

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

**National Report on the Development of Education
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1. The Education System Face to Face with the Challenges of the 21st Century: An Overview

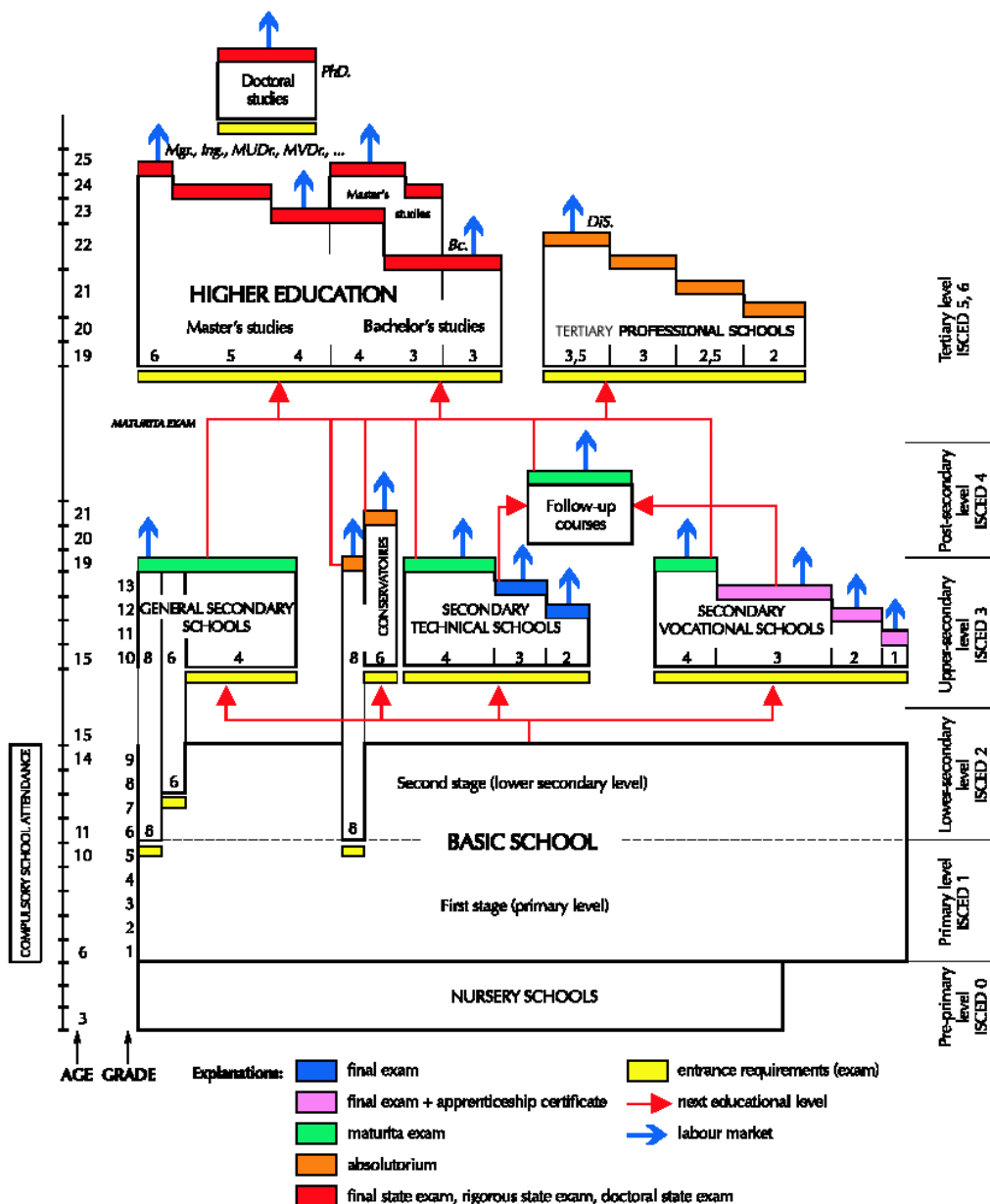
(an overview and evaluation of the development of education at all levels, particularly as regards reforms and changes implemented since the last national report was presented)

1.1 Major Reforms and Innovations in the Education System

(a) Organisation, structure and governance of the education system

The education system of the Czech Republic is characterised by relatively independent levels of education with corresponding types of school. The nature of the system of so-called “regional education” (i.e. from nursery schools to tertiary professional schools) is currently governed by Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act), as amended; the nature of the higher education sector is subject to Act No. 111/1998 on higher education institutions and on changes and additions to other laws (the Higher Education Act), as amended.

The Education System of the Czech Republic



“Regional” education:

The system of “regional” education consists of schools and school facilities.

Schools must provide education in line with framework and school education programmes, and must be entered in the school registry (*a public list of schools and school facilities that are part of the education system of the CR*), maintained by the respective regions and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS). Being entered in the school registry means that the school provides education that is recognised in the Czech Republic and that it is authorised to issue certificates of education recognised in the Czech Republic. Last but not least, such a school is entitled to financial resources from the state budget.

Therefore, in line with the Education Act, educational institutions that are not entered in the school registry and that provide other, for example non-formal education (e.g. courses delivered based on a trade licence) are not considered to be schools.

School facilities provide services and education that complement or support education provided by schools or that are directly related to it. They may also provide institutional and protective education or preventive educational care. School facilities also include establishments for the continuing training of pedagogical staff, school guidance facilities, school facilities for non-formal and continuing education, school purpose-linked facilities, educational and accommodation facilities, establishments providing school meals and school facilities for the carrying out of institutional education, protective education and preventive educational care. The operations of school facilities are also conditional on their being entered in the school registry.

The founding bodies of schools and school facilities are regions, municipalities, voluntary associations of municipalities, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (possibly other ministries), registered churches and religious societies that have been granted the right to establish denominational schools, and other legal entities and individuals.

As regards the **legal status of schools and school facilities** it may be stated that regions, municipalities and voluntary associations of municipalities and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (so-called public founding bodies) set up schools and school facilities that have the status of a legally authorised educational body or a so-called “allowance organisation” (partly funded from the state budget). Registered churches and religious societies that have been granted the right to set up denominational schools, other legal entities and individuals may establish schools that have a different legal status provided for by the legal regulations in place in the Czech Republic (e.g. joint stock companies, limited liability companies, etc.). The subject of their activities includes the provision of education or school services in line with the Education Act.

The types of school and school facilities are laid down in the Education Act.

I. There are the following types of school: nursery school (kindergarten), basic school, secondary school (general secondary school – “gymnázium”, secondary technical school and secondary vocational school), conservatoire, tertiary professional school, basic art school and language school entitled to hold state language examinations).

- **Nursery schools** (kindergartens) provide institutional preschool education normally for children from the age of three until the age of six when they begin compulsory schooling. Attendance in nursery school is not compulsory.

- **Basic schools** provide basic education and pupils in these schools receive their nine-year compulsory schooling, normally from the age of six to fifteen. The education cycle is divided into the first (five-year) stage and the second (four-year) stage. Pupils who successfully complete basic education acquire a basic education qualification. Gifted children can attend schools with extended teaching in some subjects. Alternatively they may continue their compulsory schooling at an eight-year or six-year general secondary school (after the 5th and 7th grade respectively), or at an eight-year dance conservatoire.
- **Secondary schools** provide pupils either a broader general education or technical and vocational education combined with general education. They provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for further studies or for the performance of an occupation, and establish preconditions for the pupils' fully-fledged personal and civic lives. One typical feature of the Czech education system is that virtually all basic school leavers (nearly 95%) continue their post-compulsory education in upper secondary schools.

The development of the structure of secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education constitutes one of the most significant changes that have occurred in the Czech education system since 1989. There continues to be an extremely large proportion of those who undergo secondary technical and vocational education (some 79% of the relevant age cohort in 2005/06).

Secondary school attendance normally starts at the age of 15 and it is completed at the age of nineteen (with the exception of six- and eight-year “gymnázia” and eight-year dance conservatoires, the initial years of which correspond to the relevant years of basic school – i.e. compulsory schooling). Admission to secondary school is conditional upon completion of compulsory schooling (i.e. the pupil must go to school for 9 years), and upon meeting the requirements that are part of admission proceedings. Admission criteria are set by the secondary school director. An entry examination may be part of the admission proceedings.

Secondary schools offer education in various forms (full-time, part-time, distance or combined). Depending on the field of study the length of regular studies is three to four years (3-year programmes are those that lead to a secondary vocational qualification and pupils acquire a vocational certificate, and four-year programmes are mostly those that are completed by a “maturita” examination and pupils acquire a secondary qualification with “maturita”). Some secondary schools also organise follow-up courses for pupils who have acquired a vocational certificate. After their successful completion they achieve secondary education with “maturita”. Moreover, there are so-called “shortened studies” that enable secondary school leavers to achieve education in an additional field and, in this way, ensure for themselves a better position in the labour market. The length of the shortened studies is 1-2 years (regular daily attendance) depending on the difficulty of the given discipline.

A specific type of secondary technical school is the conservatoire. It provides six-year programmes preparing for occupations in music, singing and drama, and an eight-year dance programme. At this school pupils can acquire full secondary education with “maturita” as well as tertiary professional education.

- **Tertiary professional schools** have formed part of the education system since 1995; they provide tertiary professional education and demanding practical training aiming at the performance of demanding professional activities. They are designed for applicants with secondary qualifications with “maturita”. In comparison with higher education studies tertiary professional education includes a large proportion of practical training. The length of regular daily programmes is normally 3 years, while in healthcare programmes it is 3.5

years. An “absolutorium” marks completion of their studies and graduates acquire a tertiary professional qualification.

- **Basic art schools and state language schools** also form part of the education system. Basic art schools provide fundamentals of artistic education and prepare the most talented pupils for studies at secondary and higher art schools and conservatoires. State language schools provide studies in various foreign languages with the possibility of passing state language examinations.

II. School facilities include facilities for the continuing training of pedagogical staff, school guidance facilities, school facilities for developing personal interests and providing continuing education, school facilities for special purposes, educational and lodging and boarding facilities, school canteens and school facilities for carrying out institutional education, protective education and preventive educational care.

- **Facilities for the continuing training of pedagogical staff** provide, above all, the continuing training of pedagogical staff in schools and school facilities. They also provide advice as regards methodology and governance, information about new developments and approaches in education.
- **School guidance facilities** provide information, diagnostic, guidance and methodological services for children, pupils, students and their legal guardians as well as for schools and school facilities. Moreover, they provide expert services in special education and pedagogical-psychological areas, preventive educational care, and they facilitate the choice of appropriate education for children, pupils or students.
- **School educational and lodging and boarding facilities** offer children, pupils and students – depending on the purpose for which they have been set up - various educational, sporting and other out-of-school activities. They may also provide day care, accommodation and meals, or, possibly, longer-term convalescent care for children and pupils.
- **School facilities for developing personal interests** organise educational or theme-related recreational activities, and provide all sorts of information to pupils, students and pedagogical staff, or other individuals.
- **School canteens** provide school meals to children, pupils and students when they are at school or in a school facility.
- **School facilities for special purposes** assist schools and school facilities in implementing their activities. They provide material and technical resources and services as well as guidance, information and economic-administrative services. Moreover, they provide expert, study-related and information services for pupils, students and school staff, provide for out-of-school practical training and education, and create conditions for the practical training of pupils and their out-of-school activities.

One important instrument for the governance of the education system in “regional education” is the **long-term plans for education and the development of the education system that are developed at national level and at the level of individual regions.**

The objective of the long-term plan at national level is to maintain the coherence of the education system of the Czech Republic in the new organisational conditions. The national long-term plan sets out medium-term priorities for the education system as a whole, and ways of their implementation and support, and it sets out the main policy intentions for further development of the education system. The long-term plan at the level of the Czech Republic is followed up by regional long-term plans that elaborate on individual topics with a view to

the specific conditions and needs of the relevant region. Based on expected demographic trends, labour market developments and regional development plans, regional long-term plans set out objectives and tasks concerning various areas of education, the structure of educational provision – particularly that of fields of education, types of school and school facilities and their capacity. They also set out a proposal for the funding of educational and school services in the region.

Higher education institutions:

Higher education institutions, as the top element of the education system, play a key role in the scientific, cultural, social and economic development of society.

Higher education institutions are legal entities. There are university and non-university types of higher education institution. They deliver accredited study programmes and lifelong learning programmes.

Universities may provide all types of study programme and related scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activities. Higher education institutions of a non-university type provide Bachelor study programmes and may also deliver Master study programmes and related research, development, artistic and other creative activities. Non-university HE institutions are not divided into faculties.

There are public, private and state higher education institutions. The state category includes military and police HE institutions. Various legal entities that have the relevant focus may take part in the scientific, research, development, artistic and other activities carried out by HE institutions.

Public higher education institutions are established and dissolved by law. Their title and location is also laid down by law. The following issues fall within the self-administration of public HE institutions: internal organisation, determination of intake numbers, setting the admission requirements and deciding on admission, the development and delivery of study programmes, organisation of studies, decisions on the rights and obligations of students, the focus and organisation of scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activities, labour relations and determination of academic staff and other staff numbers, financial and property management in line with special regulations, setting the level of study-related fees, and other issues.

The organisation and operations of a public HE institution, as well as the position of members of the academic community, are subject to the institution's internal regulations. State bodies may only interfere in the operations of a public HE institution in accordance with the law and in ways laid down by law.

