not stipulated otherwise by this Act; ○ Economic management of the higher education institution and assets management in compliance with special regulations; ○ Assessment of study-related fees. <p>State authorities may interfere with the activities of public higher education institutions only on the basis of the law and within the law and in the manner provided for in the law.</p>
Higher education institutions	<p><i>Lifelong Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education institutions may provide – either free of charge, or subject to payment – lifelong learning programmes within the framework of their educational activities. Lifelong learning can be either profession-oriented or interest-oriented. Detailed conditions pertaining to lifelong learning are stipulated in internal regulations. These must be provided in advance to all participants in lifelong learning programmes. • Higher education institutions shall issue certificates of graduation to all graduates in lifelong learning programmes. A higher education institution can recognise credits acquired by successful graduates of lifelong learning programmes opened within the framework of accredited study programmes and acquired within the lifelong study programme, up to 60 per cent of credits required for due completion of the study, provided that such graduates become students under this Act (subsection 48 through 50). • Participants in lifelong learning are not regarded as students.
The Rector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rector is the head of a public higher education institution. If not otherwise stipulated by the Act, the Rector acts and makes decisions

	<p>upon all matters pertaining to the institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rector is appointed and dismissed by the president of the Czech Republic upon a proposal of the Academic Senate of the public higher education institution. The proposal is presented through the mediation of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter referred to as “the Minister”). • The term of the Rector is three (3) years. Duties of the Rector at a public higher education institution may be fulfilled by the same person for at most two consecutive terms of office. • Vice-rectors act in behalf of the Rector in the areas designated by the Rector. Vice-rectors are appointed and dismissed by the Rector.
<p>The Academic Senate of a Public Higher Education Institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Academic Senate of a public higher education institution represents its independent representative academic body. It consists of at least eleven (11) members hereof at least one third and at most one half constitutes students. The members of the Academic Senate are elected from the academic community of a public higher education institution on the basis of their voting by ballot. • The membership in the Academic Senate is incompatible with the duties of the Rector, vice-rectors, deans and vice-deans. • The meetings of the Academic Senate of a public higher education institution are open to the public • The Academic Senate of a public higher education institution performs the following tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Upon a recommendation of the Rector, makes decisions upon establishing, merging, amalgamating, splitting or dissolving individual parts of the higher education institution; ○ Approves internal regulations of the higher education institution and its parts; ○ Approves the budget of the higher education institution presented by the Rector and supervises utilisation of financial means of the higher education institution; ○ Approves the annual report on activities and the annual report on economic management of the higher education institution presented by the Rector; ○ Approves conditions of admission to studies in the study programmes that are not provided by individual faculties; ○ Resolves upon proposals for nominating or dismissing the Rector; ○ Approves long-term intentions in the area of educational, scholarly, research, developmental, artistic or other creative activity of the public higher education institution (hereinafter referred to as “long-term intentions of the public higher education institution”) and an annual update of these objectives upon a discussion at the Scientific Board.
<p>The Scientific Board of a Public Higher Education Institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Scientific Board of a public higher education institution are appointed and dismissed by the Rector. • Members of the Scientific Board are distinguished representatives of the fields that are the focus of educational, research, developmental, artistic or other creative activity of the higher education institution. At least one third (1/3) of Scientific Board members are not concurrently the members of the academic community of this institution. • The Scientific Board of a public higher education institution is presided by the Rector. • The Scientific Board of a public higher education institution performs the following duties:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discusses long-term intentions of the public higher education institution; ○ Approves the study programmes the approval of which is beyond the scope of authority of Faculty's Scientific Board or the Artistic Board (hereinafter referred to as "the Scientific Board of the Faculty"); ○ Exercises its duties in procedures for the appointment of professors and procedures for obtaining "venium docendi" (habilitation) in the extent provided for by this Act.
The Board of Trustees of a Public Higher Education Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Trustees of a public higher education institution consists of at least nine members. The number of members must be divisible by three (3). Members of the Board of Trustees of a public higher education institution are appointed and dismissed by the Minister upon discussion with the Rector with the view of associating representatives of public life, municipality as well as state administration. Members of the Board of Trustees must not be employed at the pertinent public higher education institution.
The Disciplinary Commission of a Public Higher Education Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members and the Chair of the Disciplinary Commission of a public higher education institution are appointed by the Rector. Candidates are chosen from the members of the academic community. Students represent one half of the members of the Disciplinary Commission. • Should all students of a public higher education institution be enrolled in its faculties, the Disciplinary Commission of a public higher education institution is not established.
The Registrar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Registrar is in charge of economic management and internal administration of a public higher education institution. The Registrar performs his/her duties on behalf of the institution in the extent defined in a provision of the Rector. • The Registrar is appointed and dismissed by the Rector.

2.2.c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a 'predominance-of-industry' model; 2) a 'predominance-of-public authorities' model'; and 3) a 'shared responsibility' model³⁹. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.

The Czech Republic applies the "shared responsibility" model:

The government or actually the ministries (authorizing bodies) delegate responsibility to individuals or legal entities to perform assessment of non-formal and informal learning. This model has been chosen for economical reasons (low burden to the government budget) and for opening the opportunities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning to those interested in such recognition (we expect that there will be more individuals or legal entities than for example one lifelong education centre for a whole region). There is no switch to another model considered as the whole system is just before launch. However some elements might be reconsidered upon the first experience).

2.2.d) Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

³⁹ See UNESCO UIE Report (Draft) at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/recognitiondraftsynthesis.pdf>

The individual ministries are now being invited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (it has the co-ordination role) to negotiations, where the process principles of the Acts are clarified and collectively worked out, so as all the ministries proceed identically where necessary.

Component 2.3. Resources⁴⁰

2.3.a) Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

Regarding the goal to introduce Euro in 2010 in the Czech Republic and thus regarding the necessity to meet the convergence criteria, the system had to be set to have a minimal demand for the government budget. This is why the recognition of further education results takes place with minimum government funding participation. As a consequence of this fact the recognition of education results does not only take place in lifelong learning centres or schools, as in compliance with one of the piles of the memorandum of lifelong learning we are also trying to provide the opportunities of recognition of education results closer to the interested individuals. Further education results may be recognized by individuals or legal entities that meet the requirements given by the law, and the examination fees are their incomes. The fees are covered by the applicants for examination. The fee is presented in the National Qualifications Framework and is published in the form of an implementary regulation. The decree has not yet a number, as it has not been issued yet.

* Note. As the Act has not come into effect yet and the decree does not have final and approved form, there is no certainty about what prices will be set for the exams and whether they will be really published as a decree, as expected recently. It is not clear either, whether a price or price range will be given for an individual exam. It is now obvious that each partial qualification (an exam for gaining a partial qualification) will have its price set with regard to the examination demands. Theoretical exam will probably be less demanding than a practical exam for which various machines and material have to be provided. The price will be set by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The reason is to prevent assessors from setting the prices too high as it would prevent some people with lower income to access the recognition of education results.

Development of the National Qualifications Framework – a vital instrument enabling commencement of the process of recognition of further education results is funded from the ESF and the government budget (EUR 1.8 million for the period of 2005-2007)

The expected annual figure necessary for the system maintenance will amount approximately EUR 715 from 2008 (may be with ESF support).

The background of the authorizing bodies (ministries, which granting the authorization to assess education result) is funded from the government budget.

We should also stress that the total costs of the individual authorizing bodies cannot be concretized at the moment. The standards will be filled gradually and thus the costs in the first or even first two years will be minimal. The costs of the authorizing bodies will stabilize with completion of the system, namely in relation with partial qualifications that will fall into competence of a particular office.

The answers will be specified upon further development (during the project).

2.3.b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal

⁴⁰ Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.

The system does not exist for some years, the items herein presented are just estimated costs.

2.3.c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.

An individual pays for the assessment and recognition process, see question 2.3.a).

The price levels have not been set yet, the price will be determined upon the principles mentioned in 2.3.a).

The price will probably be between EUR 30 - 70, some exams may be more, some less expensive.

The answer will be specified upon further development (during the project).

2.3.d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centres? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

There are currently no assessment centres or assessors as the Act has not come into force yet. However a number of schools, professional associations etc. have already expressed their interest in this activity and are monitoring the Act and development of implementary regulations. The regional differentiation cannot be estimated, but the system is adjusted without any “territorial barriers” – there is no rule that an assessor is only allowed to perform assessment in a particular region. In other words the authorized persons do not obtain authorization with limited territorial applicability.

The “maintenance of assessors” costs nothing. It is a specific form of business. The costs related to assessment and preparation for obtaining authorization are their personal costs.

The government nevertheless funds the authorizing body – the state administration employees who assess whether an applicant for authorization meets the required criteria, and grants the authorization. There are also personnel costs spent on monitoring the adherence to the assessment conditions.

“Training programmes” are not covered by the Act, i.e. they do not represent a necessary condition for the applicants to have their existing education assessed. However, we may expect that application of the law will induce a supply of training programmes with contents reflecting preparation for particular partial qualification exams. They will probably be mostly provided by schools and lifelong learning centres, which will become natural centres of recognition of education results including preparation for such recognition.

Component 2.4. Others

2.4.a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Just a note to the previous text concerning specification of qualification levels or education levels to which the above description relates within Chapter 2:

This deals with the recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning corresponding to partial⁴¹ and full qualifications bound to the levels of secondary and full secondary education,⁴² i.e. up to ‘Maturita’ exam inclusive, i.e. up to the EQF 5 level in the European Qualifications Framework being prepared only. The basic reason for such restriction is the administration autonomy (academic freedom) of tertiary education institutions on one hand, and on the other hand it is the fact that the European lifelong learning conception applies a competence based approach at all the EQF levels however, the outcome-oriented approach is only applied on non-tertiary levels (EQF 1-5) while on tertiary levels (EQF 6-8) the input oriented approach is still being applied as in the past.

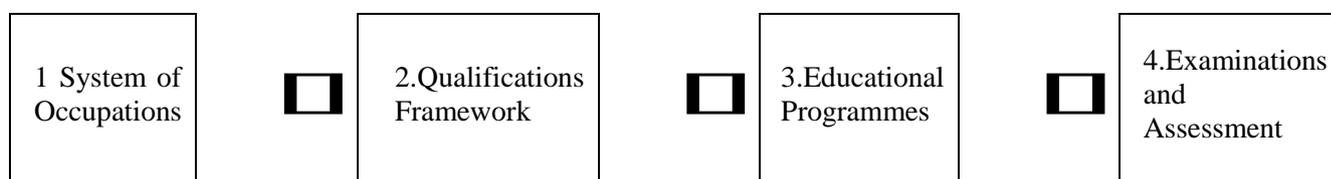
Partnership Established when NQF Has Been Developed

Practical involvement of all relevant partners in the development, generation and implementation of NQF has an essential significance. In the following text, the description of important partnerships is divided into two parts: the partnership established in projects aiming at NQF development and a “permanent” partnerships aiming at its continuing beyond project termination.

Partnership in Supporting Projects (NSK/NQF and UNIV)

Building a partnership is the common characteristic of all system projects that have been implemented in the Czech Republic since 2005 and are directed towards qualifications and VET.

Thanks to other projects (e.g. PILOT S, Quality I) supplementing two basic projects focused on the development of the NQF – (started 2005, being within the purview of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) and the National System of Occupations – (being in purview of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) social partners and other relevant stakeholders are involved in all parts of the following chain:



⁴¹ As mentioned in the reply to question 2.1c) partial qualifications may sometimes be separate, however they will usually become separately applicable parts of full qualifications, or partial qualifications related to a full qualification at the same level, i.e. increasing, deepening, extending or maintaining a qualification already achieved. From the procedural point of view thus those forming a part of a full qualification belong to initial education and preparation at usual age or anytime later within the “second chance” education, and the separate partial qualifications mastered at the minimum level sufficient for performing particular activity. On the other hand those related to a full or separated partial qualification, which are usually not accessible without it, belong to further education and preparation in this i.e. functional specification (in contrast to age specification).

⁴² However if the above mentioned proposed final exams completing the second or even first level of basic education (ISCED 2 or even ISCED 1) were introduced, recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning forming a part of primary or even elementary education would be involved. This is not necessary in present law as non of both the basic education levels is being completed by a comprehensive final exam (or by any form of overall evaluation for the whole level) the successful result of which would decide on the possibility of admission to the next level, within initial education (at common age or anytime later within the “second chance” education provided in the formal education system). Decision on admission of pupils as well as their classification into individual grades of selective educational programmes at ISCED 2 level after elementary education and at ISCED 3 or ISCED 4 levels after basic education is in competence of headmasters of the schools providing the particular follow-up programmes, likewise decision on advancement to higher grades within the same programmes and on conditions of their switch to other programmes and/or schools.

The chart presented above shows a strategy approach aiming at the necessity of establishing the linkage between the determination of qualification and the needs of employers on one side and education and VET on the other side:

- a) in the objective state of play, qualification standards in the National Qualifications Framework will correspond to the description of requirements for particular occupations in the National System of Occupations;
- b) qualification standards will become a commission from the sphere of work; framework educational programmes (in initial education) and continuing education programmes will react to them;
- c) the highest layer is represented by the system of assessment and certification of vocational competences. It confirms education results by corresponding certificates, irrespective of the way of their acquiring; assessment standards for partial and complete qualifications (they are a part of the National Qualifications Framework) will contribute to this objective. Assessment standards are developed in cooperation with social partners.

Other Relating Partnerships – Field Groups and Sector Councils

At the current state of play (until reaching the objective state of play), activities of field groups contribute to the linkage between the needs of the labour market and VET content.

Since 1997, **Field Groups** (under the present concept) have been operating at the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education within the purview of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Their basic mission is to facilitate, maintain and develop an effective communication between VET programme designers in the Czech Republic and all relevant partners.

Field groups were established to cover the issues of individual groups of occupations for which students are trained in secondary and tertiary technical programmes. Nearly 300 external experts work in 25 field groups. These experts know and gradually monitor the development in the world of work. In addition, experts who are experienced in the development of VET programmes, participate in field group activities as well.

At present, field groups represent minimally a “three-dimensional partnership”:

- the Concept Group of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports represents national or nationwide levels;
- field groups represent sector levels;

work groups represent local and regional level: They were introduced by the last amendments to the status.

At present, the methods based on teamwork are gaining ground in the Czech Republic. They are connected with the gradual establishment of **Sector Councils** (Sector Skills Councils). These are newly developed bodies composed of experts nominated by employers and their organisations in a close cooperation with central administrative authorities in the sense of future awarding bodies (Act No.179/2006 Coll.)