Higher education institutions provide Bachelor, Master and Doctoral study programmes. Those who complete a Master programme may go on to a Doctoral programme. Some HE institutions provide two-cycle programmes – i.e. after completion of a Bachelor study programme students continue by studying a Master programme.

Organisation and governance of the education system

State administration and self-administration in “regional” education

Pursuant to Act No. 561/2004 on preschool, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act) as amended, **state administration** in education is managed by the following bodies:

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports,
- other central bodies of state administration (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs),
- regional authorities,
- municipal authorities in municipalities with extended powers (pursuant to Act No. 314/2002),
- director of school or school facility,
- Czech School Inspectorate.

Self-administration in education is implemented by:

- municipalities,
- regions.

The implementation of state administration:

- **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**
is a central body of state administration for education, It performs the following tasks:
 - governs the management of state administration in education, and is also responsible for the condition of education, educational policy and the development of the education system;
 - establishes conditions for the implementation of institutional and protective education and preventive educational care, and for the education of individuals placed in school facilities;
 - establishes conditions for the continuing training of pedagogical staff,
 - performs the function of a founding body towards school facilities for the carrying out of institutional and protective education, school facilities for preventive educational care and facilities for the continuing training of pedagogical staff;
 - issues framework education programmes for each field in basic and secondary education and for preschool facilities, basic art schools and language schools (*these programmes set out the compulsory content, scope and conditions of education and they are binding for the development of school education programmes, for the assessment of the learning outcomes of children and pupils, for development and evaluation of textbooks and for setting the level of financial allocations*);
 - sets out national formula coefficients for determining the level of expenditure for the education and school services provided to one child, pupil or student of the relevant age category; based on the national coefficients the Ministry allocates financial resources earmarked from the state budget for the operations of schools and school facilities established by regions and for the operation of those set up by municipalities and associations of municipalities; these resources take the form of block grants placed in a special account of the region;
 - is responsible for checking the correct and efficient use of the financial resources it allocates or provides, based on contracts, from the state budget, the National Fund and foreign resources provided by international organisations in line with international agreements; ex-ante, interim and ex-post control;
 - develops long-term proposals for education and the development of the education system of the Czech Republic (the document is reviewed biennially and tasks for the

following period are formulated);

- develops annual reports on the condition and development of the education system of the Czech Republic;
- maintains the school registry (the school registry is a public list containing data about schools and school facilities that are part of the education system of the Czech Republic);
- is responsible for the central maintenance and processing of data related to education;
- issues decrees setting out conditions of admission of pupils to schools, conditions related to the implementation and completion of education, organisation of education, keeping of documentation, etc.

- **Ministries of the Interior, Defence, Justice and Foreign Affairs**

Apart from the Ministry of Education the following ministries hold the powers of a founding body in respect to educational institutions: Ministry of the Interior (secondary and tertiary professional police schools, secondary and tertiary professional fire protection schools and school facilities providing services to these schools); Ministry of Defence (secondary and tertiary professional military schools and school facilities providing services to these schools); Ministry of Justice (secondary schools within the Prison Service and school facilities providing services to these schools) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (basic schools at the diplomatic mission or the consular office of the CR). These schools are entered in the registry of schools and school services (with the exception of the schools run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

- **Regional authorities**

Have taken over part of the powers of education authorities and have acquired some new powers. The schools system has been decentralised.

Regional authority

- develops, updates and publishes biennially a long-term plan for education and the development of the education system;
- maintains data in the registry of schools and facilities about nursery schools and school facilities except those run by the Ministry, and presents the registry data to the Ministry for keeping records and publication;
- appoints and dismisses directors of schools and school facilities of which it is a founding body;
- allocates and distributes financial resources to schools and school facilities of which it is a founding body in line with regional formula coefficients and with principles set down by the Ministry; allocates and distributes financial resources directly to schools and school facilities the founding bodies of which are municipalities and associations of municipalities; regional block grants include additional resources for the special educational needs of children, pupils and students;
- carries out financial settlement in respect to resources from the state budget, carries out analysis and evaluation of ways in which financial resources from the state budget are managed in line with procedures determined by the Ministry;
- takes decisions concerning recognition of certificates issued by foreign schools, etc.

- **Authorities of municipalities with extended powers**

The authority of a municipality with extended powers processes proposals for a breakdown of financial resources allocated from the state budget in line with principles determined by the Ministry and in line with regional formula coefficients, and presents

it to the regional authority; develops and presents to the regional authority analysis of management of financial resources from the state budget in line with procedures determined by the Ministry.

- **Directors of schools and school facilities** manage schools and school facilities:
 - decide on all matters concerning the provision of education and educational services;
 - make sure that schools and school facilities provide education and educational services in compliance with the Education Act and framework education programmes; are responsible for the professional and pedagogical standards of education and educational services;
 - establish conditions for the activities of the Czech School Inspectorate and adopt the relevant follow-up measures;
 - establish conditions for the continuing training of pedagogical staff and for the operations of the school council;
 - provide information to legal guardians of pupils and to mature pupils about learning outcomes, etc.

School directors set up a pedagogical board as their advisory body that consists of all pedagogical staff. They consult the board about all major pedagogical documents and measures concerning the educational provision of the school.

Moreover, directors of schools and school facilities, the founding body of which is the state, region, municipality or an association of municipalities, take decisions on the rights and obligations within the purview of state administration that concern the admission of pupils to education, transfers of pupils to different educational programmes, transfers of pupils to different schools, recognition of prior education, expulsion of pupils or students from studies, repetition of a year, reduction of or exemption from a payment for education, etc.

- **Czech School Inspectorate**

is set up by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as a constituent body of the state administration. Apart from execution of state control over compliance with generally binding legal regulations the Inspectorate is authorised by law to carry out external evaluation – i.e. to ascertain and evaluate the conditions, implementation and results of education, to assess the conditions for educational provision in terms of human, material and technical resources, and to check upon the efficiency of the use of financial resources allocated from the state budget.

The findings and outcomes of evaluation carried out by school inspectors are recorded in the form of inspection reports. The Czech School Inspectorate issues annual reports presenting information and facts ascertained during inspections in schools, and including basic data about the scope of inspection activities and the conditions under which they are conducted. The report also contains data about the information system and internal administration of the CSI.

Furthermore, the Czech School Inspectorate oversees state control over compliance with legal regulations related to the provision of education and educational services, and public control over the use of financial resources from the state budget.

Implementation of self-administration:

- **Region**

as a higher-level self-administering unit is obliged to establish conditions for the implementation of secondary and tertiary professional education, the education of children, pupil and students with physical disabilities and disadvantages, language education (in language schools entitled to organise state language examinations), basic art and non-formal education, and the carrying out of institutional education. The region sets up and dissolves secondary schools, tertiary professional schools, nursery, basic and secondary schools and school facilities for children and pupils with physical disabilities, special basic schools, schools at healthcare facilities, school educational and lodging and boarding facilities and school canteens for children, pupils and students of schools of which it is a founding body, secondary schools where the language of instruction is a language of a national minority, language schools with the right to organise state language examinations, basic art schools, school facilities for non-formal education and children's homes. The region covers the expenditure of schools and school facilities of which it is a founding body with the exception of expenditure covered from the state budget and other sources. The region also may contribute resources to these schools and facilities to cover further recurring expenditure that is normally paid from the state budget.

- **Municipality**

is obliged, as part of self-administration in education, to establish conditions for implementation of compulsory education of children permanently residing on its territory and children placed in school facilities for the implementation of institutional and protective education on its territory who do not attend schools set up at these school facilities. Municipalities either establish basic schools or provide for implementation of compulsory education at basic schools founded by other municipalities or associations of municipalities.

Municipalities are obliged to establish conditions for preschool education in the final year before the commencement of compulsory schooling for children permanently residing on their territory and for children placed in a children's home on its territory. For this purpose the municipality sets up a nursery school or provides for preschool education in a nursery school set up by another municipality or an association of municipalities.

Moreover, municipalities and associations of municipalities may establish and dissolve basic art schools, school facilities for developing personal interests, school facilities for special purposes and schools and school facilities that are normally established by regions or the Ministry, provided that they prove to the body maintaining the registry of schools and school facilities that they have the necessary financial, material and human resources to ensure their operations.

Municipalities and associations of municipalities cover the expenditure of legal entities, of which they are the founding bodies, that perform the activities of schools and school facilities with the exception of expenditure covered from the state budget and other sources. Municipalities and associations of municipalities may also contribute resources to these entities to cover further recurring expenditure that is normally paid from the state budget, grant them subsidies in compliance with the law on the state budget to cover part of their operating costs, and they make the relevant financial arrangements with them.

School council

is set up at basic, secondary and tertiary professional schools. It allows legal representatives of under-age pupils, mature pupils and students, the school staff and the

founding body to take part in the school administration. The school council performs a public monitoring function. It is a self-administering body of the school. Its main task is to approve annual school reports and reports on financial management. It expresses views on the school development policy and school education programmes and their implementation, approves rules for pupil assessment in basic and secondary schools, and discusses inspection reports of the CSI.

(b) Objectives and purposes of education at each level

(c) Curricular policy, content of education and teaching and learning strategies

In line with the new principles of curricular policy set out in the National Programme for the Development of Education in the CR (the so-called White Paper) and embedded in Act No. 561/2004 (the Education Act) a new system of curricular documents for the education of pupils from 3 to 19 years of age is gradually being introduced into the education system.

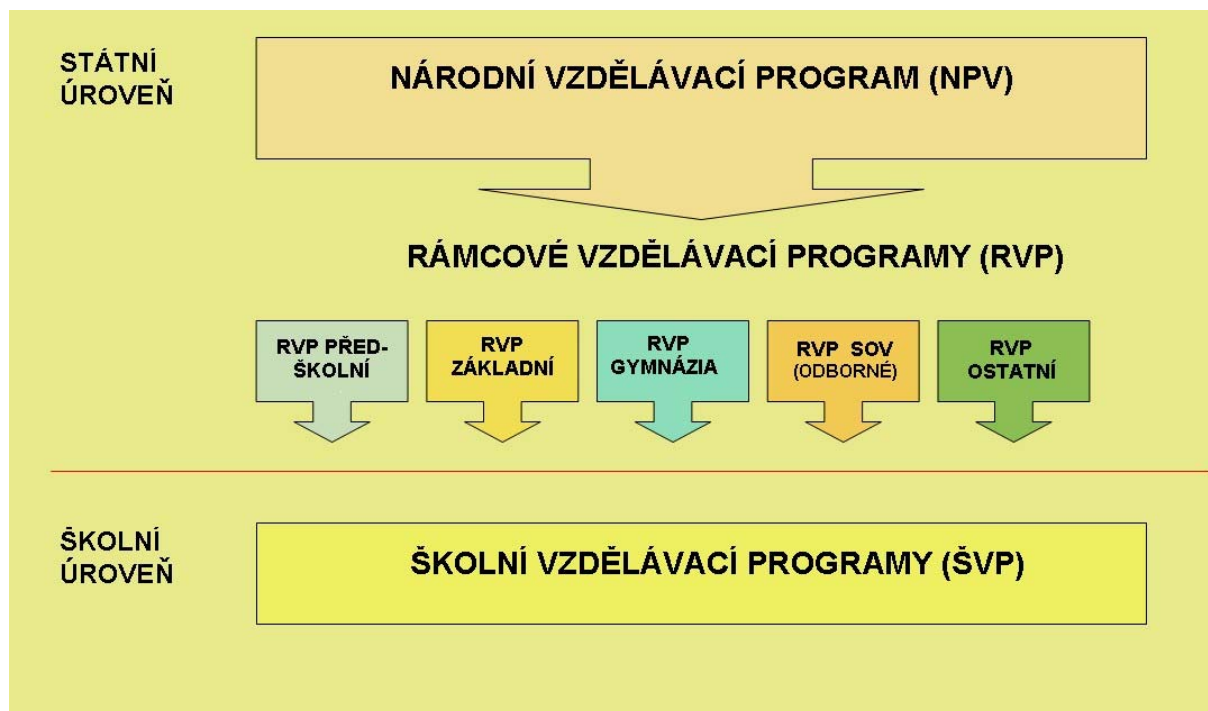
Curricular documents are developed at two levels – national and school level.

- The national level in the system of curricular documents is represented by framework education programmes (FEPs) that set out binding frameworks for education at various stages (for each field of preschool, basic and secondary education).
- The school level is represented by school education programmes (SEPs) that govern the education at individual schools. Each school develops its own school education programme according to the principles set out in the relevant framework education programme.

Framework education programmes:

- are based on the new educational strategy that emphasises key competencies, their links to the educational content and application of the knowledge and skills gained in practical life situations;
- are based on the concept of lifelong learning;
- set out the expected level of education defined for all those who complete various stages of education;
- support the pedagogical autonomy of schools and the professional responsibility of teachers for learning outcomes.

Framework and school education programmes are public documents accessible to the teaching and non-teaching public.



The system of curricular documents

Captions: FEP PE – Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education; FEP BE – Framework Education Programme for Basic Education; FEP SGE – Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education; FEP STVE – Framework Education Programme(s) for Secondary Technical and Vocational Education.

Other FEPs – framework education programmes that are set out in the Education Act in addition to those above – Framework Education Programme for Basic Art Education, Framework Education Programme for Language Education, and possibly other.