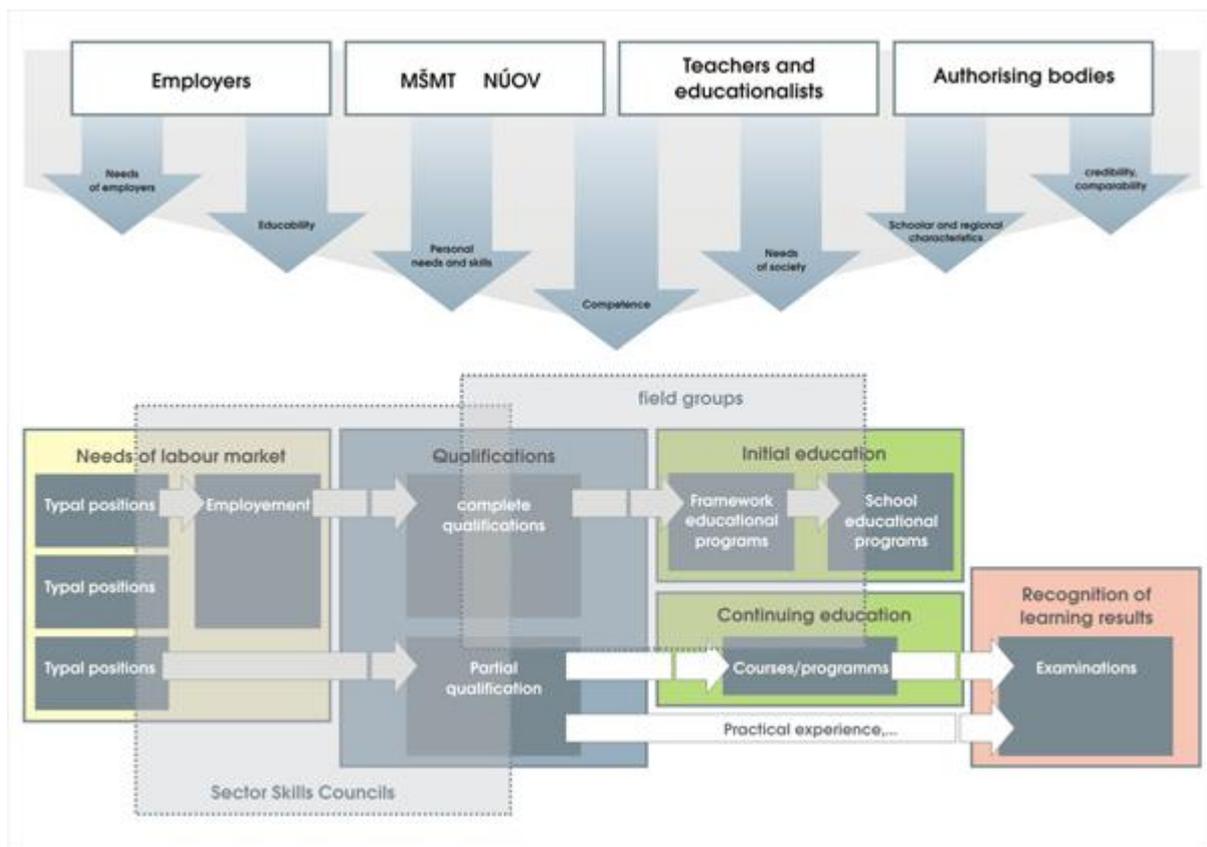
Sector councils are being established after negotiations with relevant representatives of employers under the backing of the NQF project team, the administrator of the Integrated System of Typal Positions and the project team of the National Qualifications Framework. After establishing sector councils their operation is managed from the inside by steering bodies that have its chairpersons and status. In case of broader professional fields, sector Councils have also internal sections. Sometimes the authorising body itself participates in the management of sector councils.

As regards the organisation, activities of sector councils are governed by TRESIMA⁴³ of which one employee is usually the secretary of a sector council.

Sector councils have usually the different number of members. Experience showed that an optimal number of members are up to 15 members because of their successful work.

The representatives of the educational sphere are also the members of sector councils.

The following chart (the next page) shows possible solutions of future relations between both partner groups. Sector councils should be active rather in the field of work performance and on the contrary field groups should focus on the educational field so that sector councils may formulate an order from the sphere of work in objective state of play and field groups assist to project it into educational programmes. This should apply to initial as well as continuing education.



⁴³ A private company participating both in the development of the National Qualifications Framework and the National System of Occupations

Component 3. Description of technical arrangements

Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework

3.1.a) What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. of 30 March 2006 on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results),⁴⁴ see part 2, sub 2.1.b) through 2.1.f) and 2.4.a), uses the term *ověřování a uznávání výsledků dalšího vzdělávání* (verification and recognition of further education results), while the term *further education* in this Act means “educational activities which are not considered to be initial education” (Sec. 2, point b), and the Act only applies to the part that aims at acquisition of educational results included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)⁴⁵ as full and/or partial qualifications, see 2.1.c), unless the process of recognition of educational results regardless the way of their achievement as specified by Act No. 179/2006 Coll. is limited by special regulations (Sec. 1, par. 2). The first of these limitations deals with the learning results themselves and does not require any comments (they mean learning results set in advance as qualification requirements⁴⁶ for capability of performing an occupation and/or achievement of an educational level and specified in the NQF by the respective qualification and assessment standards). The other deals with acceptable paths to achievement of a particular full and/or partial qualification, and in Sec. 1 (Subject and Scope of Application) of Act No. 179/2006 Coll. they are specified by the provision of the above mentioned paragraph (2):

“The provisions of special legal regulations¹⁾ regulating education, the assessment and verification of results of education, professional training or conditions of qualifications, and the assessment and recognition of professional qualification and other competences for starting up employment or self-employed regulated activities and their performance in the Czech Republic shall not be prejudiced by this Act.

¹⁾ For example Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act), as amended by Act No. 38/2005 Coll.; Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on Higher Educational Institutions Amending and Supplementing Some Other Acts (the Act on Higher Education Institutions), as amended; Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Other Competencies of Nationals of European Union Member States and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications), as amended; Act No. 95/2004 Coll. on Conditions for Attaining and Recognising Professional Qualifications and Special Qualifications to Perform Professions of a Surgeon, Dentist and Pharmacist, as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll.; Act No. 96/2004 Coll., on Conditions for Attaining and Recognizing Qualifications to Perform Professions Other than Medical Professions and to Perform Activities relating to Health Care Provision and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Professions Other than Medical Professions), as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll.; Act No. 85/1996 Coll. on Advocacy, as amended; Act No. 312/2002 Coll., on Officials of Territorial Self-governing Units and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts as amended by Act No. 46/2004 Coll.; Act No. 360/1992 Coll., on Performing the Profession of Certified Architects and on Performing the Profession of Certified Engineers and Technicians Working in Construction, as amended; Act No. 111/1994 Coll., on Road Traffic as amended; Decree No. 224/1995 Coll. on Qualifications of Persons to Navigate and Service Vessels as amended by Decree No. 295/2005 Coll.; and Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Public Health and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts; as amended.”

It follows that if stipulated by special legal regulations or by statutorily appointed institutions (NQF), the term *further education results* in the phrase *verification and recognition of further education results* (in its quoted specification for the purpose of the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results) does not include the following cases of learning results:

⁴⁴ For full-text of this Act in English, see <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/act-no-179-of-30-march-2006>.

⁴⁵ More precisely in its core part, the so-called Národní soustava kvalifikací (National Register of Qualifications).

⁴⁶ Together with possible requirements of performance of such work (or also qualification preparation for that) for health capability of a person who performs such work (or participates in qualification preparation).

- learning results corresponding to all tertiary education levels (levels EQF 6-8), see sub 2.4.a) above for the basic reasons for this limitation (particularly the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. itself does not take into account the possibility of application on these qualification levels⁴⁷),
- results of education and training preparing for regulated occupations and other regulated activities or performance forms (whether the respective education and training programmes are included in initial or further education within the formal educational system framework or provided separately by various authorised providers operating beyond the formal education system),
- and of course learning results not specified in advance and/or not registered in the NQF as qualifications.

And on the contrary, learning results already gained at the age adequate to initial education (for youths and young adults at pre-productive age) do not always have to be disqualified from the process identified by the phrase *verification and recognition of further education results*.

In this relation we should refer to the above limitation of applicability of Act No. 179/2006 Coll., and to terminology specification (both sub 2.1.c). It is obvious from both that verification and recognition of further education results as per the Act covers the area of non-formal and informal learning just selectively according to all the three above mentioned limiting points of view and moreover in dependence on learning classification defined by the conditions in the formal education system (this is given by orientation to further education in the quoted only negative specification dependent on what is understood initial education). This is specified by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. in Sec. 2 (Definitions), points a) and b) as follows:

„ For the purpose of this Act the following definitions shall apply:

- a) initial education shall mean pre-school education, basic education, secondary education, education at conservatories, and tertiary professional education carried out in accordance with a special regulation²⁾ in nursery schools, basic schools, secondary schools, conservatories and tertiary professional schools, and studies carried out on accredited study programmes under a special legal regulation³⁾ by universities and their faculties;
- b) further education shall mean educational activities which are not considered to be initial education;

²⁾ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll.

³⁾ Act No. 111/1998 Coll., as amended.“

As the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) does not exist as system measure in the CR, no terms for that have already been fixed and there is no provision defining which of the Czech translation equivalents being used for this or the other related English expressions⁴⁸ are terminologically binding in specified contexts being referred to, except the above terminological phrase *ověřování a uznávání výsledků dalšího vzdělávání* (*verification and recognition of further education results*) used in Act No. 179/2006 Coll.

As neither the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. or any other Act or legal regulation in the CR specifies or uses the terms of formal, non-formal or informal learning, the term recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) still remains technically unspecified in the CR, and it is only obvious that it is wider than what Act No. 179/2006 Coll. deals with. In relation to this wider term⁴⁹ we may characterise the present situation in the CR from the technical point of view more concisely by means of the term *formal recognition of so far formally unrecognised results of prior learning* (as analogy of English

⁴⁷ See Sec. 4, par. 1, point a) of this Act, quoted above in 2.1.c), which only accepts successful completion of the respective tertiary formal education programme as the only way to obtaining full qualification for occupations at these qualification levels.

⁴⁸ Like for example the phrase *identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*, used within the European concept of lifelong learning, or the phrase *accreditation of prior learning (APL)* or *accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)*, used previously or still in the UK, etc.

⁴⁹ As it is specified within the European or also other widely internationally accepted concepts of lifelong learning (LLL) in both its basic dimensions (LLL and LWL) and in relation to the respective strategic intents on one hand and their operationalisation and instrumentarium on the other hand

terms *APL* and *APEL*), that might be used for terminological distinguishing of technically specified or closely unspecified processes of recognition in the CR as follows:

- recognition of such results within formal education as specified by Acts No. 561/2004 Coll. and 111/1998 Coll. (School and University Acts) and according to their provisions,
- recognition of such results in the field of performance and preparation for performance of regulated professions and other regulated activities as per the respective special regulations,
- verification and recognition of further education results as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll.,
- recognition of vocational qualification as per Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Other Competencies of Nationals of European Union Member States and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications), as amended, and
- recognition of other such learning results, if their formal recognition is not legally or morally unacceptable and if it has any sense.

Except for the last “residual” category all the others are legally specified at present, and all of them (including the legally unspecified “residual” one) may include learning results usually acquired and, if appropriate, formally recognised at the age of initial education (for youths and young adults at pre-productive age) as well as further education (for people at the age of 15 and more, with regard to the fact when they left the initial education, and especially for adults at productive or known here as third age). This is due to the confusion of two different meanings of the Czech term *další vzdělávání* as opposed to the term *počáteční vzdělávání*, to be distinguished especially within VET, namely the functional opposition of initial and continuing/continous VET (IVET and CVET) and the above age-dependent opposition of initial and further education (which has been implicitly taken for base of the definition used by Act No. 179/2006 Coll.). However, an even more essential difference is to be mentioned that is being confused with the definition of the Act, i.e. the definition from the learner’s perspective (which is by now used within all concepts of LLL in connection with its LWL dimension) as opposed to the definition from the educational system perspective, be it represented firstly by administration or by providers or by the fixed overall structure of educational routes and study fields (which is explicitly preferred by the definition of the Act through its referring to education results, not to learning results or outcomes).

The present situation of the implementation of the European concept of LLL (and recognition of non-formal and informal learning within that) in the national conditions of the CR may be better characterised from technical point of view as (A) technically specified given conditions of the present state and (B) the ongoing reform process and technical aspects of its stepwise implementing in given conditions.

The technically specified given conditions (A) are represented by the above outline of categories of formal recognition of so far formally unrecognised prior learning results, the reform process (B) by Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and the institutional and technical measures foreseen by this Act, however these are related to the present state of this process as a phase and a part of much wider reform process, the framework of which is formed by the European concept of LLL (as a part of the Lisbon Strategy and the following Bologna and Copenhagen processes) and is still going to develop at both national and international levels.

The technical term *verification and recognition of further education results* thus should not be confused with wider and technically unspecified term of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) used in this project, as (unlike the latter) it is integrated as described not only into the institutional and technical reform measures taken at all administration levels of the body politic, but also in the existing state of arrangement and functioning of interrelations between competence and its acquiring through education/learning in general and particularly in the field of qualified work. This aspect of embodiment in existing relations of arrangement and functioning of the whole complex also brings the fact that the basic type of the whole educational system structuring as a system of paths and fields (programmes) of functionally specified education (preparation) somehow proves or does not prove good with regard to functions it is expected to fulfil towards the society as a whole or to various groups of users, and if it fulfils these functions principally well, the whole complex usually shows

considerable inertia and has only low tendency to change, particularly according to the ideas of policy makers in given area of the society structure.

As the type of the whole architecture of the educational system also defines to considerable extent whether and to what extent the formal educational system acts as a basic link to achievement of initial and further formally recognised education from functional point of view, it is of course impossible to abstract in relation to RNFIL from the structural type of educational system and treat it separately.

If we apply the OECD criteria specifying formal education/learning within the RNFIL project,⁵⁰ all the above mentioned legally specified fields of education and/or recognition of qualifications obtained from that, belong to formal education in the CR educational system, except for *verification and recognition of further education results* as per No. 179/2006 Coll. This has thus just complementary character (where it is applicable at all), to shortening of the otherwise long way to achievement of full qualification and to enabling formal recognition of partial qualifications applicable at the labour market independently on full qualification (and of course their recognition by certifying acquirement of the respective competences by formally recognised certificates that have, however, no aggregate value legally equal to a formal certificate of full qualification connected with an educational level, without passing the same final exam as within the initial education and training).

For the structural type of the formal educational system in the CR see Introduction to this report, and for functionally specified types of initial and further formally recognised education within and outside the formal educational system see sub 3.4.a).

3.1.b) Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages.

Verification and recognition of further education results as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll. as mentioned in part 2, esp. sub 2.1.c), is related to development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Formal recognition of so far formally unrecognised prior learning results in general, the categorisation of which is described in 3.1.a) above, and of which Act No. 179/2006 Coll. is just a sub-category, is however also governed by further regulations, see the above overview in 3.1.a) and the overview of functional types and providers of formally recognised education and/or qualification preparation in 3.4.a).