▪ Preschool education

Principal requirements of the state for preschool education are set out in the **Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education.**

The objective of institutional preschool education is to *complement upbringing in the family* and, in a closely cooperative manner, help to ensure for the child an environment with enough multi-faceted and appropriate *stimuli for his/her active development and learning*. Preschool education should provide meaningful *enrichment to the child's daily programme* during preschool years, and provide him/her with *professional care*. Another important objective of preschool education is to create sound *preconditions for the continuation of education* by means of providing *maximum support for developing the child's potential* in any circumstances, and, in this way, make it possible for each child to reach an optimal level of personal development and learning at the time of leaving nursery school (i.e. such a level that an individual child is able to achieve).

On the basis of long-term and daily contact with the child and his/her parents preschool education can also perform a *diagnostic task – particularly as regards children with special educational needs*. Preschool education should provide *early special pedagogical care* to children who need it (those with unbalanced development, physical disabilities and physical and social disadvantages) on the basis of the knowledge of the actual level of the child's development and development potential. In this way their chances in life and in education should be increased. Preschool education *takes account, to the maximum degree*

possible, of the developmental, physiological, cognitive, social and emotional needs of children of this age group. It makes sure that these developmental specificities are fully respected in their education. Education should be consequently linked to the *various individual needs and capacities of children*, including *specific* educational needs. Each child needs to be provided with assistance and support to an extent he/she needs and of the relevant standard. In this way the child can make optimal educational and developmental progress in view of his/her potential, and may feel successful and recognised and accepted by his/her environment.

This concept of education allows for the *inclusive education of children in one class regardless of their different capacities and study aptitudes*. It is therefore possible to form classes of children at a similar age, as well as those with children who have a wider age spread and different educational capacities and needs, including specific ones.

Institutions providing preschool education (or their teachers) should therefore observe the following *framework objectives* in their work: *child development, his/her learning and cognition, acquisition of basic values on which our society is built, personal independence and the capacity to function as an independent personality affecting his/her environment*.

▪ **Basic education**

The major requirements of the state concerning basic education are set out in the **Framework Education Programme for Basic Education** and the **Annex to the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education Specifying the Education of Pupils with Mild Mental Disabilities**.

Basic education is the continuation of preschool education and follows up education in the family. Basic education is the only stage of education that the whole population of pupils goes through on a compulsory basis. It is organized in two stages that are linked in terms of content and organization.

Basic education at Stage 1 is conceived so as to facilitate pupils' transition from preschool education and family care to compulsory, regular and systematic education patterns. It is based on learning things, while respecting and developing each individual pupil's needs, skills and interests (including pupils with special educational needs).

Basic education at Stage 2 helps pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and habits that will enable them to study independently and to create such values and attitudes as lead to prudent and cultivated behaviour, to responsible decision-making and to respect for the rights and obligations of other individuals. The scope and principle of Stage 2 basic education build on a wide development of pupils' interests, on pupils' higher-level learning potential and on the linkage between education and school life on the one hand, and out-of-school life on the other hand. This makes it possible to use rather demanding working methods as well as new sources and methods of learning, to assign the pupils comprehensive and long-term tasks or projects and entrust them with quite a lot of responsibility in learning as well as in organizing school life.

The following objectives, among others, are pursued in basic education:

- *to create preconditions for pupils to acquire basic learning strategies and motivate them for life-long learning*
- *to stimulate and encourage pupils to creative thinking, logical reasoning and problem solving*
- *to get pupils to engage in efficient, effective, open communication on all aspects of their life*
- *to develop pupils' abilities to cooperate and to value their own work and achievements as*

well as the work and achievements of others,

- *to guide pupils so that they should become free and responsible individuals who exercise their rights and meet their obligations*
- *to guide pupils to tolerance and consideration for other people, to a respect for their culture and spiritual values; to teach pupils to live together with others, etc.*

The following key competencies are stressed in basic education: *learning competencies; problem-solving competencies; communication competencies; social and personal competencies; civil competencies; working competencies.*

Upon successful completion of basic education the “basic education level” is achieved.

▪ **Secondary education**

Education at secondary grammar schools (“gymnázia”)

The basic requirements of the state for “gymnázia” education are set out in the **Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education and Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education with Sports Training.**

In view of the fact that the lower grades of six- and eight-year “gymnázia” provide basic education as part of compulsory school attendance, education at these grades is governed by the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education. The Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education therefore concerns education in four-year “gymnázia” and the upper grades of six- and eight-year “gymnázia”.

Education in four-year “gymnázia” and at upper grades of six- and eight-year “gymnázia” should equip students with key competencies and a level of general awareness corresponding to an upper secondary qualification. As a result they should be prepared, above all, for higher and other types of tertiary education, professional specialisation and for life in society. Students in four-year “gymnázia” and in upper grades of six- and eight-year “gymnázia” should acquire the following competencies within the scope determined by the framework education programme:

- *learning competencies*
- *problem-solving competencies*
- *communication competencies*
- *social and personal competencies*
- *civil competencies,*
- *entrepreneurial competencies.*

Secondary technical and vocational education:

The basic requirements of the state for technical and vocational education are set out in the **framework education programmes for individual fields of education that are included in the system of fields of secondary education.**

At present secondary technical and vocational education is also undergoing a sweeping curricular reform the essence of which is to **develop and put into practice newly designed framework education programmes for individual fields of education** (with a stress on overall competencies) that came into effect with the new Education Act (2005). School education programmes developed by individual schools will follow from the relevant framework education programmes.

The objective of this two-level development of education programmes is to facilitate a

more flexible shaping of graduate profiles in line with school conditions, regional needs, and the interests and capacities of students. **In parallel with the education programmes professional requirements are being formulated as part of the Integrated System of Typal Positions and the National Qualifications System.** These systems set out the requirements for various occupations and should also ensure comparability with the relevant requirements of the European Union.

Technical and vocational programmes at upper secondary level are provided by the following types of school:

- secondary technical schools
- secondary vocational schools
- conservatoires.

The task of developing framework education programmes has been entrusted to the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education. The work is relatively complex because a separate programme is prepared for each field of education. Moreover, the original 900 or so fields are being pruned to some 220 more broadly-conceived disciplines. Framework education programmes for technical and vocational schools are being developed gradually, and they are being approved in three stages – during the period from 2006 to 2009. They always come into effect as from 1 September of the relevant year. After this schools have two years in which to prepare their school education programmes.

The concept of key competencies forms a major part of framework education programmes in technical and vocational education. The requirements for the development of key competencies are also set out in framework education programmes for various types and levels of education.

The following key competencies have been defined to form part of framework education programmes for secondary technical and vocational education:

- *learning competencies*
- *problem-solving competencies*
- *communication competencies*
- *social and personal competencies*
- *civil competencies and cultural awareness*
- *job-seeking and entrepreneurial competencies*
- *mathematical applications*
- *ICT competencies and work with information.*

The following **levels of education** are achieved upon successful completion of the relevant education programme:

- **secondary education,**
- **secondary education with a vocational certificate,**
- **secondary education with “maturita” examination.**

The certificates of a final vocational examination and a “maturita” examination include a clause confirming acquisition of the relevant level of education.

▪ **Tertiary professional education**

This sector of the education system consists of tertiary professional schools providing education at ISCED 5B level. Some of these schools have recently acquired the status of non-university higher education institutions.

The objective of education at tertiary professional schools is to make it possible for students to acquire a professional qualification for the performance of demanding professional activities, or to enhance a vocational qualification achieved earlier.

Tertiary professional schools offer programmes lasting 3 to 3.5 years (two-year programmes are being phased out). Each school develops its own educational programme that must be approved by the MoEYS based on a statement of the Accreditation Commission for tertiary professional education. Practical training in a specific field forms a major component of this type of education during which students work on a paper or a project that is then evaluated jointly by the school and the relevant company or institution. Schools maintain close links with social partners in their regions and the business sector. Instruction consists of lectures and seminars, practical training, laboratory work and work placements.

Students who have achieved secondary education with “maturita” (normally older than 19) are eligible for admission. As part of admission proceedings the school director may decide whether an entrance examination will be held and what its content will be. Tertiary professional schools, including public ones, can collect tuition fees.

Studies are completed by a procedure called “absolutorium”. **Upon successful completion the graduate acquires tertiary professional education** and a title “Specialist with a Diploma” (an abbreviation DiS used at the end of the surname). Graduates of tertiary professional schools find employment in the labour market. They may further enhance their qualification by studying at higher education institutions.

▪ **Higher education**

University-type studies predominate in the tertiary education sector. Universities provide both general and professional education. They deliver accredited study programmes and lifelong learning programmes.

Bachelor study programmes are designed as preparation for an occupation and for further studies in Master study programmes. Bachelor studies last 3-4 years (ISCED 5B). Master study programmes focus on acquisition of theoretical knowledge in line with the current state of scientific knowledge, research and development, and on its application and the development of creative skills. In the arts area the programme aims at demanding artistic training and the development of talents. Master study programmes follow upon Bachelor programmes. The standard length of study is 1-3 years (ISCED 5A). Where the nature of the study programme so requires, accreditation may be granted to a Master programme that does not follow upon a Bachelor programme. In this case it lasts 4-6 years. A Doctoral study programme may be undertaken after completion of a Master degree. These programmes are focused on scientific research and independent creative work in research and development, or on independent theoretical and creative activities in the arts. The standard length of studies is 3 years (ISCED 6).

Admission to a higher education institution is conditional upon completion of secondary education with “maturita”, or “absolutorium” at a conservatoire. (Artistic disciplines may be an exception; however, a subsequent passing of “maturita” is a condition for the granting of a higher education diploma). Admission to Master programmes following upon Bachelor studies is conditional on the proper completion of these studies. For admission to a Doctoral programme the applicant must have completed a Master programme.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act the education of Czech nationals at public higher education institutions is free of charge with the exception of special fees (for procedures as part of the admission process, extension of studies beyond the standard length, etc.). Foreign students who come to study in the CR based on international agreements enjoy

the same conditions at Czech public HE institutions as Czech students.

Study programmes are developed and submitted for accreditation by the relevant higher education institution or by an institution that intends to deliver it jointly with the HE institution. The determining features are the type of programme (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral) and its form (full-time, distance or a combination of the two). The study programme is subject to accreditation granted by the Ministry of Education based on a statement by the Accreditation Commission that is established by the government.

Bachelor programmes are completed by a state final examination and the defence of a Bachelor thesis. Graduates are awarded the title of Bachelor (Bc.) or Bachelor of Arts (BcA). Master programmes are completed by a state final examination and the defence of a dissertation. Graduates of Master programmes acquire the title of Master (Mgr.), Master of Arts (MgA.), Engineer (Ing.), Engineer Architect (Ing.arch.), MUDr. and MVDr. Graduates holding the Master degree may also take a so-called “state rigorous examination” which includes the defence of a “rigorous paper”. After the examination is passed the following academic titles are awarded: JUDr. in law, PhDr. in humanities, pedagogical and social sciences, RNDr. in natural sciences, PharmDr. in pharmacy, etc. Studies in a Doctoral programme are completed by a state doctoral examination and the defence of a dissertation. Upon passing the examination the Ph.D. title is awarded.

d) the legal framework of education (particularly new regulations)

The legislation governing Czech education is based on the Constitution of the Czech Republic and on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Liberties, which was incorporated into the Czech constitutional system through a Resolution passed by the Czech National Council Presidium on December 16, 1992. In fact the basic legislative framework of the existing education system began to emerge even earlier, and it comprises several underlying acts and a number of ensuing decrees and government resolutions, i.e. delegated legislation.

A. The most extensive component of the schooling system (so-called “regional” education that includes educational institutions from basic to tertiary professional schools) is governed by several laws:

In 2004 the following major laws concerning education were enacted:

- **Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act)**
- **Act No. 562/2004 Coll. that amends certain laws in relation to the adoption of the Education Act**
- **Act No. 563/2004 Coll. (law on pedagogical staff).**

Initial education is subject to **Act No. 561/2004 on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act) which came into force on 1 January 2005**. This law stipulates conditions under which education is provided in schools and school facilities, defines the rights of individuals and legal entities in education, and sets out the responsibilities of bodies implementing state administration and self-administration in education.

Act No. 562/2004 Coll. that amends certain laws in relation to the adoption of the Education Act changed, among other things, the following laws: the **law on higher education institutions** (see below), the **law on state social support** – by specifying what is considered to be compulsory education and studies in general, and the **law on provision of subsidies to private schools, pre-school and school facilities** – by modifying the terminology. It affected other laws in that it brought them into line with the new perception of

legal institutes set out in the new Education Act.

Act No. 563/2004 Coll. on pedagogical staff and changes to certain laws newly defines the position of pedagogical staff and lays down preconditions for the performance of their activities, continuing education and a career system.

Act No. 306/1999 Coll. on provision of subsidies to private schools, pre-school and school facilities, as amended, remained in force (it was amended by Act No. 562/2004 Coll. for terminological reasons, not reasons to do with its content).

The area of protective and institutional education and preventive educational care is governed by a separate **Act No. 109/2002 Coll. on the management of institutional education and protective education in school facilities, and on preventive educational care in school facilities and changes to other laws**, as amended.

In 2007 another major law concerning education came into effect – **Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on verification and recognition of the outcomes of continuing education and changes to other laws**. This law makes it possible for any individual to acquire or enhance a level of education or qualification, to adapt to economic and social changes and to verify or confirm the knowledge and skills acquired during non-formal education or informal learning.

None of the aforementioned laws contains any provisions that could be perceived as discriminatory in terms of the intention to ensure equal access to education, equality of all persons in education and inclusion in education. This follows, among other things, from the **legal foundations on which the laws mentioned above are built:**

A **general ban against discrimination** in the Czech Republic is set out in Resolution No. 2/1993 of the Czech National Council Presidium of 16 December 1992 that declares the **Charter of Fundamental Rights and Liberties** to be incorporated into the Czech constitutional system. Article 3 ensures fundamental rights and freedoms for “*all regardless of sex, race, colour of skin, language, belief and religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, belonging to a national or ethnic minority, property, kin or other position*”.

Protection from discrimination is also laid down in **international agreements** that are binding upon the Czech Republic. These include, for example, the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

The ban on discrimination is, for the same reasons, also set out in the revised European Social Charter (ETS 163). The **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (ETS 157) prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of belonging to a national minority.

The International Labour Organisation adopted **Convention No. 111 on Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation**. The Convention prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, colour of skin, sex, religion, political views, national or social origin in employment or occupation, which also includes access to vocational training.

In 2007-2008 the **law on equal treatment and protection from discrimination** was drawn up and presented for legislative debate. The main objective is to complement the legal system of the Czech Republic so as to bring it into line with EC legal requirements where this is not yet the case. Moreover, the law should set out legal instruments for protection from discrimination.

The Education Act and the Act on Pedagogical Staff

➤ The Education Act

Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (the Education Act) is in line with the constitutional system of the Czech Republic, particularly with the Constitution of the Czech Republic and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Liberties. Moreover, it is in line with the commitments of the Czech Republic resulting from international agreements by which the Czech Republic is bound, as well as other “soft law” regulations of the European Union that reflect the EU’s pivotal objectives and requirements as regards the education systems of its member countries.

The law sets out the general objectives of education. Emphasis is placed on equality of educational opportunities for all and elimination of barriers to such equality, on respect for educational needs of individuals in education, and on the adoption of measures against all manifestations of discrimination and intolerance. Moreover, stress is placed on the prohibition of discrimination, particularly as regards access to education, which is in line with Article 2, par.1 a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is also in conformity with the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning incorporation of the ban on discrimination into all relevant legal regulations that relate to children.

The Education Act ensures *equal access to education for all people regardless of sex*. Equal access to education for all and respect for the individual needs of learners is declared in the initial general provisions of the Act and pervades its entire wording.

As regards the *education of pupils with special educational needs, emphasis is placed primarily on exercising their right to education by means of employing specific approaches and methods and on establishing special conditions that facilitate this education.*

Distinction is made between the special educational needs of pupils with physical disabilities, those with physical disadvantages and social disadvantages. A major change in this respect is that the law supports *links between special schools and mainstream schools and strongly encourages the trend towards integration of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools*. Education programmes may be adapted to meet the needs of these pupils. The law also reckons with support measures for the benefit of these pupils – e.g. teacher assistants. The law also retains the possibility of establishing, in justified cases, schools or classrooms for pupils with physical disabilities.

The law contains *special provisions concerning the education of national minorities*, the teaching of religion, **the education of pupils with special educational needs and gifted children.**

The law respects international commitments of the Czech Republic concerning protection of the rights of members of national minorities. Following up on Act No. 273/2001 Coll. on the rights of members of national minorities and changes to other laws, it *establishes conditions for minority education. Moreover, it lays down new conditions for religious education at public schools.*

The law does not contain any provision that could be interpreted as discriminatory, nor does it contain any provision violating equal opportunities.

The Education Act was developed *in the broader perspective of lifelong learning* in that it has opened up room for smooth transfers between “initial” and “lifelong” education (e.g. the system for recognition of education achieved outside the formal education system, the opportunity for undergoing shortened courses, continuing education instruments – a modular structure of learning, specialisation courses, subject-focused courses, etc.). The law has also made it possible to accept the learning outcomes of other than formal education.

In line with European trends the law responds to a number of problems that must be addressed in relation to lifelong learning. For example, the law

- establishes the necessary foundation for lifelong learning,
- places emphasis on key competencies that are set out in framework education programmes and other documents,
- strengthens the impact of social partners and their participation in both designing the content of education and in the process of its completion,
- introduces a system for recognition of prior education resulting in various advantages for the learners – e.g. they do not have to attend certain classes, etc.
- introduces the possibility of running vocational, subject-focused, other coherent courses or “post-maturita” specialisation courses at schools (retraining will continue to take place outside the system of fields of education pursuant to other legal regulations),
- introduces the possibility of organising shortened courses leading to acquisition of secondary education with a vocational certificate ,
- introduces the possibility of organising shortened courses leading to acquisition of secondary education with “maturita” ,
- facilitates the development of modular programmes.

The education system as enacted by the Education Act ensures a sufficient degree of **horizontal and vertical “permeability”**. For example, the pupil may

- change the field of education in the course of studies,
- be admitted to a higher year,
- undertake additional studies in a different field at a secondary or tertiary professional school to complement his/her education,
- return to the same (or a different) programme after interrupting studies,
- study several programmes at several schools in a chosen mode,
- have previous education recognised.

Furthermore, the new Education Act takes account of *the key priorities of the European Union – e.g. the principles concerning comparability and recognition of diplomas and certificates* in relation to the free movement of EU citizens, respect for human rights and elimination of discrimination against individuals and minorities, influencing further development of the system of vocational education and training as an instrument for workforce mobility, for enhancing employability, formulating plans for human resources development and linking them to regional labour market requirements.

A major change brought about by the new Education Act is the *commencement of extensive curricular reform*, mainly by introducing a new, two-level system of curricular documents for the education of pupils from kindergartens to secondary schools (education in tertiary professional schools is provided in line with *education programmes accredited for each discipline and school by the Ministry of Education* based on a recommendation of the Accreditation Commission for Tertiary Professional Education).

Moreover, the law ensures the right of the child to be *admitted to preschool education that is free of charge* in the final year before the beginning of compulsory education.

Major changes occurred in secondary education. *Levels of education* were newly defined (*secondary education, secondary education with a vocational certificate and secondary education with “maturita” examination*). The fundamental systemic change consists in a *new concept of the “maturita” examination where the dominant new feature is*

a so-called “common” part of “maturita” designed by the state. The law also strengthens, more than previously, the **role of social partners** (representatives of employees, employers and professional associations), particularly by means of their participation in examination panels in the process of completing secondary and tertiary professional education (this participation is obligatory in the case of final examinations in secondary vocational programmes).

The law introduced several new instruments that aim at **increasing opportunities for staying the course through the education system**:

- **strengthening the role of follow-up studies** and increasing their quality,
- introducing **shortened studies** leading to the acquisition of a vocational certificate and secondary education with “maturita” (providing a second chance for those who completed secondary education with “maturita” and face difficulties finding employment),
- **recognition of prior education** (including non-formal education) which is in line with European recommendations (so-called Europass); recognition of prior education can, for example, facilitate admission to higher years,
- the possibility of **acquiring a level of education without previous studies at a secondary or tertiary professional school.**

Since 2005 the Education Act has been amended several times.

➤ **The Act on Pedagogical Staff**

sets out a new definition of pedagogical staff, requirements for performing pedagogical work, ways of achieving professional qualifications in pedagogy, conditions for performing the function of director of a school and school facility, and the system for the continuing training of pedagogical staff and their career development. The new law aimed, above all, to determine statutory qualification requirements, to strengthen the professional prestige of teachers in society, to provide stimuli for their personal development and, in this way, to improve the quality of the educational process.

The law observes the following **main principles**:

- to contribute to enhancing the quality of the educational process,
- to increase the prestige of the teaching profession,
- to ensure remuneration for specific pedagogical activities,
- to even up the pay of teachers at basic schools with that of teachers at secondary and tertiary professional schools,
- to develop a career system, and to define requirements for the performance of pedagogical activities,
- to motivate pedagogical staff to undergo continuing education,
- to support managerial staff at schools in improving their qualifications,
- to set up stable bodies of pedagogical staff.

Special education teachers, psychologists, teachers in out-of-school subjects, assistant teachers and others enjoy, as from 1 January 2006, the status of pedagogical staff.

B. Higher education institutions are subject to **Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on higher education institutions and changes to other laws (the Higher Education Act) as amended.**

Act No. 111/1998 Coll. was amended in the period under review, the most important amendment being Act No. 562/2004 Coll. (allowing for the establishment of different conditions for the admission of applicants who have completed a study programme or a part of one, or who are studying another programme, at a higher education institution in the Czech Republic or abroad, and for admission of graduates of accredited education programmes or parts of programmes at tertiary professional schools). Another major amendment is Act No. 552/2005 Coll. that enacted, in particular:

- a change in the rules governing the election of members of academic senates at public HE institutions and their faculties,
- specification of provisions concerning the validity of the mandate of student member of an academic senate,
- a more specific definition of disciplinary transgression on the part of a student,
- new rules for financial management of HE institutions (*particularly the introduction of a new grant for the delivery of accredited study programmes and lifelong learning programmes and the related scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activities. Public HE institutions receive this grant from the state budget along with the existing subsidy. Unlike the subsidy, the purpose of which is to support institutional development, what is left of the grant can be carried forward into the following year.*)
- Extension of the length of doctoral study programmes to three (four) years,
- Extension of the period of study programme accreditation up to a maximum of 10 years for all programmes (up to now this has only concerned doctoral programmes, with other programmes the maximum length was double their standard length),
- Introduction of a fee for the “state rigorous examination” at public higher education institutions,
- Extending the decision-making powers of the academic senate of a public HE institution to cover the establishment and closure of common operational units at this HE institution, etc.
- New provisions concerning the acquisition of a diploma supplement (*In September 2003 a Conference of Ministers responsible for higher education was held in Berlin. The ministers adopted a Communication on 19 September 2003. As regards recognition of qualifications the Communication sets out the objective that, from 2005, each student completing studies receives a diploma supplement automatically and free of charge in a language commonly used in Europe. Before the amendment was passed HE institutions, in line with the Higher Education Act, only issued diploma supplements at students’ request.*)

As regards changes to the financial management of public higher education institutions, the Czech Republic took part in the OECD project “Review of Tertiary Education Systems”. An analysis of the current situation contained in the Country Background Report” and comments of OECD experts contained in the “Country Note” have resulted in the conclusion that it is appropriate to develop a new law on tertiary education (at present tertiary education is subject to two laws – the Higher Education Act that concerns higher education institutions

providing Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programmes (ISCED 5A and ISCED 6), and the Education Act, one part of which concerns tertiary professional schools providing advanced professional education at ISCED 5B level).

Currently a *White Paper on Tertiary Education* is under development and should be completed by the end of 2008.

The objective of all changes that are being proposed is to develop a system of tertiary education the structure of which (both in institutional and programme terms) will

- make it possible for tertiary institutions and universities to provide, in line with their mission, top quality education. In this way they should contribute to the increasing traditional prestige of our country as a European education centre;
- further increase the autonomy of tertiary institutions and responsibility for own development;
- ensure access to studies for all those interested, and make a major contribution in terms of elimination of social and other barriers in access to tertiary education;
- strengthen the responsibility of institutions (providers) and students (clients) for the quality of instruction and learning;
- fulfil the expectations of employers and the needs of society as regards the quality and quantity of human resources (including all forms of lifelong learning);
- contribute to the generation of new knowledge and increasing the innovative potential of the economy by means of research and development;
- facilitate the development of necessary cultural and social functions of tertiary education.

The necessary condition for meeting the aforementioned objectives is not only to set all parameters of the system, but also to ensure its openness and diversification. The system will consist of various types of institution with varying aspirations, visions and objectives. Each individual institution will employ various ways of meeting three fundamental roles – education, research and development, and a so-called “third” role (i.e. service to society in general terms). Each tertiary institution will perform these roles to an appropriate degree and at an appropriate quality level, and evaluation and control mechanisms will be implemented at all levels.

e) the objectives and major features of ongoing and upcoming reforms

The most important strategic document, which takes account of the current development trends and priorities in the national and European context, is the **Long-Term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System of the Czech Republic (2007)**. The Long-Term Plan follows upon the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic (the so-called White Paper) which provides reasons for necessary changes, lays down education policy objectives and the long-term focus in further development. The Long-Term Plan is one of the important instruments for shaping the education system, and its updated version of 2007 places emphasis on implementation of the new school legislation adopted in 2004-2006. It sets out plans, objectives and criteria in relation to education policy along with accompanying conceptual, methodological and financial support as part of development programmes. Moreover, it determines the framework for the long-term plans of regions and brings their approaches, particularly as regards secondary schooling, more into line with one another.

The Long-Term Plan of 2007 sets out the following *major strategic aims*:

- **equal opportunities in education**
- **curricular reform – the instrument to modernise education while stressing the development of key competencies**
- **support for foreign languages and information and communication technologies**
- **development and implementation of quality systems, methods of evaluation and self-evaluation of schools and school facilities**
- **increasing the professional standards of pedagogical staff and improving their working conditions**
- **support for continuing education.**

- **Curricular reform**

Changes to curricular policy are laid down in Act No. 561/2004 (the Education Act). The Education Act opened up space for further transformation of the education system and the objective and content of education (curricula). It introduced a new system of education programmes and made it possible for schools to develop their own school education programmes. Education reform is not only about a different approach to developing and approving curricular documents. Curricular reform is primarily about changes in education priorities: there should be more attention paid to pupils' personal development and acquisition of key competencies, their preparation for a meaningful life, increasing their employability and chances of succeeding in both the labour market and social life, and preparation for lifelong learning. The objective of the curricular reform is to ensure that schools prepare their school education programmes based on the relevant framework education programme. School programmes should respond to the conditions of each particular school, its educational needs and the aptitudes of its pupils, as well as specific regional labour market needs.