As the NQF shall include a register of all full (complete) and partial qualifications acknowledged, distinguished and recognised in the Czech Republic, it should bring more transparency for all users into the intransparent present state of the whole area of both the designing and offering and the recognition of qualifications, in the complex structuring of this area on both territorial (national or international) and sectoral (professional and/or industrial) principles, without replacing or even unifying the existing qualifications. The present state of development of NQF does not so far enable us to give any details about how particular full qualifications and partial qualifications they consist of or those separate ones will be defined and how their definition will be linked to the above mentioned (sub 2.1.c) two basic types of achieving full qualifications upon verification and recognition of further education results as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll., Sec. 4, par. 2, points a) and b) (see quotation and illustrative explanation of both the types sub 2.1.c)).

As verification and recognition of further education results as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll. has not been introduced yet, we are of course not able to describe the impacts of implementation of NQF and recognition of learning results registered and described in that as per this Act.

⁵⁰ See item (7) in part 2, sub 2.2 in RNFIL Guidelines: 'Formal learning' refers to learning through a programme of instruction in an educational institution, adult training centre or in the workplace, which is generally recognised in a qualification or a certificate. 'Non-formal learning' refers to learning through a programme but it is not usually evaluated and does not lead to certification. 'Informal learning' refers to learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities.

3.1.c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework.

Limitation of applicability of the *verification and recognition of further education results* procedure as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and thus the expected scope of its action as well as its complementary functional character are dealt with in the above part 2, see 2.1.b through 2.1.f) and 2.4.a), and sub 3.1.a) and then sub 3.4.a) herein.

As for the difficulties or obstacles in linking this way technically specified concept of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (or formally so far unrecognised prior learning in general) with the National Qualifications Framework being designed, there seems to be no substantial drawback in this direction, as the *National Qualifications Framework* (NQF) as well as the *verification and recognition of further education results* procedure are specified within the same legal framework and are being newly introduced into practice “top down”.

Insufficient motivation of employees as well as employers may be more likely a roadblock for this way of recognition as a whole, if a formally recognised qualification for performance of the particular occupations or work activities is not a legal prerequisite. As regulated jobs or activities are at the same time outside the scope of this recognition procedure, this risk is systemic, as it results directly from definition of the scope of recognition as per Act 179/2006 Coll. This is at the same time the basic dilemma of this as well as other methods of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results, i.e. whether to regulate something just because to make it formally recognised, or whether to keep on the principle to regulate anything only if it is really necessary, see 3.4.a) for more details. The described limitation of the Act 179/2006 Coll. scope in principle to a partial area of (non-tertiary and unregulated) job skills may be considered more as an advantage, since an extension of formal recognition to further potential areas of life activities described through (expected) “learning results” (i.e. defined in prior) would bring pointless regulation of these areas of life activities as areas of learning, see part 1, particularly sub 1.5.

If actually the scope of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results included also the “learning results” exceeding the field of qualified work and similar qualified activities (e.g. sports)⁵¹, as it is the case in requirements for valuing of learning in general (or learning for pleasure and personal growth etc., see above, part 1 sub 1.5) to its support, it would bring the necessity

- either of algorithmising (and thus specifying by a method) even what is not and should not be algorithmised from its character as it cannot be, which would be technically inadequate and functionally incongruous, and thus even dangerous (in the best situation the inadequately specified “learning results” and corresponding certificates would not be socially accepted, in worse situation they would be accepted and would create inadequate unification on one hand and pressure for obtaining such certificates for various related social advantages instead of intended learning for pleasure and personal growth on the other),
- or of developing qualifications in the sense of “awards” like “blank cheques” expressing nothing more and nothing more specified than valuation of someone’s activities “honoris causa” (like for example honorary doctoral and other degrees or other honorary titles or awards), which might indeed support learning for pleasure and personal growth of some individuals, but it might be inefficient or even counterproductive for the others, and it would definitely contradict the crucial requirement for formal recognition of functionally designed learning to be definable by means of “learning results” set in prior.

So the awards granted for stimulating and valuing learning and effects of learning specified this way (for pleasure and personal growth) in persons’ job and life careers should be strictly distinguished from certificates verifying achievement of competence (capability) for due performance of an activity requiring such an acquired competence as well as social control of its achievement.

⁵¹ That is the area of activities characterised by specified performance outcomes and/or processes and thus by definable qualification requirements for performance of such specifically qualified activities.

Anyway none of both these procedures would respect the technically specified term competence (i.e. capability of due performing of an activity)⁵², as this term is only suitable just for the acquired activities that can be well enough isolated, described and assessed, moreover just for the part of them, for which the social control of acquired competence is really needed (necessary or probably useful).

3.1.d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing 'legitimacy' both in working life and in the educational system?

See in Introduction to this report and sub 3.1.a) and 3.4.a) herein for more detailed description related to this topic. As there are no legal differences between professional and academic qualifications awarded in the formal educational system in the CR, and as qualifications awarded in the sphere of labour (e.g. professional examinations and certificates required for membership in professional chambers and designed and operated by these chambers) mostly deal with tertiary qualifications or with regulated professions and other regulated activities regardless qualification levels, neither of which belongs to the scope of Act No. 179/2006 Coll., a reply to this question is in principle impossible at the present situation in the Czech Republic (it would be just speculations on how things might develop in this area).

3.1.e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

Yes (to both of the posed questions).

The extent to which the NQF introduction has been motivated by the efforts for enabling recognition of non-formal and informal learning or for simultaneous introduction of both was described above in part 2, esp. sub 2.1.c), as well as here in part 3, esp. sub 3.1.a) and sub 3.4.a).

However, neither recognition of non-formal and informal learning or introduction of the NQF are themselves the purpose, they may only be instruments, namely where their application is indicated. As to this question of expectations and real impacts, see esp. sub 3.1.c) above for what has been said to the main dilemma (to what extent and for what good reasons the area of interrelations between learning and performance of work and other acquired activities ought to be more regulated through qualifications, or on the contrary more deregulated). Nevertheless, it is too soon yet for trying to find a balance in this more empirical issue.

3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

For the potential threats that might endanger introduction of the recognition process as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll. or its use see esp. sub 3.1.c) above. As to the question concerning possible threats of its introduction to various stakeholders and their possible resistance, be it educational institutions (not only tertiary) and employers as well as employees or target individuals or their groups, this question in general is just a secondary one, related to the bottom-up approach and the feasibility issue. The questions for expected functionality of the measures being introduced are primary, and there is no

⁵² As a set of expected learning results characteristic for the respective capability and designed both so as to be seized and described the essential of what has to be acquired to the sufficient or better degree of mastery (in qualification standard) and so as the respective competence of anyone is assessable (according to the assessment standard) regardless the place, time and way of its acquirement.

reason to expect that ambitions of policy makers and administration are more relevant here than opinions and attitudes of further mentioned stakeholders whether from the labour performance sphere or from the sphere of education and training providers (in educational institutions and in enterprises). That is also why there is no point to talk directly about overcoming resistance to reform efforts, as first there are questions for the sense of the measures being introduced, see above in 3.1e). There is and there will probably be no basic resistance to reform efforts at the national level in the Czech Republic, only if they lost credit and support under influence of inappropriate enforcement regardless their objective purposefulness on one hand and possible risks on the other.

Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

3.2.a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory of sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)

Except for the university tertiary sector (where ECTS operates), no credit system has been introduced yet in the CR at national level, whether for formal, or non-formal and informal learning. Partial credit systems exist in non-formal CVET at sectoral level (esp. in the field of health care and social work at all qualification levels, with allocation and awarding of credits for participation in various educational events rather than for achievement of learning results) or within several companies and/or company networks (esp. involved in international systems of LLL).

3.2.b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

See 3.2.a). Where any such arrangements exist at all, the respective ministries and professional associations or companies and their associations are responsible.

3.2.c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

They are based on notional workload in the ECTS. The same criterion is considered to be taken as the base for the ECVET introduction, as in contrast to other possible criteria this one enables more objectively based estimates of how time-demanding are particular partial qualifications and their aggregates forming the vocational part of a full qualification, derived from the time necessary within IVET for mastering vocational competence corresponding to the component of vocational education and training within the individual education fields (branches) subdivided into partial competences for work activities corresponding with partial qualifications the full ones consist of. This criterion may be of course analogically applied on estimating how time-demanding is mastering of various separate partial qualifications and from that what number of credits they shall be allocated and may be gained by an individual for their mastering.

3.2.d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

This question is inappropriate at present for the situation in the CR (it would be just speculations on how things might develop in this area).

3.2.e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

This question is inappropriate at present for the situation in the CR (no credits have been introduced yet and virtually all components of both IVET and CVET programmes provided by schools and other educational institutions are running and/or assessed within the formal educational system or within

other appropriate educational institutions at presence of teaching staff responsible for the individual components, i.e. for vocational education and practical training).

3.2.f) Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HE system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

ECTS has no direct relation (at least in terms of legislation) to recognition of non-formal and informal learning results in the CR, as all tertiary degrees may only be achieved by completion of an accredited study programmes of pre-graduate tertiary education in the respective educational institutions (universities and non-university colleges⁵³), see Sec. 4, par. 1, point a) of Act No. 178/2004 Coll. quoted above in part 2, sub 2.1c), and as these study programmes

- either include some periods and allowable forms of pre-graduate practical training (to which a number of credit points necessary for advancement to higher grade or for completion of study is allocated) in their curricula as their obligatory part,
- or do not include such practical periods (and possible individual initiative in pre-graduate practical training in various forms of partial jobs is usually informally supported and appreciated, however not awarded credit points that might substitute credit point allocated to the obligatory part of study programme and awarded for their successful completion, in the total number of credit points necessary in each year for advancement to the next grade).⁵⁴

⁵³ Tertiary education institutions in the CR (ISCED 5) include apart from universities also tertiary professional schools (VOŠ). These however only provide terminal practically oriented tertiary programmes (of ISCED 5B type) and their graduates obtain the award of „diploma specialist (DiS.), different from the “bachelor” award (Bc.), which may only be awarded by this type of schools for programmes of this type. Universities however particularly provide vertically transferable tertiary programmes (of ISCED 5A type), while non-university tertiary schools may only provide the first two levels, (bachelor and master), and universities also the third level (doctoral). All tertiary educational institutions may moreover provide LLL programmes (oriented on occupation or interest) and issue certificates of their completion, which however stand aside the formal education system and its certificates. This nevertheless only means that their completion cannot be confirmed by the same formal certificates with the same nationwide applicability as those issued in formal education. If these are not considered binding for performance of occupation or another activity, the LLL programmes may factually fulfil the function of qualifying education and training, and a certificate of their successful completion the function of evidence of mastering the competence (competences) they provide as well. This means in principle, that they may compete with programmes and certificates from formal education in the OECD delimitation, see sub 3.1.a) and then sub 3.4.a), everywhere, unless this is obstructed by any legal provisions and/or unwillingness to accept these parallel certificates by their users..

⁵⁴ Non-formal awarding of pre-graduate individual practical placement (whether optional or obligatory) naturally arises from the outside of the school system, from the world of labour and has its known typical forms. It's characterised by direct offers of jobs from companies and other work institutions (already during studies or later after its completion), or by success of individual's own entrepreneurship with customers or results of his/her independent work for users etc., and transferability of these individual work results is usually assured by usual personalistic tools (structured CV, employer's reference, reference from customers and other users about quality of products or services of individuals' own companies or about quality of operation or results of their independent work, etc.). This informal direct recognition of individual's work and its results as indicators of performance potentials as well as current performance is thus principally independent on assessment or recognition of his/her learning results within educational and training programmes (whether formal or non-formal) and may have and sometimes has different unwritten standards and indicators of their meeting and methods of their examination in given case. For the needs of formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning all that would have to be explicitly related to its instrumentarium. However if we assume that accredited study programmes should also adequately define the possibilities (and realm of possibility) of pre-graduate or also post-graduate practical training necessary for achievement of full qualification in a particular field or to apply individually partial qualifications, such necessary practical training should be included in the curricula as their obligatory component (in the sense of the first of the mentioned possibilities), and only in such a situation it may be allocated some number of credit points in ECTS application. What paths to gaining the appropriate practical experience will then be determined as acceptable and mutually equivalent will only be a matter of arbitrary (conventional) determination, similarly to obligatory parts of study programmes. This should obviously

ECTS thus has relevance in the CR mainly for the mobility inside a particular study programme of pre-graduate tertiary education in national, and mainly in European or wider international scale (study placements in other institutions abroad or home and recognition of their results by the sending institution), and only in specific limits, or also for transition between different study programmes (within one institution or within various tertiary institutions of university or non-university type). Transition between different study programmes is defined by the appropriate type and field of these programmes and is in the competency of the tertiary institution themselves to some limited extent only. For example direct continuation at master level of an ISCED 5A type programme after completion any of ISCED 5B type study programmes, whether provided by a higher vocational school or a college is impossible, first it is necessary to complete a bachelor level and then possibly the master level of ISCED 5A type at an appropriate college, while the school management decides about the possibility to continue in studying at the appropriate higher level of a structured two- or three-level programme of ISCED A5 type or ISCED 6 type in the instance of modification or change of study branch or specialisation.

This situation is not likely to get changed remarkably after the NQF introduction. An assessment of the extent of accordance of the whole study programme and its parts with the qualification standard, see above in part 2, sub 2.1.c) and here sub 3.3.c), actually defines whether and to what extent which part of it is qualitatively relevant in relation to that (relevant centrally, marginally or irrelevant), and then only a discussion on some qualitative expression of such relevance whether by means of credit points or any similar tools may start. For ECTS like for ECVET credit accumulation and transfer thus depend from the nature of the case on identity of the particular education/work field, towards which any explicit elements (units) may only represent some credit and its rate. And as against the idea of some elementaristically-additively interpreted “units as they are” (whether units of qualified activities or preparing for them) there are all the known and decidedly substantiated basic objections (the whole is more than the sum of parts and only from the whole the parts are identifiable and acquire their sense), the extent to which the idea of accumulation and transfer of credits may be supportive or at least harmless, thus depends on a reasonable delimitation of not only the level, but also the field of qualification.

The idea of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results then makes sense within these limits, unless its implementation turns into a nonsense, see sub 3.1.c) for its basic dilemma. Its second basic risk is the above mentioned elementaristic-additive startpoint, and particularly the risk of transferring this startpoint conceptual and constructional principle directly to instrumental level (e.g. aligning the idea of accumulation and capitalization of credit gained in the society upon education/learning and competent use of its results with some units of such learning and credit points for them, and aligning of separated units of expected learning results directly with learning unit forms, usually with modules).

Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures⁵⁵

3.3.a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

also apply generally to dual systems (with implementation of education component and practical training component in different institutions), and it does apply to the system of education and training in the CR and will still apply after the NQF introduction, see above sub 3.1.a) and sub 3.4.a) for functional types of education and training and to legislation frameworks for recognition of the qualifications certified, distinguished and recognised in the CR, as well as below sub 3.3.c) to types of standards being developed within the NQF creation and introduction.

⁵⁵ Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

As for the legislation provisions related to verification and recognition of further education results as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll., see part 2, esp. sub 2.1.c) through 2.1.f) and 2.2.a) through 2.2.d).

As the conception and structure of the whole NQF and descriptions of the particular qualifications are developed “top down” at the national level (in co-ordination of ministries to whose responsibility the various sectors belong and under assistance of industrial committees and professional associations), the descriptions of qualification requirements or assessment criteria in the standards being developed or the methods and procedures of validation and assessment should not vary depending on sectors. Of course the differences between nature of particular occupations and work activities (e.g. crafts versus industrial jobs or technical versus personal services, etc.) bring necessity to adapt specifications of both the qualification and assessment standards and the verification and assessment methods and procedures to the differences in nature of the respective types of competences and their reflection in performing the corresponding occupations or work activities.

As recognition as per Act No. 179/2006 Coll. has not been introduced yet as system measure, it is impossible to present an overview of such specifications in relation to content-specific typological differences between both the standards and the methods and assessment procedures in different qualification work fields in the overall field of labour division and co-operation, even for the level being worked on (ISCED 3C). We only have experience available from a preliminary pilot verification within the EPANIL project in just one field (“cook”), and now a wider pilot verification of applicability of the standards being developed will run in further system projects, along with the works on the NQF project, particularly in the UNIV project, see part 5, sub 5.5.a).

3.3.b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.)

As for the types of methods and procedures, we may only talk about the proposed procedure and the implementation pilots, see part 5, sub 5.5.a) for details of the UNIV and EPANIL projects, where also our experience with external situational and internal psychological advantages of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results for its participants is described.

As for the expected costs of introduction of the assessment into routine practice, see the estimates mentioned above in part 2.3. Part 2, esp. sub 2.1.c), also describes procedural and staff background for execution of the recognition process and its social control.

As for the procedure of assessment and recognition of previous learning results in terms of its stages, it has in principle always to contain the following stages (after the introductory stage of making contact and development of supportive emotional climate):

- the stage of investigation of the overall case and preparation of the recognition process itself, i.e.
 - the divergent explorative and the convergent focusing stage of balance diagnostics (searching for individual’s limits and acceptable possibilities for the recognition process in his/her given situation and then comparing with his/her ideas about his/her further professional and/or educational career and considering the feasibility of these ideas and possibility of other and maybe more suitable variants and subsequent choice of one of these variants),
 - the stage of completing individual’s portfolio and collecting “proofs” of his/her prior learning results (which are relevant for the chosen variant of his/her further professional and/or educational career or which just should be subject to assessment and recognition),
 - the phase of building up an individual plan for the chosen variant of individual’s further professional and/or educational career (recognition of the recognisable and complementing of the rest),

- the stage of recognition itself and assessment of the prior learning results, i.e.
 - verification of the learning results that may only or preferably be verified upon verification of collected “proofs” (documents on completely or partially successfully completed formal education and various non-formal education courses including various practical placements in companies, references from various previous employers, demonstrations of individual’s own work and references from various users of this work and/or its results, etc.),
 - assessment of those learning results that may be assessed by demonstration (i.e. according to the character of demonstrated competences, by oral or written exam for demonstration of necessary knowledge and familiarity with activities, or by practical demonstration of activities, in which the needed skills or results of their application can be seen, or by a complex combination of both the assessment methods),
- the stage of implementation of the set individual plan for parts of full qualification or the chosen partial qualifications to be complemented, and its completion (namely by taking the appropriate exams necessary for achievement of full qualification, or the appropriate processes of verification and assessment for obtaining further partial qualifications).

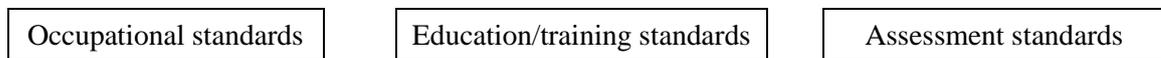
This general procedure may of course be reasonably modified into presumable types according to the type of assessed learning results and/or according to target groups, and of course some of its stages or their components may be performed in groups or individually if necessary.

For the roles of advisors or guiders and assessors see part 5, information on the UNIV project.

3.3.c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

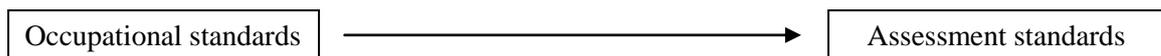
In general, three types of standards are developed in the CR, as theoretical works to the European concept of LLL assume:

Fig 1: Types of standards necessary for assessment (and validation) of formal learning



Source: Colardyn a Bjørmåvold, 2003

Fig 2: Types of standards necessary for assessment (and validation) of non-formal and informal learning



Source: Colardyn a Bjørmåvold, 2003

The process of the NQF development is to crate qualification and assessment standards for particular partial qualifications and their aggregates included in full qualifications, as well as sets of partial and full qualifications, based upon the National Occupations Framework mentioned in 3.1a) above and upon the data on the existing type positions collected and processed in the Integrated System of Type Positions⁵⁶. The whole procedure is illustrated on schemes and described in detail below in Component 5, sub 5.5.a), in the NQF project description.

The existing education fields and their framework are going to be revised at the same time and new education fields will be still developed, maintained and modified so as also educational, i.e. curricular standards exist for all full and partial qualifications corresponding to them, related to the appropriate qualification and assessment standards describing the learning results that should be achieved in these educational fields or in their parts corresponding to partial qualification in terms of competences

⁵⁶ The Integrated System of Type Positions (ISTP) is a system of registration, description and typology analysis of workforce occurring within the whole field of labour division in the CR, established by the Ministry od Labour and Social Affairs several years ago.

(capabilities). This process is a part of the curricular reform in progress and includes the Quality Project described below in part 5, sub 5.5.a) apart from the others.

3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your county of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.

As the assessment and recognition of prior learning results in general, see the summary in 3.1.a), as well as in particular pursuant to Act No. 171/2006 Coll. is focused on learning results previously determined and registered in the NQF, there is no substantial difference between this one and other methods of assessment and recognition of learning results for qualification achievement, see the outline in Sec. 4, par. 1 and 2 of the Act, quoted above in 3.1.c). Only the learning results explicitly mentioned and described in the NQF shall be formally recognised in future, which naturally does not prevent an individual from acquiring – in any learning pathway, whether within formal initial or continuous formal education or within non-formal education and informal learning – various further formally recognisable competences not forming bindingly part of a given qualification (i.e. various complementary competences chosen by an individual from facultative offers or on optional principle) or various capabilities not formally recognisable at all (not included in the NQF). This is dealt with – within initial formal education and training at all non-tertiary education levels – by two-level structure of curricular standards for each of particular educational paths and fields (branches). At the national level there are national-level, known here as framework educational programmes, which ought to ensure all-society integration of curricular (incl. corresponding qualification and assessment) standards at the national and, if appropriate, international levels. At the institutional-level, there are known here as school educational programmes, which ought to enable programmes of individual schools to be adapted to the situation at regional and local labour markets and to requirements of employers.

Nevertheless discussions on balancing the individuals' right to independence of what they learn on the assessment and recognition process still appear. Especially in relation to known here as "state" Maturita exams and their technical provision (in principle, by creation of databases of test items for the purposes of setting up of externally organised exams) there are fears that schools and individuals will mainly or only concentrate on preparation for the exams organised this way. There is of course the risk of concentration more on summative assessment by means of the Maturita exam organised this way than on preparation for qualification itself, but it is reduced by the fact that apart from the state Maturita exams there should still be internal Maturita exam taken at examination boards, which serve and should go on serving to awarding and recognition of qualification achieved in given educational field. The „state“ Maturita exams might pose a problem if the functions of the individual exams were separated, i.e. internal Maturita exam still served as confirmation of achieved qualification for direct access to the labour market while for access to tertiary education the state Maturita exam would have to be passed.

Similar fears are occurring to lower extent in relation to the final exam reform being prepared for lower secondary vocational education (with certificate of apprenticeship or without). These should also be complemented, or say replaced by externally organised final exams, however these exams only have the function of confirmation of obtained qualification for direct access to the labour market, and in the educational sphere the achievement of educational level upon passing these exams is only a pre-requisition to access to further vocational education for modification or change of qualification already achieved at the same level, not to qualification extension to Maturita level and possibly to tertiary level. This function may only be performed by programmes leading to maturity exam from the process point of view, known here as follow-ups to completed secondary education with certificate of apprenticeship or any of three programmes providing secondary education with Maturita directly after completion of basic education.

3.3.e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?

See part 2, esp. sub 2.1.c) through 2.1.f) and 2.2.a) through 2.2.d). As the recognition of non-formal and informal learning does not exist as system measure so far in the CR, a quality assurance model for RNFIL has only been elaborated and implemented within pilots, see in part 5 sub 5.5 for UNIV and EPANIL projects.

Component 3.4. Others

3.4.a) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

The definition of formal education from technical point of view is most essential within the LLL as well, as non-formal education and informal learning are specified complementarily to that, and only negatively as absence of some of its features (non-formal education by the absence of certificates with nationwide validity, informal learning moreover by the absence of educational programmes⁵⁷).

What is essential in this connection is that a great deal of core-relevant education/learning of both youths and adults in the CR has to be ranged with the formal learning when the OECD definitions are used (and not those of ISCED '97). With the OECD definition being applied, the formal education/learning in the CR can be sub-divided as follows:

- 1) the initial formal education and training in the strict sense of the word (according to the ISCED '97 definition), consisting (within ISCED levels 1+2) of 9 years of the compulsory schooling (normally at the age of 6 to 15 years), leading to the basic general education (ISCED 2A), and the post-obligatory general (ISCED 3A) or technical (ISCED 3A) or vocational (ISCED 3A or 3C) upper secondary education, leading to the complete secondary education in programmes completed by the Maturita examination (ISCED 3A) or to the secondary education with or without apprenticeship certificate in programmes completed by the final examination (ISCED 3C), which can be followed by non-university (ISCED 5B) or university (ISCED 5A) tertiary education, directly in case of graduates of ISCED 3A programmes, indirectly in case of graduates of ISCED 3C programmes who need firstly to pass an extension course completed by the Maturita examination (ISCED 4A);
- 2) the “second chance” formal education and training (for drop-outs and early school leavers but also for re-entries aimed at proceeding to a higher-level qualification than the acquired initial one), enabling out-of-school persons aged 15 years or more to attain the same qualifications as the ones which are usually attained within the “first chance” initial formal education and training;
- 3) the formally recognised CVET of all levels and fields, covering regular CVET programmes designed for modifications or changes of the acquired initial qualification at the same level (specialisation or extending, or refreshing, upgrading, innovation programmes, etc., or retraining programmes aimed at attaining a completely different full qualification);
- 4) the so-called retraining courses, organised by labour offices for unemployed and other registered job applicants and leading mostly to various partial qualifications which are supposed to be necessary for or useful to their (re)integration into the labour market;
- 5) the so-called normative education, that is formally recognised education and training leading to licences which are prerequisite for carrying-out some regulated activities, separate or bound to some full qualifications (such as various driver’s or welder’s licences or engineering inspector’s licences, etc.);
- 6) the formally recognised educational and training programmes provided – for some age groups or independently of age – by several types of accredited schools situated outside the formal education and training system as defined above sub (1), typically for instance the language schools authorised to provide language education leading up to the so-called final state examinations or the so-called basic art schools the programmes and outcomes of which can serve as preparation for

⁵⁷ This is exactly what it is after all defined like according to the OECD definition for RNFIL project in the Guidelines, cf. 3.1.a).

enrolment on art schools within the formal system but, besides this, can lead to achievements attested by formal certificates.

All these types of E&T programmes are to be ranged with the formal learning (according to the OECD definition) by virtue of their being both designed and delivered under formally binding legislation and administration conditions stipulated and guaranteed by competent bodies established or accredited by respective state administration bodies of the Czech Republic. The formally binding conditions usually concern their curriculum and expected learning outcomes as well as their delivering forms (or even teaching/training methods) and procedures for assessing acquired learning results and awarding them by formally recognised certificates. At the level of the whole education system, these formally binding conditions concern regular learning pathways into which particular programmes can be combined (with access and transfer requirements to be met by individuals).

If all the above is ranked into formal education according to the OECD definition (according to the criterion of formal completion with a certificate or in some instances also completion of appropriate education defined by the appropriate educational programme), only education without any formally recognised certification (non-formal in that sense) and self-education or learning from experience non backed by any educational or training programme (informal in that sense) obviously remains outside the formal education defined this way.

The first group would then include various in-company education or educational and/or training courses organised or provided by various educational institutions (including schools) and focused on various general (comprehensive) and not strictly vocational education (e.g. languages, mathematics and science, social science, culture and arts) and practical preparation (for various public and citizen roles and activities and for various practical daily activities useful at work and within families and households or in common social contacts, and various leisure activities, sports, hobbies etc.).

The second group would include self-education and learning by doing or various implicit experiential learning in the same fields as to its subject- and/or function-based delimitation (but not based on any educational programmes or completely implicit).

The whole sphere of non-formal education and informal learning has definitely just complementary character in the CR, as mentioned in the Introduction to this report, since most of the core-relevant learning has already been included in formal education (as per the OECD definition), and when the NOF for full and partial qualifications is developed and continuously maintained and modified (esp. updated), this starting situation will become even more remarkable, i.e. there will be just different paths to formally recognised partial or even full qualifications (where process of their achievement not only within formal education, but also in through non-formal education and/or informal learning will be accepted by the respective regulations related to qualification achievement and/or recognition).

We may add that if the described starting situation does not totally change, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning results will probably have just limited relevance, to shortening the paths to formally recognised qualifications upon

- direct recognition of so far formally unrecognised qualification-relevant results of prior learning within formal or equivalent non-formal education and/or informal learning,
- identification and assessment of various learning results acquired this way as to their qualification relevance for enabling them to be complemented in an individual tailored educational programme for gaining the respective formally recognised qualification(s).

Both are or may be nevertheless in progress even now – unless it is obstructed by regulations related to regulated occupations and other regulated activities or programmes preparing for their performance – in the types of formal education mentioned above in items 1 through 4 and 8 (it is up to headmasters or other staff of the respective schools or educational institutions, whether they admit an applicant for admission to an educational programme or for assessment and formal recognition of mastering requirements to this or that grade etc., or take him/her to final exams directly or after fulfilment of some conditions). On the other hand this does not apply or applies to much more limited extent to the type of formal education mentioned above in item 5 and in the part of formal educational types mentioned in items 1 through 4 which are subject to special regulations related to regulated

occupations and further regulated activities or programmes preparing for their performance. And finally, the present situation is likely to remain even after introduction of the NQF and recognition of prior learning results (at least neither Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Vocational Qualifications or Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Recognition of Further Education Results introduce any change in this direction).

Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders⁵⁸

4.1.a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement a list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list maps out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition. Please note, due to the difference of nature of non-formal and informal learning, that the grid for non-formal learning uses a provider of non-formal learning or an input-side as a starting base- first column – as non-formal learning seems to be more recognised after going through a non-formal learning programme. On the other hand, the grid for informal learning uses output/ skills as a starting point because it is not feasible to list all types of informal learning where there is no such supplier as the individual is the active entity to create such learning opportunities. Therefore, there is a separate grid for non-formal and informal learning. The annex also aims to examine characteristics of users for aggregation of data, but please provide micro-level data about users in this section.