The main objectives of the curricular reform include preparation of pupils for work and life in society in the 21st century, their readiness to respond to new and changing requirements for individuals and citizens and workforce, modernisation and higher quality of education, the use of teaching methods and approaches that facilitate the development of desired competencies, increasing pupils' employability, support for lifelong learning, greater autonomy of schools and better transparency of education.

The Education Act introduces a two-level system of developing curricula for initial education. So-called framework education programmes (FEPs) are developed at national (central) level. They represent a shift towards curricula based on competencies and set out, apart from the content of education, the desired competencies of graduates. FEPs form a foundation for the development of school education programmes. Framework education programmes are approved by the MoEYS in agreement with the relevant ministries, trade unions and representatives of employer organisations. The development of school education programmes is fully the responsibility of school directors.

The task of modernising the **curricula for preschool, basic and secondary general (gymnázia) education** was entrusted, by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, to the Research Institute of Education in Prague. All the relevant framework programmes have already been published.

The task of modernising the **curricula for technical and vocational education** was entrusted to the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education in Prague. Schools and social partners are also involved in the development of framework education programmes for technical and vocational education. The plan is that they should be completed by 2009.

FEPs for technical and vocational education set out three types of competence: civil, key and vocational competencies. Vocational competencies are defined based on qualification requirements for an occupation or a group of related occupations that are formulated by industry. Graduates' vocational competencies are derived from professional profiles set out in the system of occupations that fall within the purview of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Moreover, key competencies play a major role in FEPs. They involve communication skills, work with information, teamwork, problem-solving and the development of learning skills. They are conceived as transferable competencies that every individual needs in both personal life and employment. Schools will develop their education programmes in accordance with FEPs.

- **Reform of the system of fields of education**

The development of framework education programmes is closely linked to the reform of the system of fields of education, since an FEP is designed for each field of education. The intention is to ensure closer links between the programmes, the labour market and the National Qualifications System that is under development. The system of fields of education is embedded in a government regulation which is an implementation document attached to the Education Act.

- **The development and implementation of quality systems, and methods of evaluation and self-evaluation of schools and school facilities**

Assurance of the quality of education in schools and school facilities is one of the major tasks of all founding bodies and directors of schools and school facilities. In recent years there have been noticeable efforts in the Czech education system to develop instruments for testing the quality of education both at national and regional levels. Generally, we may say that a number of useful evaluation and self-evaluation instruments have been developed at various levels of governance. However, they do not form a coherent system.

In the following years these efforts should be effectively co-ordinated so that schools, in particular, are provided with appropriate instruments for monitoring and evaluation of their operations, and, at the same time, an effective system can come into being. Regions (and municipalities) will still have the possibility of developing their own instruments for evaluation of the quality of education that will complement the products and programmes offered by the state in line with the policies of the Czech School Inspectorate and national evaluation schemes.

- **Reform of completion of upper secondary education**

The “maturita” examination is undergoing a major reform. **A common part of “maturita” is being introduced as a new component of the examination (prepared and organised by the state) and the so-called “profile” component (assigned by the school) is to be changed.** In order to pass the “maturita” examination and achieve secondary education with “maturita” the pupil must succeed in both parts of the exam.

The new “maturita” examination aims, by means of the common part guaranteed by the state, to ensure basic standards of school leavers' knowledge in general subjects. The quality of the examination will be higher, its evaluation will be more objective and comparability of the results of various schools will be achieved.

The “maturita” amendment to the Education Act was presented to the government of the CR and Parliament and entered into force upon its publication in the Legal Code in July

2008. Some of its provisions will become effective on 1 September 2009.

There are two levels of difficulty in the common part of “maturita” (assigned by the state): **basic** and **advanced** (it is at the pupil’s discretion which one he/she chooses).

- The examination at the **basic level of difficulty** aims at the minimum level of knowledge and skills set by the state for each secondary school leaver regardless of the type of school and field of study.
- The examination at an **advanced level of difficulty** is based on the existing level of knowledge and skills that is necessary to continue studying at a higher education institution (or tertiary professional school).
- The level of difficulty of foreign language examinations relates to the international classification of language skills (CEFR) so that the basic level corresponds to B1 level and the advanced level to B2 level of this classification.

The “profile” part of the “maturita” examination (assigned by the school) will consist of 2-3 compulsory examinations. Pupils will successfully pass the “profile” component only if they succeed in all compulsory examinations. Decisions about the procedures and topics for the examination are the responsibility of each school director.

The preparation for the new “maturita” includes various programmes, for example a programme called “Maturita Tryout”, involving the continuing training of pedagogical staff. Pupils at all secondary schools with “maturita” years can take the exam on a voluntary basis. The programme “Maturita Tryout 2005 and 2006” was also intended for pupils with special educational needs for whom, until then, preparatory programmes entitled “Maturita without a Handicap” had been run separately. A total of 2,770 members of pedagogical staff were trained as part of the programme in 2006.

In March 2008 the MoEYS approved catalogues containing requirements for the common part of “maturita” in 2010.

The new concept of the final examination

should ensure a higher level of comparability of results, increase the prestige of graduates of vocational programmes (i.e. those who completed 2-3-year courses at secondary level and acquired secondary education with a vocational certificate) and enhance their employability. The final examination is based on a uniform (common) assignment prepared by an expert team for each field of education. The team consists of representatives of schools, employers and experts in education. The development of new final examinations for vocational programmes is the subject of a systemic project called KVALITA I that is supported from the ESF and run by the Ministry of Education.

The uniform assignment should, as with “maturita”, increase the quality and prestige of the final examination and comparability of results.

- **Evaluation of education**

The new concept of education - where emphasis is placed on the individual needs, interests and capabilities of pupils, the development of their individual potential, more diversity in education corresponding to the external environment, differentiated conditions for schools and a high level of their autonomy in choosing the approaches to and methods of instruction, timetable and, to a degree, also the content – must be balanced by a systematic monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes achieved. The key requirement therefore is to *develop a comprehensive system of evaluation*. It should consist in the introduction of

objective evaluation instruments, expansion of *external evaluation* (by the Czech School Inspectorate), and implementation of *self-evaluation* which is a precondition for improving the quality of the work of schools and their results (and precedes the development of a school-based education programme).

The purpose of developing such a system for evaluation is to check retrospectively on the gradual implementation of curricular reform with the aim of increasing the quality, relevance and effectiveness of education so that each individual can develop his/her potential to the highest possible level and prepare for life in society.

The outcomes of education must be evaluated not only in terms of compliance with the relevant education programme – they must be constantly confronted with the needs and expectations of the main players and partners in education (pupils and their parents, founding bodies, employers, etc.) and, also with criteria going beyond education.

The body that will play a major part in evaluation is the Centre for Identification of Educational Outcomes. It was set up as an organisational unit of the state as from 1 January 2006 by Act No. 561/2004. The Centre will develop, above all, standards for evaluation of educational outcomes and instruments for objective evaluation of these outcomes and procedures for their application.

- **Other systemic projects**

In 2005 work began on establishing qualification standards as one of the instruments for recognition of qualifications and for facilitating links between initial and continuing technical and vocational education. This work is part of a systemic project entitled the Development of a National Qualifications System (NQS).

The objective of the project is to establish links between initial and continuing education by means of developing a database that will define qualifications, describe links between them and determine qualification and evaluation standards. The project is mentioned in the Long-Term Plan for the CR 2005 under the heading *Qualifications – Development of a National Qualifications System Supporting Links Between Initial and Continuing Education*.

The Ministry of Education together with its partners will design systemic foundations for the immediate and future development of the National Qualifications System. The National Qualifications System will draw on the National System of Occupations established within the remit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The main building blocks of the National Qualifications System consist of full and partial qualifications and standards (agreed and structured descriptions of qualifications and ways of verifying that an individual has acquired the relevant professional competencies). The National Qualifications System defines partial qualification levels and the corresponding professional competencies. Moreover, it defines indicators of professional competencies and introduces a system for evaluating them (including the possibility of credit transfer at secondary school level). The NQS presents links between full qualifications (initial technical and vocational qualifications linked to a particular level of education) and partial qualifications (that do not lead to the acquisition of a particular level of education but can be recognised while an individual pursues a full qualification). Partial qualifications are proposed so as to have a practical relevance in the labour market (not only in continuing education), and to guarantee that one has acquired professional competencies necessary to perform a coherent set of professional activities that is based on descriptions in the Integrated System of Typical Positions.

The National Qualifications System is currently being supplied with qualification and evaluation standards for partial qualifications at ISCED 3C. In May 2008 a total of 347 partial

qualifications were entered in the system of which 61 were officially approved as of that date. Employers are involved in the process.

In August 2005 a project entitled “*Projekt UNIV*“ was launched (Recognition of the Results of Non-Formal Education and Informal Learning in a Network of Schools Providing Adult Education Services). The general objective of the project is to support the development of continuing education provided by secondary and tertiary professional schools. The main output will consist in a network of schools providing adult education in six regions that are involved in the project. Moreover, a total of 132 continuing education programmes will be developed that meet both the needs of the labour market and the needs of the education sector (primarily extracurricular educational activities). This approach fits the concept of lifelong learning. The recognition mechanism facilitates verification and evaluation of competencies, knowledge and skills acquired not only in various courses but also through work and life experience. They can then be used to achieve a formal certificate. In this area the UNIV project runs in close co-operation with the National Qualifications System project. At the end of 2007 the first applicants obtained certificates validating successful passing of an examination in line with an approved evaluation standard for a partial qualification. The National Qualifications System thus came to life.

1.2 Major Policies, Outcomes and Lessons Learnt

- (a) *access to education (emphasis is placed on steps focusing on children, young people and adults who are currently excluded from education)*
- (b) *early intervention in childhood (as a means of supporting child development, transfer to primary education and learning)*
- (c) *educational outcomes, particularly efforts aimed at their improvement (How do students perform at various levels?) and elimination of inequalities (How are inequalities in educational outcomes reduced?)*
- (d) *the initial training of teachers, their recruitment, placement, working conditions and continuing professional development*

Despite major steps towards enforcing equal access to education, which have already been taken in the Czech Republic, there are still inequalities to be found. First of all, there are inequalities resulting from a social status. Additionally, there are other disadvantaged groups of the population to whom attention must be paid in the context of providing educational opportunities and establishing conditions for the implementation of their education.

➤ *People with special educational needs and their access to education*

The groups of children and young people who have special educational needs are defined in the Education Act as follows:

- **people with disabilities** – i.e. mental, physical, visual or auditory disability, language deficiency concurrent with more deficiencies, autism and development deficiency in learning or behaviour;
- **people with health-related disadvantages** as a result of weak health, long-term illness or a

mild physical disorder leading to learning or behavioural disorders that need to be taken account of in education;

- **people with social disadvantages**; a family environment with a low social and cultural status, threat of pathological social disorders; institutional education ordered or protective education imposed, or the status of asylum seeker, a person enjoying supplementary protection, or a party to proceedings for granting international protection in the Czech Republic under a special legal regulation.

The objective of the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs is to:

- ensure that they fully develop their potential,
- support their overall development,
- make it possible for them to make progress towards achieving their personal goals – be it goals related to knowledge or those concerning life skills,

while applying special approaches, forms and methods of work.

Children, pupils or students with **special educational needs are entitled to education the content, form and methods of which correspond to their educational needs and capacities, and to the creation of necessary conditions that make such education possible**. As distinct from the legislation valid until 1 January 2005 (Act No. 29/1984 Coll.) the new Education Act does not contain a separate chapter on special education. **Integration into mainstream education is preferred** when pupils with special educational needs are placed in schools.

The **accessibility and structure of the educational provision** for children, pupils and students with special educational needs is the responsibility of the relevant regional authority. The relevant policy is set out in the regional long-term plan that defines the main objectives and tasks for various areas of education, the structure of fields of education and types of school, school facilities and educational services. The long-term plan also contains a proposal for the funding of education with a view to ensuring educational opportunities for the entire range of pupils in the region with regard to demographic developments, topical needs in education and the labour market situation.

Guidance

Guidance plays a major role in the care of children, pupils and students who, for whatever reason, might be impeded in their access to education.

Guidance includes services focused on supporting the education and career choice of children, pupils and students (hereinafter referred to as “pupils”). These services are provided to pupils, their legal guardians and pedagogical staff.

The methodological and theoretical base for guidance is represented by the Institute for Pedagogical and Psychological Guidance of the CR, which also plays a co-ordinating role, and by departments of psychology and special education at higher education institutions. Information and direct services related to career guidance are also provided by the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education.

The identification and exact diagnosis of special educational needs of children, pupils and students with disabilities and health-related and social disadvantages are the responsibility of **school guidance facilities** (pedagogical-psychological guidance centres and special education

centres). Pupils with disabilities for whom a school guidance facility proposes that they be educated in line with modified education programmes are also required to present a **recommendation** by a physician so that appropriate conditions for their education can be established.

Guidance services are provided by schools, school guidance facilities (pedagogical-psychological guidance centres and special education centres), and, in specific cases, by diagnostic institutes and educational care centres (however, these are not guidance facilities pursuant to the relevant decree and normally do not provide vocational guidance).