The description and explanation of learning in the Czech Republic in the component **3.4a)** has a **fundamental role** for the content of following grids. Because of this detailed description, there is only one listed alternative in each grid.

The definition of formal education within the LLL is most essential from technical point of view as well, as non-formal education and informal learning are specified complementarily to that and actually only negatively as absence of some of its traits:

- non-formal education by the absence of certificates with nationwide validity,
- informal learning moreover by the absence of educational programmes⁵⁹.

Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Various in-company education or educational and/or training courses organized or provided by various educational institutions (including schools) and focused on various general and not strictly professional education (language, mathematic-scientific or social-scientific or cultural) and practical preparation (for various public and citizen roles and activities and for various practical daily activities useful at work and within families and households or in common social contacts, and various recreational activities, sports, hobbies etc.).

Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.)	Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.)	Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.)	Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.)	Main user(s) (Specify)	
Various educational institutions (including schools).	Non relevant	Non relevant	The quality of above-mentioned activities is self-regulated by	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Working professionals
	See the component	See the component		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	People after army service
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High skilled immigrants

⁵⁸ Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

⁵⁹ This is exactly what it is after all defined like according to the OECD definition for RNFIL project in the Guidelines, cf. 3.1.a).

	3.4a)	3.4a)	corresponding demand.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low skilled immigrants
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed (over 30 years old)
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30
				<input type="checkbox"/>	Others (Specify)

Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Types of skills gained by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeration, business protocol, negotiation skills, etc.)	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body	Main users (specify)	
Subjectively and/or functionally defined fields focused on various general and not strictly professional education (language, mathematics, science, social science or culture) and practical preparation (for various public and citizen roles and activities and for various practical daily activities useful at work and within families and households or in common social contacts, and various recreational activities, sports, hobbies etc)	Labour market stakeholders (particularly employers) - flexibly recognize virtually all types of skills and competences at present, except those with regulated competence/work activity character. This is enabled by traditionally good level of initial, particularly vocational, education in the Czech Republic, and thus very good level of labour force employability, in which only approx. 6% of economically active persons do not have at least basic qualification level achieved in initial education.	Non relevant See the component 3.4a)	Non relevant See the component 3.4a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Working professionals
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	People after army service
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High skilled immigrants
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low skilled immigrants
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed (over 30 years old)
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Others (Specify)				

Note:

The main factor causing relatively insignificant pressure for setting legally binding mechanisms of formalised recognition of skills and competences and their formal awarding in the Czech Republic is a flexible and legally unbound recognition of real skills and competences (regardless of the way they were achieved) by employers.

With regard to this fact, the development of the NQF mentioned hereinafter is an activity that is complementing the existing range of opportunities, particularly in two directions:

- a. Improvement of employability of lower qualified workers
- b. Improvement of the system transparency with regard to the needs and development in wider European surroundings of the Czech Republic (in relation to the European Qualifications Framework, which is being developed).

Component 4.2. Access

4.2.a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

The operating recognition possibilities have in general the conditions for competences for recognition set very widely, without useless restrictions and differences between different levels and sectors.

The new recognition possibility being prepared (to be implemented from August 2007) will most probably have - with regard to the concept of the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results - the conditions of passing the recognition process set as favourable and motivating for potential clients. They are very likely not be set with substantial differences for individual sectors. However with regard to qualification levels we may expect (at least at initial stage of real operation of the mechanisms being prepared) some principal difference, as the current state shows high level of orientation of the new system at lower qualification sphere (up to level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework).

4.2.b) How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

A head of an educational institution at any level up to ISCED 4 has the statutory right to recognize demonstrable (formal as well as) non-formal education from the period of the last 10 years to an applicant for admission, and to shorten the studying time upon assessment of knowledge level (thus also results of non-formal learning). This possibility is commonly used, always if it is the case. In this sense the possibility of recognition of non-formal and informal education as an admission policy is applied to 100%. However the need to use this possibility is the condition here (in a given year at a given school).

A similar regulation also applies to the other (tertiary) education levels. There is usually also the possibility to recognize individual credits at higher vocational schools and universities (operability of the ECTS - European Credit Transfer System is still expanding).

The new possibility of learning result recognition being prepared (likely to be implemented from September 2007) related to the approved Act and the National Qualifications Framework being worked on will be limited to the schools which will meet statutory conditions. That will necessary be just a certain part of all schools, particularly those operating in the sphere enabling achievement of secondary education (ISCED3A-C).

Within current pilot verification there are networks of selected schools formed in about a half of the CR regions - always about 15 schools within one network covering the needs of each region.

4.2.c) Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.'). Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

The position of the an information centre responding to questions that might arose in relation to the recognition system in the Czech Republic will finally be held by the National Institute of Technical an

Vocational Education (NUOV). It results from the position of the institution to the National Qualifications Framework, which is provided by the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results.

There are moreover networks being built within the system project UNIV (Recognition of the Results of Non-formal Education and Informal Learning in Networks of Schools Providing educational services for the Adults) at present that should ensure activities related to recognition of learning results in each certain region. Similar networks with trained specialists should exist in all the Czech Republic regions at the end. Development of such networks is coordinated by the NUOV, which is the main project solver. This provides and will provide for cohesion and internal consistence of the whole system development. The project being dealt with expects that apart from internet sites with free access to the whole system being elaborated, other media and communication means will participate.

Component 4.3. Participation⁶⁰

4.3.a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels).

Quantification of the results of the formalized recognition process according to the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results is impossible at this stage. The Act will be fully effective and the new mechanisms will be used no earlier than from August 1, 2007.

However there are at least three important activities in progress in the Czech Republic at present, which are preparing conditions for future launch of standard processes:

1. Within a large (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MSMT) project supported also from European sources (ESF) the *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* is being developed, the aim of which is further enhancement of links between initial and further educations. The Framework is being built as a tool that will substantially support lifelong learning and will extend the possibilities to get to comparable qualifications along different paths. It will also support clarity, transparency and comparability of qualifications in the Czech Republic and thanks to the link to the European Qualifications Framework being developed also the possibility of their recognition on international basis.
Basic agreement of all participants in the National Qualifications Framework project on the Framework conception and content has been reached so far. Provisional versions of more than two hundred qualification standards and assessment standards (in the field of lower qualification levels), which are going to be the structure elements of the Framework have also been developed. These standards will among others be used for recognition of informal learning results.
2. Within another MSMT project, also supported from European sources (ESF) there are networks of secondary schools being built in six regions of the Czech Republic preparing experts who will be able to assess skills and competences of a pilot sample of clients upon NQF standards, in a real process in the sense of the Act.
3. An international project controlled by a Czech institution (NUOV, project EPANIL, a Leonardo da Vinci programme framework) focused on pilot evaluation of recognition processes in European context. This project involved practical trials of methodological procedures of competence assessment on a sample consisting of tens of individuals.

4.3.b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

⁶⁰ Some questions are provided with additional data presented in the Attachment.

The same as mentioned in item 4.3 a) applies to the full extent in principle.

However there is no information on relation between participants' background and uptake of the recognition process available.

4.3.c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the 'learning leads to learning' and 'training leads to training' track ? Who constitutes the 'disadvantaged group' in your country?

We should precede again that formalized recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning is still under construction. The Act on Recognition of Further Education Results, which will provide for that, is designed for the society as a whole and its consequences will particularly affect the active inhabitants. It has been conceived from the very beginning with regard to those who need to complement, change or extend qualification. This particularly applies to persons with lower education level and with lower qualification level.

Since the Act will enable obtaining of known here as partial qualifications awarded with certificates with nationwide validity, this form of qualification extension will be better accessible to those who do not have enough time for long-term (continuous, formal) education or study, it enables the applicants to apply what they have learnt in their lives (regardless the way or form of learning) - thus without necessity to participate in a predetermined education form. The fact that the act counts with recognition of education results up to level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework being prepared, specifies the presumable target group, i.e. people with lower education and qualification.

The opportunities given by the Act will also be useful for university graduate. At the final stage they will be able to have particular special competences verified and confirmed. However this target group will probably use the opportunities given by the law to less extent.

People with lower education (and qualification) level may be considered the "disadvantaged group" of inhabitants to whom the possibility of formalized learning result recognition will help in the described sense. They are those to whom application of the act being prepared will offer efficient support on their way to achieving qualification better applicable at the labour market.

People with health handicap form another "disadvantaged group" to whom the new opportunities resulting from the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results will help. *The provision enabling applicants to deduct the costs spent on taking an exam from the tax base up to CZK 10,000.– (EUR 360) per year enables those with health handicap to deduct up to CZK 13,000.– (EUR 465) per year and those with more serious disability CZK 15,000.– (EUR 535) per year.*

Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition?

The current legal adjustment (the School Act) enables a headmaster to decide in individual cases about shortening studying time of education leading to obtaining education level (see section 2.1 d). If a particular individual really achieves the education level and related qualification within the shortened period his/her chances to access to further study, to finding a job, to change a job or to get higher pay are improved.

The use of the new Act on Recognition of Further Education Results being prepared, which was conceived for the purpose of enabling recognition of non-formal and informal learning to all who are

interested, and thus supports particularly the target group with lower achieved education, will bring further possibilities:

- It will enable to recognize such aggregates of competences (partial qualifications) that will correspond to qualification needs for performance of individual occupations at the final stage. In other words – awards of partial qualifications will improve the opportunity to find a job to a certificate holder.

This is particularly backed by the fact that employers are involved in the process of setting qualification requirements for performance of individual occupations. This should result in enhancement of credibility of certificates and bring demand for people with such qualifications among employers.

That should result for example in better integration of the unemployed into labour process.

- It will enable recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning regardless the method or form of their acquisition – only upon approval demonstration of professional competence at the final stage.

The possibility of taking competency gained e.g. through experience into account will substantially save preparation time as it does not require a particular prescribed type or form of preparation, course etc.

This will result in substantial time saving, but also saving of money.

As the Act is focused at partial qualifications it enables more flexible and faster modification of existing qualification or even acquisition of new qualification. This has influence on finding a job more quickly or on the possibility of faster adaptation to current needs – demand for qualification from employers.

4.4.b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)

This issue is not dealt with case studies at present, but by standard application of the appropriate paragraph of Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Preschool, Primary, Secondary, Higher Vocational and other Education (the School Act). See section. 2.1.d) for more detailed information.

Mechanisms of formalized recognition being prepared within the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results are not in operation yet. Obtaining of adequate strategic data will be very useful and will most probably become one of monitored indicators of new mechanisms use.

4.4.c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

As the process of formalized recognition of further education results in the sense of the newly approved Act will be launched no earlier than on 1 August 2007, no data related to investment return are available yet.

The system being prepared is adjusted so as:

a) Employers:

- have insight into applicant's qualification and have thus easier job with recruiting new employees and minimize the period of their adaptation;
- minimize the costs related to further education of newly admitted employees, as they will better suit to qualification requirements;

- have better insight into efficiency of staff training with regard to the possibility of verification of achieved competences, which means more effective use of investment into staff training. The time of study of employees (time spent by participation in courses), which also represent lost incomes for employers may also be shortened substantially;
- minimize the costs related to further education of employees and extension of their qualification - they may reduce the tax base (through recognition of learning results).

b) Employees, further education participants, the unemployed

- may have verified their existing skills and competences in a transparent way and obtain a certificate of partial qualification with nationwide validity;
- the achieved partial qualifications enable them to gain full qualification, i.e. usually an education level after passing a final or Maturita exam;
- recognition of learning results saves money spent on educational courses;
- recognition of learning results saves time spent on further education;
- partial qualification certificate substantially improves the chance to find a job;
- achieving a partial qualification is less time consuming than achieving a full qualification. As the extent of partial qualifications corresponds to individual positions at labour market, they enable to their holders relatively quick change of qualification or its extension according to current labour market demand.

The above possibilities of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results are thus an important means of social mobility and at the same time they put some demands on personal responsibility of participants in further education who should start playing distinctively more active role in setting qualification demands.

4.4.d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

Practices of fiscal incentives for employers may be currently identified in two directions in the Czech Republic:

- further education costs
Employers may deduct the costs linked to further education from their tax bases. However this possibility does not apply to sole traders and employees to whom employers do not pay for courses extending their qualification.
There is however a certain restriction not given by the law but by the methodology. Only those items directly related to educational process may be deducted from tax base.
- costs of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results
The new Act on Recognition of Further Education Results will enable individuals as well as legal entities and also employees, to whom employers do not cover the costs, to deduct the costs related to the fee for taking an exam leading to a partial qualification – i.e. the costs of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
In such an occasion the resulting effect will be enhanced by the fact that the results of non-formal and informal learning may be recognized without prior necessary participation in courses, which remarkably saves costs related to achievement of a partial qualification.

4.4.e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

The conception of the newly approved Act on Recognition of Further Education Results, which creates legislation base for assessment of learning results, had been based on support of equity and social coherence from the very beginning of its preparation.

The government unambiguously professed to the principle of support of equity and social coherence by application of recognition of non-formal and informal learning in its approval of the Act proposal.

4.4.f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

The Czech Republic has developed legislation conditions for formalized recognition of learning results and is developing professional, organizational and technical background for putting the system being prepared into operation (August 2007).

The system designers are doing their best to avoid stigmatisation of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results.

The above mentioned, e.g. in section 4.4a) involvement of social partners – where employers participate in setting qualification requirements for individual partial qualifications – is one of our strategic approaches, and so we are entitled to expect that these qualification will be demanded and also generally accepted. The concept of partial qualifications is after all based on the principle of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (see section 2).

Another strategic measure is that the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results is conceived to enable partial qualifications (recognized results of non-formal and informal learning) to be assembled into known here as full qualifications, which (usually) correspond to requirements of education level. The Act thus links initial and further education, while the requirements for professional competences are defined identically. If an applicant wants to assemble achieved partial qualifications into a full qualification, i.e. to gain all partial qualifications forming a full qualification, he/she can achieve a qualification level identical to initial education. This may avoid stigmatization completely. There is moreover the fact that after assessment of individual partial qualifications forming a full qualification a final exam (e.g. Maturita) has to be passed under the conditions prescribed by the School Act (i.e. under identical conditions).

This form of existing recognition conception however does not apply to the academic sphere.

4.4.g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?

Employer sphere is inquired within the system MSMT project “Development of the National Qualifications Framework Supporting Connection of Initial and Further Education” co-financed from the ESF. Employers (as well as SMEs representatives) participate according to their professional fields in setting qualification requirements for partial qualifications. The reasons are particularly as follows:

- Professional competences of a partial qualification certificate holder have to correspond with the real labour market requirements. That is why employers are invited for co-operation and that is why individual partial qualifications correspond with performance of real individual positions at the labour market.
- Demand from employers for partial qualification certificate holders has to be ensured and credibility of these certificates has to be supported – credibility is also supported by gradual publishing of all qualification requirements in a generally accessible way – at the Internet.