Guidance in schools is focused, among other things, on prevention of school failure, primary prevention of pathological social disorders and career guidance integrating educational, information and guidance support in the choice of an educational path and future professional career. Moreover, it involves professional assistance concerned with the integration and education of pupils with special educational needs (including pupils from various socio-cultural backgrounds and socially disadvantaged pupils) and methodological support for teachers in applying their knowledge and skills in psychology and special education in the operations of the school.

Pedagogical-psychological guidance centres are school guidance facilities established by regions or other legal entities or individuals (denominational and private guidance centres). There is at least one such centre in each district. Guidance centres ensure that pupils are ready, in educational and psychological terms, for compulsory education and carry out examinations of psychological and special educational needs of pupils being placed in schools. Moreover, they identify special educational needs of pupils attending school, provide guidance services to pupils facing a risk of school failure or a risk of unfavourable personal or social development, etc.

In the area of career/vocational guidance the centres co-operate with labour offices.

In 2004 the Czech Republic joined the process of standardisation of pedagogical-psychological guidance services and psychology as a profession within the EU – through the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations.

Special education centres are set up predominantly at schools in order to educate pupils with disabilities. Their objective is to provide guidance services, support and professional assistance to disabled pupils' legal guardians and teachers in the process of their educational and social integration. In the period under review there were some 90 such centres operating in the CR.

➤ **Socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and access to education**

The Education Act describes **people with social disadvantages** as one of the subcategory of pupils with special educational needs.

The Act considers the following to constitute a social disadvantage:

- **a family environment with a low social and cultural status,**
- **threat of pathological social disorders, institutional education ordered or protective education imposed,**
- **the status of asylum seeker, a person enjoying supplementary protection, or a party to proceedings for granting international protection in the Czech Republic under a special legal regulation.**

Social barriers in access to education appear, to a varying degree, at various levels of

education. Some of the problems are mentioned below:

✓ **Preschool education** should, apart from the objectives set by law (*to support the development of the child's personality, to contribute to his/her healthy emotional, mental and physical development and acquisition of basic rules of conduct, life values and interpersonal relationships*), also help balance inequalities in the development of children before they enter basic education. Preschool education should provide special education to children with special educational needs, to complement education in the family and, in close co-operation with the family, to help create an environment for the child that contains sufficient and appropriate stimuli for his/her active development and learning. Preschool education is also responsible for **diagnostics – particularly as regards children with special educational needs**. The Education Act stipulates that municipalities that are the founding bodies of kindergartens are obliged to ensure placement in a kindergarten for children one year before commencing compulsory education. The director of a kindergarten is obliged to admit such children on a preferential basis. These children – together with those whose compulsory education has been postponed, are placed in the final year of kindergarten. Education in this year is free of charge. This measure results from **the efforts to even up possible differences in the socio-cultural development of children. It introduces the right to placement in a preschool facility, not an obligation to attend it.**

Families pay a contribution for preschool education (the operation of kindergartens) the level of which is determined by the municipality as a founding body. **The level of this contribution may constitute an obstacle for some families – for example lone or unemployed parents, which is the case of some Roma families.** However, in these cases the municipality is authorised to exempt the payers from the obligation to pay the contribution either in full or in part.

✓ **The implications of social disadvantages** may be identified as late as during **enrolment in basic school** when the child may be diagnosed as insufficiently mature to enter compulsory education. If the teachers who are present during the enrolment procedure establish that the child is not mature enough for school, the parents may apply to the school director for a postponement of compulsory education, provided that their request is backed up by a recommendation to this effect written by a school guidance facility. The parents are normally recommended that their child should attend a **preparatory class** during the period before entering basic school. In order to prevent a situation where inappropriate school maturity is ascertained too late, measures have been adopted to further increase the rate of participation of children in preschool education (which is already very high).

In order to prevent difficulties in the education of children so-called **preparatory classes for children from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds** were introduced in 2001. They may only be set up at basic schools and the number of children in such a class is at least 7 and at most 15. Preparatory classes are designed for children whose compulsory education has been postponed, and, exceptionally, five-year-old children. The provision consists of the development of intellectual skills (language and communication, mathematics and cognitive skills), music, fine arts, manual skills and physical education along with the development of cultural, social and hygiene habits.

✓ The Education Act stipulates that **school attendance is compulsory for a period of nine school years** and pupils implement it in a basic school established by the municipality or an association of municipalities in the catchment area where they have a permanent residence. The pupils' legal guardian may choose a different school for his/her child that is outside the catchment area. However, the director of the school is obliged to admit preferentially those

pupils who have a permanent residency in the relevant catchment area. Therefore no child living permanently in the relevant area can be denied admission to the “catchment” school if the parents register him/her. Unlike in other countries *there is no social selectiveness related to the place of residence* at the level of **basic school**. The reason is that a mixed settlement in social term continues to predominate, and therefore the quality of school is not determined geographically (e.g. in terms of its location in either a “good” or “bad” neighbourhood). Schools do fall into catchment areas, but parents have a statutory right to a free choice of school for their child.

✓ One problem that occurs particularly at the second stage (lower secondary) of basic school is that intellectually more capable pupils may leave for six- and eight-year programmes at **secondary schools** (i.e. six- and eight year grammar schools called “gymnázia” and eight-year conservatoires). The departure of these pupils has a negative effect on the atmosphere at the basic school in social and instructional terms. The choice of a six- or eight-year is, of course, a decision taken based on study achievements, but it is closely linked to the family social status. It has been confirmed that the educational path of a child depends very much on the *type of family background* and on *the level of education achieved by parents* in particular. This situation is conducive to self-reproduction of traditionally educated strata of the population and hampers inter-generational (and therefore also social) educational mobility. There is a relatively high level of inequality resulting from social status in secondary and higher levels of education.

✓ There are further concerns at the **level of higher education**, particularly as regards the plans to introduce tuition fees at HE institutions (as a result of pressures to increase the level of cost-sharing). Social support during higher education studies *in the event that the student is in a difficult social situation* is set down by legal regulations, namely:

- *Government Regulation No. 122 of 1 March 2006 stipulating a minimum level of scholarship in the case of a difficult social situation of a student*. The scholarship granted in the event of a difficult social situation faced by a student is set as double the amount of the increased monthly child allowance pursuant to Act No. 117/1995 Coll. on state social support, as amended. The increased child allowance is currently 810 CZK per month, and therefore the scholarship awarded by a HE institution in line with its scholarship regulations for ten months of the academic year is at least 1620,- CZK per month. Social support in the event of a difficult social situation of a student facilitates inclusion of people from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds (foreigners – asylum seekers, the poor, members of the Roma community and other national minorities).

- *The regulations of the MoEYS (Ref. No. 4632/2006-30) concerning the provision of grants and subsidies to public higher education institutions by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports pursuant to Act No. 111/1998 on higher education institutions and changes to other laws (the Higher Education Act, as amended)*. These regulations set down another type of scholarship – an accommodation scholarship, and a subsidy for meals in the students’ canteen. The accommodation scholarship was introduced on 1 October 2005 with the consent of the Czech Conference of Rectors and the Council of Higher Education Institutions, and incorporated into scholarship regulations of HE institutions. Scholarship regulations are subject to approval by the Academic Senate one third of which is composed of students. The granting of the accommodation scholarship is conditional upon the student’s being enrolled in a full-time Bachelor, Master or Doctoral study programme, not exceeding the standard length of studies and not residing in the district where he/she studies (or in Prague).

Subsidies for student meals pursuant to the Regulations are provided to HE institutions to encourage students to have meals in students' canteens.

The aforementioned legal regulations take account of the student's social situation without any racial discrimination.

Children, pupils and students from the Roma community

The Roma are viewed as the group most at risk of exclusion from education. Their ethnic difference coupled with the negative effects of life in socially excluded communities is in some cases further intensified by prejudices and stereotypes that are rooted in our society. ***However, the Roma community is constantly receiving increased attention.*** Specific measures are set out in the MoEYS Programme of Support for Integration of the Roma Community (2005, 2006, 2007). As part of the scheme various themes are announced the implementation of which is supported by means of subsidies from the Ministry of Education – e.g. residential courses dealing with preschool preparation for Roma children and their parents, methodological support for teachers working with Roma children, or the development of educational programmes and materials focusing on the integration of the Roma.

The education of children from Roma communities must take account of the language handicap that Roma children face when entering basic school and which is one of major barriers to their education. Apart from the language barrier, these children show a different pace of personal development, a different hierarchy of values and different socio-cultural awareness. This is reflected in their overall attitude to education.

Several research studies have revealed that children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds are able to achieve good study results if there are conditions established for their individual development. Positive measures that are implemented to support these children bring good results provided that they meet their educational needs. Preschool education is a principal and effective means of preventing school failure on the part of children with social and cultural disadvantages. Education programmes delivered at schools – provided that they are individualised, respect different cultural backgrounds from which the children come and establish conditions for a maximum development of their capacities and personal potential – constitute an effective instrument for the education of these children. Co-operation between schools and families and communication between the school staff and parents as partners helps to meet objectives in the area of early intervention. The effectiveness of early intervention is largely influenced by the quality and focus of the education programme that is implemented in the relevant school facility.

The following **measures adopted** up to now should be stressed:

- ***Preparatory classes*** are set up for children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. Their objective is to eliminate the handicaps of these children that are caused by their disadvantaged backgrounds, including those concerning the language (most often the problem of ethnic dialects or argot), and, in this way, to increase the children's chances of successfully launching school attendance in mainstream education.
- If need be, ***the post of a Roma assistant*** is set up at basic schools (and also at secondary and tertiary professional schools). These assistants help teachers in their educational work, assist pupils in their accommodating to the school environment, and facilitate communication with pupils, parents and the communities from which they come. The

school director determines the job description of a teacher assistant and, in line with this description, sets the requirements for his/her professional competencies;

- In classes with a high proportion of Roma pupils it is possible to *decrease the minimum number of pupils per classroom*, as is the case with national minorities;
- The legislation sets down the possibility of *entering a secondary school without completed basic education* provided that the applicants meet the admission requirements;
- There is a *scheme for supporting Roma students, including financial assistance*;
- Support is provided for *the activities of Roma civic associations* focusing on work with children and young people;
- There are efforts to reinforce flows of information about Roma culture between the mainstream population and the Roma, teachers and educators begin to *learn about multicultural issues*;
- The updated version of the Long-Term Plan for Educational, Scientific, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities at Higher Education Institutions also refers to *support for such activities that will lead to evening up study opportunities for applicants from various disadvantaged social groups*.

■ In 2006 there were **330 teacher assistants for children with social disadvantages** at basic schools. The subsidy for their wages was 70 million CZK.

■ A total of 55 projects worth over **12 million CZK** were approved **as part of the grant scheme of the MoEYS** designed to support integration of the Roma community (state budget resources).

■ A total of 166 million CZK was allocated from the **European Social fund** to support projects focusing on the education of Roma children.

■ In 2007 the government assigned the MoEYS the task of carrying out an **analysis of ways of desegregating Roma pupils** (including prevention from segregation of these pupils in the future) from ethnically homogenous schools (so-called community schools) into mainstream schools. The MoEYS, in co-operation with other ministries, was to define the concept of “social disadvantage” (this term is used in the Education Act but it has not been clearly defined). (Both these tasks for the MoEYS are set down in the Government Resolution No. 335 of 11 April 2007 concerning the Report on Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015 in 2006).

Policy documents and special programmes implemented in the period under review that focus on the integration of children, pupils and students facing social disadvantages or coming from Roma communities

Policy documents and special programmes in the area of education are designed to create an inclusive environment in schools and school facilities, and to support school achievements of children, pupils and students in mainstream education. They are implemented with the aim of supporting these individuals in achieving a qualification and, in this way, increasing their employability.

The following policies, in particular, concern the education of the Roma:

- **Policy for Integration of the Roma Community** – a policy document approved by the government of the CR which sets out tasks for all ministries including the MoEYS. The document and the tasks resulting thereof are regularly updated and evaluated.
- **Policy on Early Intervention for Children from Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Backgrounds**

The Czech Republic is one of the countries implementing programmes as part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015) – an international initiative by eight countries of Central and South Eastern Europe where the participating governments, international institutions and the Roma civil society jointly support implementation of activities focusing on the social integration of the Roma as one of the priorities of the regional and European political agenda. The activities concern exchange of experience and knowledge, involvement of the Roma in decision-making that concerns them, the use of international experience and expertise with a view to speeding up resolution of demanding issues related to the Roma integration, and increasing public awareness of the situation of the Roma via an active society-wide communication.

The objectives of the Decade in various countries are being implemented through national action plans where each country has set out tasks in the area of education, employment, healthcare and housing. In the following years progress made towards these objectives will be monitored and evaluated. Apart from governments major international institutions also take part in the initiative.

Implementation of specific programmes is based, apart from other things, on the conclusions of the report developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Council of the Government of the Czech Republic for Roma Community Affairs in 2006 and entitled *An Analysis of Socially Excluded Roma Communities and the Absorption Capacity of Bodies Operating in this Area*. The report pinpoints the following problems: debts in rent and energy, long-term unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, a poor housing culture, poor hygiene conditions, and dependence of families on welfare benefits. Due to these problems there is a high incidence of negative social phenomena – truancy and crime, and, to a lesser degree, economic prostitution, drugs, gambling and usury. The environment in these communities fails to provide children and young people with the necessary stimuli for successful education and personal development. The report also identified specific socially excluded localities and localities at risk of such exclusion. Information in this report can be used, apart from other things, to develop or update policies and implement programmes focusing on education.