Component 4.5. Others

4.5.a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

The efforts for improving quality, attractiveness and efficiency of education and quality, transparency and availability of qualifications (particularly at lower levels) is the corner stone of all the changes being prepared and implemented in the Czech Republic. The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV) under authorization of and in close co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is the direct author of these changes, in co-operation of further stakeholders, mainly the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and other ministries, social partners (representatives of employers, trade unions), regional school authorities and schools.

Thanks to widely conceived partnership the processes now under way leading to launch processes of formalized recognition of learning results also involve collective bargaining parties. This creates the background for successful recognition of non-formal and informal learning also upon collective bargaining.

4.5.b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

The National Qualifications Framework will have substantial importance for enabling formalized recognition of learning results in the Czech Republic – in compliance with the approved Act on Recognition of Further Education Results. This is why there is some basic information related to development of the important instrument so far presented here.

a) Some features of the situation before starting preparation of the NQF conception

There was a growth (particularly in the school system leading to secondary education) of educational fields and thus some non-transparency of the framework after 1989. That was why works on proposal of a new framework of educational fields were initiated. Also the framework of professions had to be based on new modern principles better reflecting the dynamism in the sphere of profession exercising. Each framework is backed by a particular ministry: the framework of education spheres by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MSMT) and the framework of professions by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV).

b) Preceding projects

Numerous activities, directly linked to the description, definition or improvement of access to qualifications, are running in the Czech Republic on long-term basis. There are two of them mentioned below.

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV) Project - Integrated System of Type Positions

Formation and further development of the Integrated System of Type Positions (MPSV, Trexima, spol. s r.o., social and other partners) has substantial importance not only in the field of employment consulting and support, for which it was primarily designed, but mainly as a very large and easily accessible (www.istp.cz) and continuously updated source of information on qualification requirements of professions. This is permanently used by authors of educational programmes of all types, which will be remarkably supported by related development of the framework of professions.

NUOV involvement in an OECD Project backed by the Ministry

OECD Activity *The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning* runs from 2000 to 2005. The Czech Republic participated through MSMT/NUOV in the activities of Thematic Group. *The development and use of 'Qualifications Frameworks' as a means of reforming and managing qualifications systems.*

The opportunity to compare methods of solving similar problems in different countries enabled by participation in the project was very inspiring. Involvement in the project meant acceleration of the processes leading to development of qualifications framework in the Czech Republic and ended in preparation of the MSMT system project implemented under support of the ESF: *Development of the National Qualifications Framework Supporting Connection of Initial and Further Education.*

c) Projects leading to development and fulfilment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

There are two examples from a wide range of projects related to the NQF development mentioned below:

Brief description and goals of the NQF system project

The general goal of the project is to improve quality of education at schools and school facilities, and to develop supporting systems in education (measure 2.1. OP RZL), the specific goal is connection between initial and further education namely through development of the National Qualifications Framework. In project elaboration that means to create the NQF and support its consequent development.

The NQF will describe qualifications (both complete and partial) and mutual relations among them. It will then define qualification and assessment standards.

Qualifications (recognized learning results) and standards (agreed and structured descriptions of qualifications and methods of verification of achievement of adequate knowledge, skills and competences by an individual) will thus be the basic elements of the National Qualifications Framework. The NQF will combine all these elements into a unified and generally accessible (Internet) information system.

Social partners will be enabled to „communicate the basic requirement” for goals and contents of education by means of the NQF. Schools and other education providers will be able to design initial as well as further educational programmes with the information obtained through the NQF, by means of which people interested in lifelong learning (with different knowledge and work experience levels) will be able to get to comparable qualifications in different ways.

NQF will support clarity, transparency and comparability of qualifications and corresponding knowledge, skills and competences. The NQF will be open for all stakeholders in lifelong learning – authors of complex strategies, employers and their organizations, schools and other education providers, career consulting centres and of course those interested in lifelong learning.

Brief description and goals of the UNIV system project

System project elaborated in co-operation between the Department of conception of educational framework and further education of the MSMT, the Department of secondary and higher vocational education of the MSMT, NUOV and further partners directly relates to development of the National Qualifications Framework. It is the UNIV system project, which is – except others – focused on description of a method of assessment of non-formal and informal learning results.

Development of the new National Qualifications Framework cannot pursue without participation of schools as present or potential organizers of further education. Solution of the NQF project in its final stage will support interconnection of initial and further education provided by these schools and will lead to development of further education, particularly at secondary vocational schools. The UNIV Project solution will add methodological as well as professional background for recognition of learning results.

Social partners (from government, private and non-profit sectors) and their organizations form another important target group - as important representatives of the labour market. Organizations of social partners will be able to exercise their influence on education targets and content through formation and further development of the National Qualifications Framework in a standard way. The National Qualifications Framework should thus serve except for others to efficient communication between schools and social partners.

Both the target groups will participate in solution of both problems as known here as external partners in implementation and verification.

d) New approaches related to the NQF development

The project implementation brings new approaches to problem solution at two levels.

First it focuses on implementation of the system, by means of which learning results may be recognized, assessed and compared or also linked. The system will also provide for better connection

of some existing activities (the Integrated System of Type Positions, development of framework educational programmes) and completion of the missing system instruments, e.g. assessment standards.

The project then tries to support implementation of a new instrument for support of lifelong learning – a conception of partial qualifications and their assembly. This conception will enable schools and other education providers create educational modules enabling lifelong education participants to reach comparable qualifications along different paths.

Qualifications and standards in the NQF being prepared

The NQF distinguishes between two qualification types in compliance with the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results:

Full qualification is capability of performing a particular profession as a whole (confectioner, electrician, architect, physician etc.). It is usually obtained by education at schools or educational establishments through completing a particular education branch.

Partial qualification is capability of performing just a part of a particular profession, i.e. certain work activity or several work activities that however give an opportunity to have a job as a whole.

Each qualification will have its so called **qualification standard** and known here as **assessment standard** in the NQF.

The qualification standard defines what is necessary to know for obtaining a particular qualification. It is a set of competences (capabilities) necessary for exercising work activities of the appropriate qualification.

The assessment standard defines how to find out whether a person really meets the qualification standard requirements. It is a set of criteria, procedures and further instructions and conditions for assessment of prescribed competences.

It is important that the content of qualification and assessment standards is based on requirements of the world of labour and representatives of employers participate to remarkable extent in their formulation. The NQF will thus operate as a link between the worlds of labour and education.

The current idea of the operation mechanism

Each citizen who will want to gain a certificate of partial qualification will have to pass an exam according to the assessment standard of the appropriate partial qualification. Examination and issuing of certificates will be performed by known here as authorized persons. These may be individuals or legal entities, who gain a known here as authorization for a particular partial qualification upon meeting prescribed requirements. The authorizations will be issued by the ministries to whose sphere of action the appropriate professional spheres will belong – known here as authorizing bodies.

A generally accessible NQF information system will be operated on the Internet, where those with interest will be able to find the qualification and assessment standards and contacts to all the authorized persons with authorization to examine citizens according to the assessment standard of the partial qualification in question and award a certificate of its achievement with nationwide applicability.

The NQF will moreover offer the citizens the opportunity to achieve not only a partial but also a full qualification without going through school education, as some full qualifications can be made up of partial qualification. In practice this will mean that if a citizen achieves certificates of all these partial qualifications, he/she will be able to pass an exam resulting in a full qualification at a particular school or educational establishment.

Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers

Component 5.1. Economic benefits

5.1.a) Shortening the formal education process and thus reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals.

As per Act No. 561/2004 (School Act) a headmaster may recognize formal and non-formal education for the past 10 years to an individual and thus shorten his/her studying time (unless it is hindered by the regulations of regulated occupations and activities). Economic benefits of this provision are not being monitored in the whole-society terms, but we may suppose that application of the Act reduces direct costs of learning, both from the society as well as individual points of view. Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Recognition of Further Education Results, which is going to be effective from August 1, 2007 will enable an alternative method of obtaining a further partial qualification, or substantial shortening of the path to obtaining a full qualification. From the individual point of view the direct costs of learning should be reduced as well (although a client will pay the assessment and recognition process). Clients in EPANIL project have gained certificates of cooks upon assessment of their previous learning, which however does not enable them to achieved full qualification (until Act No. 179/2000 Coll. becomes effective on 1 August 2007). The pilot project has shown that the recognition system would substantially shorten the period of formal educational process. The clients did not pay anything for the process of recognition of previous learning results within the EPANIL project, the costs were covered form the project budget. Clients in the process of recognition of previous learning results within the UNIV project will already have opportunity to gain partial qualifications in 16 branches; the costs will be covered from the project budget. This will bring important shortening of formal educational process and thus direct cost reduction for individuals.

5.1.b) Increasing the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and thus enhancing potential benefits for future economic gains.

We expect increased visibility of N/I learning and thus increase of economic gains after introduction of the NQF and the system of previous learning recognition, however it will depend on the extent of use of this system.

5.1.c) Improving the allocation of human capital within organisations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.

None of the pilot systemic projects that will enable us to introduce previous learning recognition is focused on the organization level. UNIV is focused on the regional level, NQF on the national level. Allocation of human capital in organizations is not controlled from the national level, it is fully in competencies of individual companies. The question is irrelevant for the situation in the Czech Republic.

5.1.d) Reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch by allowing more mobility within the labour market (occupational mobility).

The labour market is not regulated in the Czech Republic and IVET leavers may found jobs in other occupations or positions than those they were prepared for (with regard to the fields of wide conception). We thus expect that previous learning result recognition will be an alternative way to obtaining qualification otherwise obtained in formal education, and will contribute to shortening of the way to them (apart from regulated professions and activities requiring adherence to strict regulations).

5.1.e) Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).

The EPANIL project target group consisted of adults without qualification or with low qualification level (ISCED 2 or lower), unemployed or threatened by unemployment, but with work experience in the field of cooking. The project offered these people an opportunity to gain a qualification certificate upon assessment and recognition of their work and live experience and thus to improve their labour market position and/or to enter into further education and vocational training. The UNIV project target group consisted of people interested in further education at secondary or higher vocational schools who will need to complement and/or change existing qualifications. We expect the system to be used by individuals who will try to gain initial qualification, or want to complement, extend or change their original qualification obtained within IVET.

5.1.f) Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by improving productivity of the current labour force.

After pilot evaluation of previous learning recognition (in the field of cooking) within the EPANIL project that took place in March 2006 we did not monitor whether workforce productivity was improved. However we may suppose improvement of the existing workforce productivity after introduction of the previous learning recognition system and through its wide application.

Component 5.2. Educational benefits

5.2.a) Reshaping the established concept of education from ‘terminal education’ to ‘lifelong learning’.

Interest in further education leading to obtaining a formal certificate (Certificate of Apprentice) was found within discussions with clients after completion of the recognition process within the EPANIL project as well as within the UNIV project preparatory pilot programme. Introduction of the NQF and the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results (179/2006 Coll.) will bring the possibility to assemble partial qualifications into full qualifications and thus the possibility to link initial and further education and develop the lifelong learning conception. That is why we may expect that widespread introduction of the previous learning recognition system may contribute to the lifelong learning conception development.

5.2.b) Providing flexible personalised learning pathways.

The NQF targets include qualifications framework systemizing, specification of comparability of learning results achieved through various learning forms and enabling recognition of real knowledge and skills independently on the means and methods of learning and education. We assume that it will enable achievement of partial and full qualifications described in the NQF in different ways and in different settings, which will lead to gradual formation of flexible learning pathways.

5.2.c) Raising educational attainments levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications.

The EPANIL project target group consisted of adults without qualification or with low qualification level (ISCED 2 or lower), unemployed or threatened by unemployment, but with work experience in the field of cooking. The project has not contributed to their qualification (obtaining a Certificate of Apprenticeship) as it is not provided by the current legislation yet. The clients only gained certificates of their competences in the field of cooking. The UNIV project clients will already be able to gain a certificate of partial qualification or even a certificate of full qualification and related education level, as the Act on Recognition of Further Education Results (č. 179/2006 Coll.) will become effective in the meantime.

A client will be able to gain partial qualifications upon the Act, which he/she will be able to assemble into a full qualification (under conditions stipulated by the law). If many applicants of the recognition system turn up we may also expect an increase of people with secondary education (at apprentice level in the near future and later also at the ‘Maturita’ exam level).

5.2.d) Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.

The above pilot projects do not deal either with tertiary education or with access to that, and qualifications corresponding to the 'Maturita' exam level have not been worked out yet at the existing NQF elaboration level. This question is not relevant for the Czech Republic at least for the time being.

We may only add that the Czech Republic does not even consider a possibility of access to tertiary education without 'Maturita' exam. If this requirement remains valid, participation in tertiary education may in principle only increase through an increase of proportion of inhabitants achieving secondary education at 'Maturita' level. Recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning may contribute to that to some extent by shortening the pathway to its achievement. However there is no reason to assume that it might substantially increase the demographic structure of people with the highest achieved education at secondary level and all the tertiary levels as the formal education system in the Czech Republic is characterized by good vertical and very good horizontal transferability in international comparison, and enables everybody to achieve the education level and initial qualification corresponding to his/her educational background and profession focus in initial education or in the "second chance" education. Higher participation in tertiary education is thus more restricted by insufficient capacity of tertiary education institutions (and moreover in some fields only) than by lack of education opportunities enabling access to it within initial education or later within LLL. There is moreover one more issue, that achievement of tertiary education is not everybody's ambition from social or individual points of view. Qualified workers and secondary (or higher) technicians are as much necessary as people with tertiary qualifications at university level, and a lot of people choose these known here as lower qualified positions not because of a lack of educational opportunities but simply as they want to.

5.2.e) Improving the teacher work force through more flexible entrance to teaching occupation.

The above pilot projects do not deal with teacher training so this question is also irrelevant.

With regards to the existing systemic situation an entry into a teaching job (teachers, trainers, tutors, etc.) is basically very flexible in the Czech Republic, it is for example possible to gain qualification in a particular field and then to complete teaching qualification (known here as pedagogical minimum) or teaching qualification for various school subjects or specializations may be achieved at teacher training faculties. In some situations an entry into a teaching job is also possible without the particular qualification level, and the appropriate qualification may be completed in any part-time study form. There is the same above mentioned general rule about the access to tertiary education applicable, apart from positions of practical training teachers at apprentice secondary level, which may be performed by workers with certificates of apprenticeship in the particular branches, necessary experience in the branch, who complete the prescribed non-tertiary teaching qualification.

Component 5.3. Social benefits

5.3.a) Building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing socio-cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.

Schools will be connected into a network and co-ordination centres will be created in 6 regions. Results of KRAJ project (Phare programme 2000 implemented in Moravian-Silesian region) and CVLK project (funded by the MSMT and Region Liberec in Liberec region), where school networks and co-ordination centres are already working. There will be thus trained persons operating in 8 regions, who will be able to perform the functions of guides and assessors in the previous learning recognition system and provide services in this sphere to socially disadvantaged adults.

5.3.b) Leading to the better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates, etc.).

The projects herein described are not primarily focused on this field, this question is irrelevant in this context in the Czech Republic.