Long-term experience shows that the best results in the area of inclusive education – i.e. participation of all learners – can be achieved if **early intervention** is provided for children before entering compulsory education. In 2005 the Ministry of Education, Youth and sports presented to the government of the CR the **Outline of the Policy on Early Intervention for Children from Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Backgrounds (the Policy)**. The government adopted it in its Resolution No. 564 of 11 May 2005.

Pursuant to this resolution the following tasks were assigned to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports:

- to co-ordinate, in co-operation with the MoEYS and the Ministry of Health, the work of institutions concerned with childcare so as to ensure that they establish common social and pedagogical-psychological diagnoses of children facing various disadvantages (including those from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds); and to implement joint programmes and measures focused on parents of these children so that they assume a greater deal of responsibility for the development of their children,
- to introduce programmes and measures in the area of the initial and continuing training of teachers concerned with the preschool education of children from socio-

culturally disadvantaged backgrounds from the age of three until commencement of compulsory schooling,

- to implement programmes and measures aimed at increasing the number of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds who undergo preschool education in kindergartens or in preparatory classes at basic schools designed for these children,
- to implement programmes aimed at pilot testing of projects concerned with early intervention for children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds with a view to establishing early intervention centres at kindergartens and basic schools providing preparatory classes,
- to develop and implement residential courses for parents from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and their children from the age of three until commencement of compulsory schooling,
- to implement long-term day courses for parents from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and their children from the age of three until commencement of compulsory schooling.

The objective of the Policy is, above all, to increase the number of Roma pupils in mainstream education and to improve their school performance. Last but not least, the Policy aims to establish pre-conditions for social integration on the part of the family, children and society. Early intervention schemes and measures should be implemented so as to enhance the development of children in areas where they are endangered by biological, social and psychological factors.

The Policy is being implemented by means of the following:

1. Preparatory classes, set up at basic schools, for children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. Pursuant to Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act), Section 47, a municipality, an association of municipalities or a region may, with the prior consent of the Regional Authority, establish preparatory classes of basic schools to be attended by children, during the last year prior to their commencement of compulsory school attendance, who are socially disadvantaged and where there is a presumption that their inclusion in such a preparatory class may balance out their development. A preparatory class may be established if there are at least seven children and at most 15 children. The school director shall decide on the placement of pupils in a preparatory class upon the request of the child's legal guardian and upon a recommendation in writing issued by the school guidance facility. The content of education in a preparatory class shall be an integral part of the school education programme that is developed in line with the relevant framework education programme.

The education in preparatory classes at basic schools should be in line with the principles and rules set out in the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education and with regard to the specific needs of children and the conditions in which basic schools operate (they are normally different from those at kindergartens). In 2007 a methodology was prepared for the development of education programmes for preparatory classes at basic schools which had drawn on the experience and analyses of schools in this area. The methodology assists teachers in developing programmes for specific classes and in ensuring that the education in such preparatory classes helps balance out the development of children

and create preconditions for their smoother integration into compulsory education.

As at 30 September 2005 there were 123 preparatory classes at basis schools that were attended by a total of 1,441 children. As at 30 September 2006 there were 146 such classes in which a total of 1,713 children were educated.

2. The curricular reform that makes it possible for kindergartens to develop, on the basis of the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education, school education programmes that respond to children's individual needs in a flexible manner. For this reason the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education (FEP PE) constitutes the foundation for the preparation of education programmes for children with special educational needs, regardless of whether they attend mainstream kindergartens or those following a modified education programme.

The education of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, children from weaker family backgrounds and from communities speaking a language other than the language of instruction is carried out in line with requirements set out in the relevant framework education programme. The lower level of social adaptability of these children and an increased need for education in a specific area requires adjustments to the educational content and conditions. Kindergartens apply special educational methods making it possible to diagnose and stimulate the development of children.

3. Projects subsidised from the state budget and implemented as part of the MoEYS *Programme of Support for Integration of the Roma Community* focusing on:

- **educational activities for children and parents aimed at the preschool education of children,**
- **increasing the participation of Roma children in preschool education,**
- **support for the methods and approaches that enhance the effectiveness of the preschool education of Roma children,**
- **support for the continuing training of teachers and teacher assistants working with Roma children at preschool age in the use of effective methods for the education of Roma children,**
- **support for activities increasing the chances of Roma children of a successful launch of compulsory schooling,**
- **support for activities focusing on family involvement in the preschool education of children, and activities establishing conditions for raising the awareness of the importance of preschool education on the part of Roma parents,**
- **support for accompanying activities carried out by basic schools in order to support Roma children in overcoming difficulties at school,**
- **establishing coherent educational and integration projects concerned with the preschool education of Roma children.**

In 2006 another project within the Policy was launched. It is a **systemic project abbreviated as SIM¹ – Minority Integration Centres (Development of guidance,**

¹ A Czech acronym standing for Minority Integration Centres. These centres were set up in five regions of the CR (Central Bohemia, South Moravia, Olomouc, Ústí nad Labem and Moravia-Silesia)

education and support services for socially disadvantaged pupils) as part of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, Measure 3.3.1 *Improving the quality of education in schools and school facilities and developing support systems in education.*

The Minority Integration Centres project (SIM), which is supported from the ESF, aims at *developing a support system for the care of children and young people from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly the Roma.* The project focuses on various ways of their integration into society, their education, provision of social and pedagogical-psychological guidance, and on various types of support services including early intervention.

Early intervention

The definition of *early intervention* differs in various regions of the world, and it is usually related to the definition of “early childhood”. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child developed *General Recommendation no.7* (2005) recommending that early intervention should concern children from their birth until they reach 8 years of age. As in the CR infants and children up to 3 largely fall within the purview of the Ministry of Health, the project implementers decided, in line with the UN recommendation, that early intervention within the project should concern children aged 3 to 8.

Early intervention provided by the Minority Integration Centres focuses on mothers and children at the stage of preschool education, preparation for school attendance, and specification of individual educational needs of children in the context of their cultural and social situation. As regards mothers, the assistance provided aims to enhance their upbringing and social skills.

The nature of the work with families and mothers requires, in addition to professional competencies, that the SIM staff be able to win the trust of members of the community with whom they work. Social workers and psychologists draw attention to this in connection with the Roma, but also, for example, the Arab community. They get contacts from members of the community as well as from government and non-government organisations.

The staff of the SIM centres take part in the testing of various diagnostic instruments – both verbal and non-verbal, and projective techniques. However, the most important skills in guidance are analysis and structured observation that must go hand in hand with the knowledge of the cultural background of the relevant ethnic group.

One year after their establishment the Minority Integration Centres provide regular early intervention for groups at 22 places across the Czech Republic. Other mostly one-off activities are carried out on an ad hoc basis, particularly during holidays. They constitute an opportunity for children and their families for an effective use of free time with an educational focus. SIM also provide necessary individual care for children and their families.

The SIM project involves, from January 2007, an inter-disciplinary working group concerned with early intervention (psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, pedagogues/experts in didactics, extracurricular education teachers). They regularly meet and develop methodological materials.

Experience in evaluating the effectiveness of education of children at preschool stage, and ensuring their smooth transfer to compulsory education

As the existing legislation stipulates, teachers at preparatory classes at basic schools write an end-of-year report on each child's progress in terms of preparation for school in the given year. The report should also contain information about the child's performance in view of the main educational objectives set out in the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education. Moreover, the report should include a description of the child's special educational needs, capacities, talents and interests and, possibly, a recommendation to the effect that an individual plan should be prepared for the following period, or other recommendations concerning the child's education. At the end of the year the report is presented to the child's legal guardian and to the school he/she is going to attend. Based on the needs identified and experience gained a "diagnostic form" has been developed in co-operation with teachers at preparatory classes at basic schools. The form helps the teacher recognise specific educational needs and capacities of the child, monitor and evaluate his/her education on a continuous basis, and design the education programme accordingly. As the education of children in preparatory classes is based on individualised work and normally takes the form of early intervention, the teacher cannot do without diagnostic work. Diagnostic activities should be carried out on a systematic and regular basis.

The results of the measures as part of implementation of the Policy are of a long-term nature and, at the moment, they are difficult to measure. Moreover, it is impossible to identify the number of children, pupils and students with social disadvantages from the data contained in school documentation. School can file these data only if they are provided by the child's legal guardian or by a pupil/student of age. **This is why there are no statistical data on the school performance of socially disadvantaged children.**

Other programmes supporting inclusive education that are designed to integrate socially disadvantaged or Roma children, pupils and students:

- **The development programme concerned with the funding of teacher assistants for socially disadvantaged children, pupils and students**

The scheme was initiated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 2005. It responds to the need for funding the work of teacher assistants who were for the first time introduced in Czech schools and school facilities in 1998. As opposed to the previous period teacher assistants are now an integral part of the educational process and they are embedded in the new Education Act and in the law on pedagogical staff. Teacher assistants for socially disadvantaged children have been incorporated into the education system as a result of positive experience gained from pilot testing of "Roma assistants" in preschool education and at basic and secondary schools that was launched in 1998.

Financial resources provided as part of this scheme do not constitute the only source of funding. A legal entity performing educational activities can cover the pay of a teacher

assistant from resources provided, in line with the Education Act, *by its founding body or from other sources*. The target group in the scheme consists of teacher assistants for children, pupils and students facing **social disadvantages**.

In 2006 a subsidy amounting to 70 million CZK was allocated to pay for the work of **330 teacher assistants**. The number of teacher assistants for children, pupils and students with social disadvantages did not change much compared to 2006. In 2007 the number of assistants in schools increased by some 40.

Schools mention the following benefits of co-operation with assistants:

- Application of educational methods and approaches with regard to a specific composition of the class and the pupils' social disadvantages – i.e. improvement of the educational process,
- Assistance for pupils in the process of their getting used to the school environment and their integration into society,
- Assistance for pupils in addressing difficulties related to their adaptation and communication, and in solving social problems in the context of the educational process,
- A deeper understanding of the Roma culture, history and customs,
- Facilitating pupils' participation in out-of-school activities and their involvement in extracurricular education and public presentations of the school,
- Prevention of school failure during classes, assistance in eliminating educational problems (both obvious and hidden truancy, unexcused absence, bullying, disciplinary problems, aggressiveness, etc.),
- Improving communication with socially disadvantaged families and families neglecting childcare,
- Co-operation in the choice of a suitable occupation and in placing pupils in vocational schools (e.g. encouraging interest in a particular field of study and in future employment opportunities),
- Assistance for pupils in preparation for classes,
- Support for Roma families in placing children in preschool facilities, prevention of possible difficulties at the beginning of school attendance that could put their education and further life prospects at risk,
- Help in identifying talented Roma children.

In the period between 2005 and 2007 the Institute for Pedagogical and Psychological Guidance of the CR carried out a study entitled *The Education of Teacher Assistants for Socially Disadvantaged Children, Pupils and Students - The State of Affairs and Prospects*. The objective of the project was to map the current situation as regards teacher assistants' actual as well as formal position in schools and the effectiveness of their work in view of factors such as their qualifications, working conditions and personal suitability for the job. The outputs of one part of the study that focused on assessing the job description of teacher assistants and recommendations for necessary changes were presented. They will form a foundation **for adjusting the position of teacher assistants, specification of their job description and ways of their remuneration**.

- **Grant scheme of the MoEYS to support the integration of the Roma community**

The grant scheme of the MoEYS to support the integration of the Roma community has run annually since 2001. The thematic areas are chosen depending on the tasks set out in the relevant policy documents. In 2005-2007 the scheme was focused on the following thematic areas:

- **Preparation of Roma children for school** (see also above).
As part of this thematic area most of the applications granted were those presented by kindergartens. Their projects aimed at establishing conditions for the integration of Roma children at risk of social exclusion. Moreover, finance was provided to basic schools for establishing preparatory classes, and to non-profit organisations operating in socially excluded communities and focusing on a systematic preschool education of children who, for various reasons, do not attend kindergartens or preparatory classes. Some of these projects are implemented at low threshold facilities, other ones are focused on testing new approaches and they combine co-operation with families, social work and preparation for school.
- **Education of pupils from Roma communities at basic and secondary schools**
Within this thematic area there were projects promoted by basic and secondary schools and aimed at leisure and out-of-school activities focusing on preparation for classes. Non-profit organisations also received support to implement projects combining the work of low threshold facilities, various leisure activities and preparation for classes. An overwhelming majority of projects were implemented outside classes.
- **Methodological support for pedagogical staff**
The project that received support as part of this thematic area was focused on the continuing training of teachers, particularly teacher assistants.
- **Development of didactic materials and expert studies concerned with the development of educational programmes, methods and strategies.**
In this area there were projects the objective of which was to issue publications on work with children, expert studies on inclusive education, etc.
- **Leisure activities for Roma children and young people focused on meeting their educational needs.**
Projects within this thematic area promoted leisure activities during the school year as well as holidays (summer camps, trips, clubs, low threshold activities). Some of the projects also offered preparation for classes, literary activities and competitions.
- **Grant scheme to support Roma pupils at secondary schools**

The scheme “Support for Roma Pupils at Secondary Schools” was launched by the Ministry of Education in 2003. Financial resources within the scheme are designed to support the studies of Roma pupils who are citizens of the CR and whose families experience considerable financial difficulties in relation to their children’s studies. The scheme concerns all schools included in the school registry, preschool facilities and school facilities – both those providing “maturita” programmes and those providing vocational programmes (training centres and practical schools), including tertiary professional schools. The resources are earmarked to cover, in part or in full, the study costs such as tuition fees, meals, accommodation, travel costs, school aids and protecting materials including work clothing necessary for instruction. The scheme runs twice a year and as part of the individual rounds resources are always provided to some 1,300 to 2,000 secondary school pupils.