5.3.c) Enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc.

The NQF and UNIV projects are focused on VET (ISCED 2 and (ISCED 3) in this phase, we presume that the 'Maturita' exam level will be elaborated in the next phase (2007-2013). Future cancellation of the decisive condition for admission to HE, namely the 'Maturita' exam, may however not be expected. The HE sphere is fully in competence of individual schools, which decide themselves about the admission conditions.

5.3.d) Building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into a society.

The projects described in item 5.5, do not deal with this issue, however the new system being worked on may be also used by these people.

Component 5.4. Personal benefits

5.4.a) Empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn.

According to Act No. 179/2006 Coll., which will come into force on August 1, 2007, and after introduction of the National Qualifications Framework as a publicly accessible register of all full and partial qualifications confirmed, distinguished and recognized at the territory of the Czech Republic all people will be able to obtain information about the individual partial and/or full qualifications (name and numeric code of each qualification, specification whether it is a full or partial qualification, qualification standard of a partial qualification including links to other qualifications, relation to the National Framework of Occupations, assessment standard of each partial qualification), which will provide them with insight into further education and conditions of previous learning recognition.

As labour market is deregulated in the Czech Republic to a large extent, and non-formal education and informal learning to various knowledge and skills has a long tradition based already in the reformed pedagogy of the first half of the 20th century, strongly enhanced in the 2nd part of the 20th century both by a very large offer of non-formal education opportunities for people of all age groups, and by the necessity to help oneself or with a little help from friends in the economy of lack of the previous regime, the situation of learning in all life situations and roles is very common for a substantial part of the population of the Czech Republic, and this learning and its results are assessed at least the same as the results of formal education and preparation. Formal education is particularly important where it is unsubstitutable, i.e. at the age of compulsory education, and then where systematic qualification is necessary for achievement of qualification required for performance of an occupation or activity (for regulated occupations and activities) or where it is useful for achieving particular competence (it is shorter and easier compared to individual learning). This however also means that the whole education system in the Czech Republic is arranged on these principles both in the sense of education and preparation forms (full-time, or various part-time or combined forms), so the possibility when, where and what to learn is not primarily given in contradiction to formal education on one hand and non-formal education and informal learning on the other, but primarily in contradiction to what I can learn myself and what to learn in some form of education and preparation for the above reasons (while the spectre of the forms is given by the character of what may be learnt and what cannot be learnt part-time).

A sort of individual's additional control on when and where to learn is thus not much conceivable in the Czech Republic, as the above mentioned various implementation forms of mass or group education or preparation have already been available where they are conceivable) and its full individualization (where conceivable) is possible (even in the period of compulsory school attendance, which may be implemented in a family under special prescribed conditions).

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning has in principle nothing in common with that, apart from the others also because it is limited to learning results previously defined, and that a field of results recognized this way includes neither interest (vocational) education or competences and sets of competences not included in the NQF, see above, particularly 2.1.c) a 2.4.a), 3.1.a) a 3.4.a).

5.4.b) Developing the aspirations of those who have ‘dropped out’ to resume learning and to complete a qualification.

We suppose that making the qualification system transparent (NQF project) and facilitation of access to further education upon recognition of previous learning results (UNIV project) might help ‘drop-outs’ complete their education and obtain qualifications. See 5.4.c) for the importance of formal confirmation of qualification.

5.4.c) Reducing the stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning.

Employers/self-employers as well as users of the products and services provided by them in the Czech Republic are more interested in real quality of work and competency evidenced by this quality, than by formal qualification certificates in the Czech Republic, unless it is restrained by regulation (regulated occupations and activities). This is why obtaining of competence through non-formal education and informal learning does not stigmatize the holders of these competences. Achievement of a formal certificate confirming qualification for various non-regulated occupations and activities thus has more sense in relation to qualification transfer, particularly in European or wider international scale.

Component 5.5. Others

5.5.a) Describe any cases where you identify other benefits or barriers to such benefits.

UNIV - Recognition of the Results of Non-formal Education and Informal Learning in Networks of Schools Providing educational services for the Adults

The project seeks to support further education in the Czech Republic. Two partial goals aimed at achieving a notable expansion of further education have been formulated within the project:

- a) encourage secondary schools and higher professional schools in providing further education;
- b) extend the offer of further education by procedures enabling identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning i.e. any type of previous learning.

Further education provided by secondary schools and higher professional schools

Schools involved in the project created a network covering six regions of the country (Karlovy Vary, Ústí nad Labem, Pardubice, Jižní Čechy, Zlín, Olomouc). Those schools were chosen by the education departments of the respective regional authorities and many of them have the experience in the area of further training already. Now they apply a systematic approach to the area of further training. A uniform methodology will be followed in every stage from mapping the needs of the labour market to the preparation of modular training programmes. This is a prerequisite of the efficient use of the prepared modules while building the programmes of further training. Modules are contained in the database of every single network, they become a kind of "reservoir" from which the members of the network can draw information and inspiration in the future. They also have a possibility to include individual modules in their future programme. All the training programmes are designed in close cooperation with social partners who will also participate in their evaluation.

Each network has a coordination centre which performs a number of important activities (roles) for the smooth operation of the network: coordination role (cooperation with social partners and its coordination; coordination of the school activities, especially creation of the lifelong learning programmes); conceptual role (concept of the development of the network of schools, concept of creation and implementation of training programmes); methodological role (help and support in

creation and implementation of lifelong learning programmes); evaluation role (evaluation of lifelong learning programmes; evaluation of implementation of the programmes); evaluation of institutions willing to join the network; training role (especially training of teachers and lecturers from the schools and institutions involved in the network); information and consulting role (information about the offer of programmes; information about the labour market needs; study counselling in planning the individual study path composed of various programme modules); development role (monitoring of new trends in the area of lifelong learning and training of adults and application of those trends in the activities of the centre); role of the authority and executive body in identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (identification and validation of clients' competences acquired through non- formal and informal learning and planning of their further educational path).

The following reasons were behind the idea to include schools in the provision of further education:

- use and evaluation of material equipment of schools – many schools are relatively well equipped and therefore it seems logical to use this equipment also for further education; it does not mean that it won't be necessary to invest any more money into schools but the necessary investments will not be that high;
- use of the professional qualities of the school staff members – a number of excellent specialists work at schools and it would be a waste of talent not to benefit from their experience in the area of education of adults. On one hand we can hear objections involving almost always criticism of the school education and its rigid and obsolete methods, on the other hand it is quite common that private companies providing further training often employ teachers of vocational schools in the position of lecturers. In our experience the involvement of schools in the area of lifelong learning is a way to make schools respect the reality of life and training needs of both students and social partners. There is a mutual enrichment whereby both the core programme of the respective school and the lifelong learning programmes will benefit.
- The implementation of lifelong learning, and especially of the re-training programmes leading to the achieving a complete qualification or degree at schools guarantees the comparability of outputs from these qualifications and programmes existing within the main activity of the school, which prevents a devaluation of the provided training. In this area the UNIV project will have a close cooperation with another NUOV project called National system of qualifications.

The following facts justify the effort to connect schools providing further education into a network:

- the network is spread around the whole region, presenting the offer of the lifelong learning to citizens;
- the network of schools becomes a partner for the employment offices simplifying their administration load which is very welcome by the employment offices;
- the network cooperates in activities which are necessary for the planning and implementation of the education programmes;
- schools can help each other by providing staff and materials;
- thanks to the participation in the lifelong education network schools become more open to public;
- another element of the network will be a constant cooperation with social partners.

This part of the project is backed by the experience which the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education acquired in implementation of the KRAJ project (Comprehensive development of individual's activities) and the CVLK (Centre of Education of the Liberec Region).

The basic output from this part of the project will consist in creation of network of schools providing the training services to adults in the six involved regions. At least 132 programmes of further education taking into account the needs of the labour market as well as the needs of the education market (especially the hobby areas) are created.

Recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning

The preparation and pilot testing of the mechanism of known here as recognition of the previous learning is performed in this part of the project. This approach is applied in a number of countries and its advantage lies in the effort to map the client's knowledge and on basis of the description and assessment of his/her current competences the individual training programme can be designed concentrating on the skills which are missing in the required qualification. The time needed to get the necessary certificate can become much shorter then.

This approach corresponds to the concept of lifelong learning presented in many documents of the EU. The lifelong learning brings together the results of learning in various stages of an individual's life (lifelong learning, LLL) and results of learning in every single area of the individual's life (lifewide learning, LWL). Learning which takes place within both mentioned categories is further divided in the EU documents into formal, non-formal and informal learning.

In the area of the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, the UNIV project works in close cooperation with NQF project. The assessment of the client's current competencies is based on the known here as assessment standard which, together with the qualification standard, forms part of the description of each qualification. While the qualification standard defines the necessary competencies (knowledge, skills and competences) of everyone who wants to obtain the respective qualification, the assessment standard describes criteria for assessment of the mentioned competences (knowledge, skills and competences), methods and procedures of the assessment itself.

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning is then based on seeking the "proofs" and/or proving the individual competencies required by the assessment standard. A tailor made training programme focusing on the competencies, completion of which are considered necessary for the individual client, are offered, and the clients get the chance to undergo such training at one of the schools involved in the network of schools providing the training for adults.

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning extend the availability of the further vocational training and people who would be normally discouraged by the length of study or their own lack of self-confidence get a chance to get a full or partial qualification or some kind of additional training.

In the area of identification and validation we make use of the experience acquired in the Leonardo da Vinci project EPANIL (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning), which was finished in September 2006 in the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NUOV).

About 20 assessment standards corresponding to the school branches on the ISCED 3C level are produced during the course of the UNIV project. The recognition process will be verified on two assessment standards in each region and in each of the newly created network the pilot verification of recognition procedures will again be performed on two assessment standards. The recognition process will be performed on 16 assessment standards in total, which should bring enough experience for a fast extension of recognition procedures to all of the assessment standards corresponding to the education branches on the ISCED 3C level. The assessment standards which will not be produced within the UNIV project, will be prepared in the projects Národní soustava kvalifikací (National Qualifications Framework) and Kvalita (Quality). In the final stage of the project assessment standards corresponding to the education branches on the ISCED 3C level (i.e. for complete qualifications on this level) will exist as well as assessment standards for partial qualifications of this level.

EPANIL - European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning (1. 10. 2005 – 30. 9. 2006)

This project was concerned with developing methods and processes of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in chosen branch “cook” (ISCED 3C) with the aim to increase the access of adults to further education and their pilot testing in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. In particular, it was necessary to create a framework for access to further vocational education and training for adults based on the European Principles and Inventory for the Identification and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. The project used the experiences of other European countries (Great Britain, France and Germany), which are experienced in the theory and practice of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Target group of the project were adults without qualification or with the lowest qualification level (at ISCED Level 2 or below) but with work experience (be it acquired in paid employment/position or in voluntary work). The project offered these unemployed and disadvantaged persons and persons at the risk of unemployment the opportunity of access to further education and training via validation of their work and life experience.

Project outcomes

- guidelines, examples of good practice and recognition procedures of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- method materials – training course for advisors;
- method materials – a set of methods and tools for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning for the chosen branch “cook” (ISCED 3C) in the framework of Common European Principles.

Project activities

- exchanging information between countries experienced in the area of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and countries without these experiences;
- establishing and supporting regional associate partners networks;
- developing a general concept of and framework for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- developing appropriate methods and tools of the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning for the chosen branch “cook” (ISCED 3C) in compliance with Common European Principles;
- ensuring information activities for members of national regional partners networks;
- developing the training course for advisors and schooling advisors;
- pilot testing of training course and methods and tools of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- ensuring valorisation activities (web pages, leaflets, articles, information seminars, international symposium in Ostrava).

Pilot testing of project outcomes took place in the adjacent regions of the Czech Republic (Moravian - Silesian region), Poland (Upper Silesian region) and Slovakia (Nitra region) where unemployment is high due to the process of economic transformation.

NQF - The development of the National Qualifications Framework supporting links between initial and further education (A system project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport -MŠMT)

The aim of the NQF is to create a system environment that will support:

- comparability of learning outcomes achieved by various forms of learning and education enabling recognition of real knowledge and competences independently on the way of their acquiring;
- comparability of qualification levels in the Czech Republic and in the EU;
- transfer of world of work requirements into education and training;
- public awareness of all national-wide recognized qualifications.

On the contrary, the aim of NQF is not to replace existing systems and structures of education. The NQF just strives to make them interconnected, covered and transparent.

Structure and content of the NQF

The basic units of the NQF will be divided into two types:

- Complete qualification – ability to perform an occupation; as a rule, it is connected with achievement of an appropriate level of education (e.g. a plumber, a confectioner, a hairdresser, hotel industry).
- Partial qualification – ability to perform a work activity or several work activities, which provide opportunity to apply for a job (e.g. installation and repair of gas equipment, ice cream production, ladies hairdressing). Partial qualifications can form a part of an complete qualification. It happens in case, that requirements for a partial qualification form a subset of requirements for an complete qualification. E.g. a partial qualification of Ice cream production is a part of the complete qualification of a Confectioner.

Requirements of the world of work for education sphere will be formulated through both complete and partial qualifications. Thus, the NQF will act as a bridge between the world of work and education.

The basic instruments of the NQF will be qualification and assessment standards:

Qualification standard stipulates what individuals have to be able to do for acquiring a respective qualification. This is stipulated through vocational or general competences.

Assessment standard stipulates criteria and procedures for testing fulfilment of requirements of the qualification standard, i.e. competences.

Use of the NQF for recognition of qualifications:

The creation of the National qualifications framework should not influence existing rules for acquiring qualifications and for finishing education after completing educational programs in initial education a training, that are stipulated by the Act on Education. Moreover, the system of recognition of qualifications through the NQF will be enriched with the following:

A. Putting transparency into the enormous amount of various diplomas and certificates currently awarded at the end of courses.

The system of partial qualifications should aim towards comparability of these certificates and should provide employers with guaranteed information on contents of a qualification. Qualification standards of partial qualifications should also provide unambiguous criteria for accreditation of further education courses.

B. The creation of new ways of acquiring an complete qualification – based on acquiring partial qualifications without necessity to complete formal school education.

So far entire education in a branch of study was possible to acquire only through finishing an adequate educational program. The Act on recognition of further education outcomes enables to acquire an complete qualification through passing a final apprenticeship examination or a Maturita examination after submitting certificates on acquired partial qualifications, which form a “subset” of an adequate complete qualification.

Factual and potential problems and their solution in the development of NQF in the Czech Republic (outcomes of a case study):

(a) Impact of the NQF on the nature of education

The development of the National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is from the very beginning viewed as a way leading to a situation in which the NQF will act as a bridge between initial and continuing education as well as between the world of work and education. The NQF is being developed with intent to assure the linkage between requirements coming from the sphere of work performance and adequate reactions from the educational sphere.

This approach is connected with the potential risk of “additional regulation” through restriction of current “freedom of educational offering” in initial and continuing education.

Types of education differentiate measures taken for elimination of this potential risk. The approach of “mutual influencing” is used in initial education: complete qualifications are determined rigorously not only with respect to the requirements coming from the sphere of work performance but also with respect to the possibility (to some extent also the needs) of the educational sphere. The relationship between the NQF and continuing education goes by the approach of “dominant position of labour market requirements“. Partial qualifications are determined rigorously according to requirements coming from the sphere of work performance and educational offering will be adjusted to them. The description of a certain partial qualification in the NQF does not mean (with the exception of regulated professions) that the possibility of organising various courses or educational events without direct linkage to the NQF will be cancelled.

(b) The Monopolistic Position of the NQF

The development of the National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is connected with the development of certain new tools, i.e. qualification and assessment standards which are used with a view to regulate particular processes.

The character of tools/elements of the framework can influence the potential risk of them becoming means of supporting extreme system rigidity and ill influence of some professional and interest groups.

To prevent and eliminate the aforementioned risk, the framework must be open. For example, the administrator must handle every proposal for a certain partial qualification. No less important is the intention to support “pluralistic processes of development and approval”, i.e. processes where various bodies, institutions and individuals with different interests comment the approved part of the NQF.

(c) Financial and Organisational Issues of NQF Development

The development of the NQF in the Czech Republic is connected with considerable organisational and financial demands. This issue is tied in with the fact that its development and implementation requires cooperation with a large number of different partners.

The main risk is that instead of a synergic cooperation individual organisations and bodies, they will compete and trying to push through their own different interests.

To overcome this risk and potential problems arising from considerable demands on organisation and funding is to link the NQF development with significant projects, e.g. MŠMT system projects implemented with ESF support: NQF and UNIV. Measures directed towards spread of information and maximal support of mutual dialogue try to address cooperation of different subjects.

(d) Influence of Legislative Support

The National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is being developed with legislative support of the law on recognition of education results. This law was approved prior to setting up and implementing the NQF. This is an advantage because the law specifies very clearly a great many processes and the roles of individual stakeholders.

The certain risk of the described arrangement of the outer framework of the qualification system is connected with the fact that just the process of NQF development can reveal potential problems embodied in the processes regulated by this aforementioned law. There will be no possibility to amend these processes because they are set out in the aforementioned law. An effective way of elimination of this risk is the concept of the law itself- it stipulates only the most essential issues. The concept and the creation of the NQF are in competence of particular project teams and final receivers who draw up the law.

(e) Requirements for Complexity of Stakeholders Cooperation Results

The National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is being developed in cooperation with a number of partners. They are aiming at setting up one complex framework.

There is a potential risk consisting in insufficient involvement of all relevant partners. This phenomenon can result in the fact that the NQF will not fully suits to all partners. The reality that both, the laws on recognition of continuing education results and the NQF, focus mainly on lower qualification levels can create a problem.

Two groups of measures concentrate on elimination of the aforementioned risk. The first group is characterised by the concept of the National Qualifications Framework. The framework is persistently perceived as a complex, one and only qualifications framework, which is proposed, developed and generated. The other group of measures assures persistent and repeated proposal for cooperation and dialogue even for partners from higher qualification levels, i.e. for those qualifications of which corresponding tools are not being developed now.

The platform of sector councils seems to be very essential for mutual communication on content. It is very important for employers to play a leading role in sector councils. Moreover, their roofing organisations have decisive influence on the composition of councils. It can also help them to enjoy confidence – they can be regarded as a key body as far as the NQF is concerned. Requirements of the world of work will reflect demanded competences.

In comparison with the basic prerequisites, the representatives of teachers and trainers will play an indispensable role in sector councils. They will help employers define assessment standards because they have experience with evaluation. However, it is important for them to realise that not only adult education but also adult competence verification is very specific. Another characteristic is the fact that examiners test an individual and do not have any information about his or her competences. That is why examiners must verify all required competences in their entirely extent and cannot only choose some of them.

(f) Costs of Examinations under the Law

The National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is being developed with legislative backing that characterises an organisational and financial framework of processes stipulated by the law. The dissemination of new processes is connected with the calculation of examination costs.

Authorised persons charge fees for examination for verification and recognition of continuing education results. There are several different suggestions which range from maximum to minimum or even no fees, i.e. examinations are available free of charge.

Law No. 179/2006 Coll. on verification and recognition of continuing education results requests of MŠMT to determine the amount of fees in the implementing regulation of this law. This regulation just now goes through the external comment and amendment proceeding.

A potential risk consists in setting fees for examinations of partial qualifications too high. We are not afraid that authorised persons will charge exorbitant fees but we are rather afraid of the real cost for examinations. Paradoxically, there is danger of another extreme that fees will be extraordinarily low. This situation could be connected with payment directed towards getting certificates “incorrectly easier”. Coping with the problem leads to discussions of all interested parties and interest in finding optimal solutions.

(g) Costs of Processes Connected with Recognition of Learning Outcomes

The National Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic will supplement processes linked with recognition of learning outcomes. These processes are developed and pilot verified in one of the MŠMT system projects (UNIV project).

There is a risk that financial requirements of the proposed procedures will be extremely high and costly developed possibilities will not be used. These thoughts are based on the fact that only a small number of people in the Czech Republic acquire secondary education completed by an apprenticeship certificate (ISCED 3C) and a large number of inhabitants acquire a corresponding vocational qualification in initial education. That is why the practical usability of the proposed processes will be limited as well as have a supplementary function. Educational paths will be shorter, their spectrum will be broader and the “second chance” will be provided to those who would like to use these opportunities.

The measures taken for elimination of the abovementioned risks consist in a focus on people who are disadvantaged by a lower qualification or other handicapped people. It is necessary to find the most favourable procedures that will not discourage these people.

(h) Willingness to Accept the Certificates Acquired under the Law on Recognition Continuing Education Results.

The National Qualifications Framework will use different target groups in the Czech Republic. Employers are one of these groups.

A potential risk consists in unwillingness of employers to use these new possibilities.

Solution to this problem consists in the active participation of social partners (newly developed sector councils as well) in the preparation of assessment standards. This ensures that standards are based on and respect labour market requirements.

(i) Incorrect understanding of NQF targets on the part of their (co-)designers and future users

Cooperation of social partners on qualification determination is indispensable for the development of meaningful partial qualifications.

A potential risk is in misunderstanding of social partners by employers and their associations. They do not view NQF development as lending a helping hand which assists them to recruit skilled workers in midterm horizon, if need be facilitate the mobility of labour forces through higher lucidity of qualifications. They do not view cooperation as a good investment but they only see its costs. They perceive participation in solving the tasks connected with NQF development as promotion for educators or trainees, or as promotion of rival companies. On the contrary, they do not perceive NQF development as an activity which will promote them. They are afraid to give out information about

qualification requirements as to reveal their know-how and so help their rival companies. They want to employ a worker who would have necessary competences for their specific business. At the same time, they realise that if this worker will be holder of a nationwide valid certificate then the value of this holder on the labour market will be higher.

The elimination of the abovementioned risk is very difficult. Moreover, it can be only supported by good results gained in using the developed system.

(j) Unsuitable Methods of Communication with Social Partners

NQF elements, especially qualifications and assessment standards must be developed in direct cooperation with the representatives of social partners, first the representatives of employers.

A potential risk consists in the fact that the representatives of employers are not usually able to specify qualification requirements, especially at general (more transferable) level. Another issue that is worth mentioning is that employers have bigger problems with the creation of assessment standards than with the creation of qualification standards. It could seem that just the employers should be able to express how they can recognise that an individual acquired demanded competences.

The elimination of the aforementioned risk is based on using suitable methods for communication with social partners. It means that the first set of standards for a particular field should be developed to start cooperation. To put it in a simply way - employers are not able to determine qualification borders, define required qualifications, define competences but rather point out some shortcomings of submitted proposals.

(k) The Necessity of Assuring the Quality of Processes and Stakeholders

Conditions for a successful operation of qualifications frameworks mean to establish prerequisites for mutual trust. In the case of the National Qualifications Framework, this especially means to determine demands on quality of authorised persons and examination processes. If this quality is not assured, there is danger of devaluation of issued certificates because of unwillingness of employers to accept them.

In this respect, assessment standards will play a key role. They determine both requirements for vocational capability of the applicant who asks for authorisation as well as the course of examination itself.

Awarding bodies will play another (no less important) role. Decision on awarding authorisation will be within their purview. They will be able to decide only in conformity with assessment standards. This fact support the necessity of high quality assessment standards

Awarding bodies will also carry out control activities of authorised persons. This will contribute to quality assurance of processes

There are a great many documents which describe in all details both the development of the NQF and the overall context in which the NQF is produced. Some key documents are also available in English:

- 179 Act of 30 March 2006 on the Recognition of Further Education Results

The law was translated into English by MOE (16 pages; it is also available in an electronic version).

- A proposal for the Concept, Structure and Processes of the National Qualifications Framework

The document on the current state of NQF solution translated into English by the project team (29 pages; it is also available in an electronic version).

- Curricular Reform and the Development of Educational Programs in Secondary Vocational Education

The document on the curricular reform in the Czech Republic translated by National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education with MOE backing (44 pages).

Component 6. Conclusion

6.a) Which national goals, if any, in your country, are ‘the recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning results has helped create a bridge between initial and further education. The system enables the adults to achieve individual partial qualifications, however the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. describes the method and conditions under which obtained partial qualifications may be used for obtaining full qualification (in most instances it means obtaining an educational level). It means that two systems without mutual link are not being developed.

Involvement of social partners, particularly from employers (i.e. potential users) in definition of qualification requirements is another important element. This may even result in some modifications of qualification requirements in initial education. The aim is to teach (according to the School Act) or recognize (according to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.) the things that will be demanded by employers. Within initial education and preparation and the “second chance” education this aim is served by a known here as double-level curriculum conception at the ISCED 3 and 4 levels (general educational programmes at national level that should ensure common field specific as well as non-specific requirements for preparation and its outcomes binding for all and school educational programmes, in which schools, pupils as well as employers and regional or local administration representatives may adapt the general requirements to their own education needs and/or to requirements for applicability of education outcomes at the labour market and in the society in general). Within recognition of non-formal and informal learning results (pursuant to Act No. 179/2006 Coll.) a similar function of national standards (like general educational programmes) is performed by qualification and assessment standards of partial qualifications registered in the National Qualifications Framework.

The Act enables all, who show their interest and meet the qualification requirements to obtain partial qualifications (and thus also full qualifications). Qualifications may only be obtained up to the ‘Maturita’ certificate level at present, however the qualifications framework specified by the NQF register will have to be extended to university tertiary levels in the future, as the European LLL conception presumes.

6.b) What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalize the ‘recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning’ in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. was ratified in mid 2006, but it will become effective on 1 August 2007. The time gained this way is being used for creation of background for the Act operability. Identical processes between the individual ministries have to be particularly set (the Act involves quite a lot of them, see the table in Chapter 2), and the National Qualifications Framework has particularly to be created. This started to be developed in 2005. As it is a long-term goal the Act enables recognition of further education results that will already form a part of the National Qualifications Framework (i.e. they will be approved). The act will thus be effective even if the National Qualifications Framework is only filled up to for example 10 %. It will apply to the qualification already included in the NQF. The others will be gradually developed and added to the NQF, which will enable the newly included qualifications to be recognized. We came to this decision quite unambiguously as the other possibility was to wait several years for completion of the NQF and then to launch the whole system. The possibility we have chosen will at least prevent the whole process from being too spontaneous, and there will moreover be some space for possible modifications of the system, if any elements prove not to be operational. It is also necessary to mention that the National Qualifications Framework will never be totally completed, it has to be a system permanently responding to current labour market requirements – from the point of view of development of professions and qualification requirements

for their performance. All that – i.e. development of the background for application of the Act and its actuation are the most demanding tasks at present.

Immediate tasks:	development of implementation regulations for the Act, co-ordination of ministries in applying the Act, fulfilment of the NQF, promotion
Mid-term tasks:	launching the Act into practice, starting the processes, control of the processes, possible revision of the processes or consolidation of some elements (e.g. control), NQF development
Long-term tasks:	gradual NQF development in co-operation with social partners, particularly employers

6.c) Address important policy issues for your counties which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.

See point 6.b), it is too early to develop further issues of education policy and policies of labour and social matters at this moment.

6.d) Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country.

The Country Background Report of the Czech Republic is oriented toward lifelong learning for all, i.e. it deals with the post-compulsory education level and not only with the postsecondary education level.

At the present time, the document **Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic** is being prepared. It is a coherent concept which contains other partial and cross-sectioned conceptions and policies in this area. Its ambition is to establish attainable aims which might be supported, apart from other ways, by European funds in the years 2007-2013. However, its task is not to propose methods of implementation, because these must be the result of a discussion of all corresponding participants of public politics.

This strategy is based on an analysis of the foundational strategic documents (Czech and European) which are either directly or indirectly connected with lifelong learning. It accepts complex conception of lifelong learning as presented in these documents.

The Strategy is in harmony with the economic as well as social aspects of these documents. The main contribution of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning lies in its connection of the partial aspects mentioned in the respective documents which lead to a coherent concept of lifelong learning, and furthermore it has the intention to connect efforts of all engaged stakeholders while working on the concept of lifelong learning.

This Strategy was discussed with the economic and social partners to ensure a wide consensus in the content of individual priorities and it will be discussed by the government of the Czech Republic. The Strategy is an answer to the call of European Union bodies. They received a study about the current state in the realization of the work programme **Education and Training 2010. The Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hinges on Urgent Reforms**. Based on this study, members of EU were advised to intensify their efforts to create and implement complex, permeable and coordinated national strategies of lifelong learning set out in European context.

Strategy of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic should become the foundational programme document in the period of 2007-2015. The successful fulfilment of this strategy is conditioned by an immediate introduction of the implementation phase, which should lead to a working out of particular propositions and measures into specific tasks for all engaged stakeholders and it should include financial demands and means of their acquisition.

It is necessary to engage all major stakeholders – i.e. representatives of employers, employees, educators, local and state government, and experts in lifelong learning to ensure success of this phase.

6.e) Please list some ‘factors’ which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the ‘Open Learning Society’ scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

1. Further education must be diverse, flexible, financially and locally affordable and accessible to all. It must provide an enriching personal development, it means it should provide not only a ‘second chance’ or maintenance, development, modification of initial qualification, since the Czech Republic has initial VET for workforce and similar occupations (ISCED 3C or 3A) and for occupations of lower technicians and managers (ISCED 3A) at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3), unlike countries with Anglo-Saxon and partly Scandinavian type of education systems, where the education at this level is only general, and vocational education at all qualification levels and in all fields is post-secondary.

2. Further education will provide various offers of new and shorter ways to achieve the same formally recognised qualifications via identification and validation non-formal and informal learning.

3. The NQF should be open for all stakeholders in lifelong learning – authors of complex strategies and policy makers, social partners of the labour market, schools and other education providers, career guiding centres and of course learners and those interested in lifelong learning.

4. LLL should stay open in a sense of being neither too monopolised nor too rigid for an adequate updating.