- **Support for higher education students from socially disadvantaged groups**

Public higher education institutions can apply for subsidies from various sources – also from the development schemes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Each public HE institution may present a project within a specific development scheme and apply to the MoEYS for a grant from the state budget for a number of activities that make it easier for students from socially disadvantaged groups to study (including those HE students who admit to Roma ethnicity). The grant can be used for:

- procuring textbooks, study literature and materials for institutional libraries (in order to lend them preferentially to socially disadvantaged Roma students who cannot buy them);
- increasing the level of scholarship awarded by the HE institution to socially disadvantaged students in line with scholarship regulations, provided that the student is in a difficult social situation (one-off as well as repeated contributions);
- educational, social, psychological and other forms of guidance to these students;
- protective materials purchased by the HE institution and then lent to these students, etc.

Financial subsidies to HE institutions to support socially disadvantaged students (including Roma students) enhance the motivation on the part of the institutions to eliminate specific obstacles faced by students from the Roma community and other minorities. The scope of subsidised activities, of course, depends on the resources available.

- **Support for inter-departmental co-operation focused on integration of the Roma**

In the course of 2007 the Office of the Council of the Government for Roma Community Affairs work on the concept of the government **Agency for Elimination of Social Exclusion in Roma Localities** (the “Agency”). The Agency is a result of close co-operation between state administration officials, regional and local governments, representatives of the Roma community, business sector, experts in Roma issues, ministries, the non-profit sector, members of the Council of the Government for Roma Community Affairs and members of the Association of Towns and Municipalities and the Association of Regions.

The objective of the Agency is transformation of Roma localities that will result either in their demise or in a substantial improvement of the quality of life in these places. The Agency plans, in co-operation with local governments, to launch implementation of specific cross-sectoral programmes and projects in selected municipalities and towns in 2008. A scheme involving a comprehensive solution to social integration in socially excluded localities will be offered. Municipalities together with other partners (non-government, non-profit organisations, schools, labour offices, local employers, the Roma community) will implement projects supporting employment, education and the quality of housing that will be focused on the population in socially excluded Roma localities.

➤ **Children, pupils and students with disabilities and social disadvantages**

The following international documents are of special importance as regards the education of children, pupils and students with disabilities and social disadvantages: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1991, the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities (1993), the Salamanca Declaration, UNESCO 1994 and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities of 2006.

Comprehensive national documents concerned with these issues include Government Resolution No. 466 of 29 June 1992 on the “National Plan for Assistance to the Disabled”, Government Resolution No. 493 of 8 September 1993 on the "National Plan for Measures to Reduce Negative Implications of Disability“, Government Resolution No. 256 of 14 April 2008 on the “National Plan for the Equalisation of Opportunities of Citizens with Disabilities” and Government Resolution No. 1004 of 17 August 2005 on the “National Plan for the Support for and Integration of Citizens with Disabilities for 2006-2009”.

The main legal documents regulating the education of children and pupils with special learning needs are the following:

- the law on preschool, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act),
- the decree on the education of children, pupils and students with special learning needs and gifted children, pupils and students,
- the decree on the provision of guidance services in schools and school guidance facilities.

- ***The Education Act (in force from 1.1.2005)***

- ✓ newly defines the category of pupils with special educational needs and the individual target groups – disabled pupils, pupils with health-related and social disadvantages, and gifted pupils;
- ✓ codifies the right of parents to choose the form of organisation of education for their disabled child;
- ✓ introduces the possibility of integrating disabled children into mainstream education, and increases the openness and flexibility of the system of special education;
- ✓ if the nature of the disability so requires, it is possible to set up schools for disabled children, pupils and students. With the consent of the relevant regional authority it is also possible to establish classes, sections or study groups that follow modified educational programmes;
- ✓ establishes conditions for adjusting instruction to meet pupils’ individual needs;
- ✓ framework education programmes must set out conditions for the education of pupils with special educational needs.

Children and pupils with disabilities and health-related disadvantages are entitled to education the **organisation of which** best meets the educational needs of the pupils and also the requirements of their parents. A child may be placed in one of the forms of special education stated below with an approval from his/her legal guardian. The forms of organisation of education are as follows: ***individual integration*** into classrooms/study groups in mainstream schools, ***group integration*** into special classrooms/study groups set up for disabled pupils in mainstream schools, and ***education in schools specifically set up for pupils with disabilities***. ***Individual educational plans*** that set out specific support measures are developed for individually integrated pupils (and also for pupils with severe mental disabilities, pupils within the scheme of group integration, pupils educated in schools specifically set up for pupils with disabilities and for pupils at preparatory classes).

Higher education institutions integrate students with disabilities on an individual basis. There are also group integration schemes. For example, nearly every year there is a group of deaf students at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts studying pantomime –

drama for educational purposes. Moreover, Charles University provides an opportunity for deaf students to study special education at the Faculty of Education, and the programme focusing on Czech for the communication of deaf people at the Philosophical Faculty. The lectures are translated into Czech sign language.

- ***Special support measures for pupils with disabilities***

The measures supporting the education of children, pupils and students with disabilities include special methods, approaches and forms of education and didactic materials. Also, they include the provision of pedagogical-psychological guidance, instruction in line with an individual educational plan or various forms of organisation of education. Depending on pupils' specific needs of there are, for example, various compensatory, rehabilitation and teaching aids, special textbooks (e.g. in Braille) and substitute forms of communication (sign language) available. Moreover, it is possible to provide for subjects dealing with special education (e.g. speech therapy), services of a teacher assistant or sign language interpreter, or a reduced number of pupils in the classroom, section or study group. The adoption of the law on sign language in 1998 confirmed the importance of the language for the education of people suffering from pre-lingual deafness, and opened up the path towards the provision of interpreting services for deaf pupils.

Since 1997 it has been possible for several teachers to work in one classroom set up for pupils with severe disabilities.

It is also possible, if the school director and the legal guardian agree, for a disabled child to have a **personal assistant** in a classroom, section or study group. However, the assistant is not an employee of the school. He/she does the work in line with the law on social services and assists the pupil in managing self-care, transportation to school, etc.

- ***The education of people with severe mental disabilities***

Determining the ways in which people with severe mental disabilities receive their education is the responsibility of the relevant regional authority (depending on the person's residence). The decision is taken at the request and with the consent of the person's legal guardian, while taking into account the relevant recommendation made by a physician. The regional authority will choose such mode of education that is in line with the mental and physical capabilities of the person. At the same time, the authority provides for guidance and methodological and pedagogical advice and support.

- ***The structure of educational provision for pupils with disabilities and elimination of barriers in access to inclusive education***

Schools focused on the education of these pupils normally provide education at several levels and integrate various types of school and school facilities focused on a specific disability – e.g. impaired hearing. Within one establishment there may be a kindergarten, basic school, secondary technical school, secondary vocational school, special education centre and a hall of residence for pupils with hearing impediments. This arrangement facilitates a smooth transfer of pupils between various levels of education.

As the educational reform progresses and the requirements for inclusion of pupils with special educational needs grow stronger, the role of special schools is changing. They are gradually being transformed into so-called **integrated support centres (resource centres)**.

The education of children and pupils with disabilities is the same as that of the mainstream population, while there are differences resulting from the nature of the special educational needs of disabled pupils and the type and severity of their disability.

The placement of a disabled pupil in a particular form of education is the responsibility of the school director who acts based on a recommendation made by the school guidance facility and with the consent of the pupil's legal guardian. This placement may be preceded by the pupil's 2-6-month attendance at the relevant school for diagnostic purposes. Diagnostic work and advice that is necessary to decide on the pupil's placement in special education is the responsibility of the school guidance facility. If there is a change in the nature of the pupil's special learning needs in the course of his/her education, the school director is obliged to propose a change in the mode and conditions of education.

When educating pupils with disabilities schools may use special textbooks and other special educational materials (video, workbooks, work sheets, etc.) that are adjusted to meet the pupils' needs. These include textbooks with special graphics, content layout, printed in Braille, multimedia textbooks, etc.

The use of information and communication technologies receives increased attention. Schools are equipped with special information technologies, and special HW and SW designed for pupils with special educational needs.

Preschool education for children with disabilities

If children with disabilities are not integrated into mainstream kindergartens or classrooms set up for disabled children, their education takes place in kindergartens designed for children with a specific type of disability (hearing, sight or corporal defects, etc.).

Preparatory classes at special basic schools prepare children with a wide range of special educational needs for compulsory education. The length of the preparation is 1 to 3 years.

Compulsory education for pupils with disabilities

Compulsory education for disabled pupils (if they are not integrated in mainstream schools or if they do not attend special classrooms in mainstream schools) is provided by various types of basic school – e.g. schools for pupils with impaired vision, hearing problems, corporal defects, schools for the deafblind, for pupils with specific learning disorders, etc.

According to the Education Act, what was previously called *remedial* (“*zvláštní*”) school is a basic school, or a type of basic school (practical basic school), that provides education in accordance with the Annex to the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education.

Pupils with severe mental disabilities, multiple disabilities and autism are entitled to education in a special basic school (previously called *auxiliary* (“*pomocná*”) school). A special basic school may also include a preparatory stage where pupils are prepared for entering deferred compulsory education (for 1-3 years).

Compulsory education begins in September in the year when the child reaches 6 years of age. Children can commence compulsory schooling at the latest in September of the year when they turn 8. Basic education of pupils with disabilities who attend classrooms or schools

that follow modified education programmes can last ten years. Basic education of pupils with disabilities should be completed at the latest when the person is 20 years old. Basic education of pupils with severe mental disabilities, multiple disorders or autism who attend special basic schools may be prolonged, upon agreement of the school's founding body, until the age of 26. In this case the school co-operates with the school guidance facility and the labour office.

Secondary education for pupils with disabilities

Pupils with disabilities may be educated in *all types of secondary school*; there are specific types of school – e.g. a vocational school (for pupils with mild mental disabilities or other learning disadvantages – it leads to a vocational qualification in manual work related professions and lasts three years), and practical school (prepares pupils with severe disabilities who complete compulsory education for various jobs and lasts one or two years).

All types of secondary school may be *set up specifically* for pupils with special educational needs depending on their disability: sight, hearing or corporal defects (e.g. there is a conservatoire in the Czech Republic designed for pupils with vision impairments where they train in music either as performers or teachers, and also in piano tuning).

Secondary education and tertiary professional education of pupils with disabilities may be *extended by one to two years based on individual needs*.

Higher education for students with disabilities

Education at higher education institutions is regulated by the Higher Education Act, as amended. Section 21, par. e) provides that a higher education institution is obliged to take all possible measures to ensure equal opportunities for higher education studies. Support for the integration of disabled students into higher education and support for their lifelong learning that helps them find a desired place in society are among the thematic areas of development schemes run by the Ministry. HE institutions build barrier-free access for these students when refurbishing old or constructing new buildings.

Four faculties at public HE institutions and one private HE institution provide accredited Bachelor and Master study programmes designed for disabled students, but not only for them. Many of these programmes have been running with success for a number of years. They were initially developed as subsidised projects as part of development schemes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Financial support is also provided to private HE institutions. The Technical University in Liberec traditionally holds annual national conferences with international speakers entitled “Higher Education without Barriers”. At the conferences representatives of various HE institutions deliver presentations on the ways in which they assist disabled students in their studies.

Special purpose facilities set up in order to facilitate access to higher education for pupils with disabilities (including guidance services):

- **The Tereza Laboratory** at the Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague is a centre for integrated higher education for students with impaired vision. The services provided are used mainly by students of software engineering, but they are also available for students with this disability who attend other HE institutions as well as secondary and basic schools.

- **Institute for Rehabilitation of Persons with Vision Impairments** is designed primarily for students at HE institutions. It is also involved in educational activities (training of instructors in spatial orientation, seminars for teachers and educators at basic schools concerned with the teaching of people with impaired vision), and expert, guidance and information services.
- **Typhlopaedics section** at the department of special education at the Faculty of Education of Hradec Králové University facilitates and supports the studies of students with sight and combined disabilities;
- **Academic Guidance Centre and Centre for Facilitation of Higher Education for People with Disabilities** is a special purpose guidance facility at the **Technical University in Liberec**. It provides expert assistance to people with disabilities – mainly those with corporal and sensory defects (provision of information, guidance concerned with special education, basic social/legal advice, pedagogical-psychological guidance, information about compensatory aids and healthcare, etc.).
- Charles University operates the **Information and Guidance Centre of Charles University** which provides services to disabled students.

Moreover, there are the following facilities:

- **Information and Guidance Centre at Palacký University in Olomouc**
- **The Teresiás Centre for Assisting Students with Specific Needs at Masaryk University in Brno,**
- **Guidance Centre for Students with Specific Needs** at the Czech Agriculture University in Prague.

The facilities mentioned above receive financial support from the MoEYS.

Support for the education and integration of students with disabilities is embedded in the Long-Term Plan of the MoEYS for Educational, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of HE Institutions. In the annually updated versions of the Plan the Ministry declares support for projects focused on the integration of disabled students, and this reality is also reflected in the formulation of priorities for the relevant development schemes.

In line with the relevant updated version of the Long-Term Plan the department for higher education institutions of the MoYES initiates transformation and development grant schemes dealing with the integration of disabled students.

➤ *National minorities and their access to education*

Pursuant to Article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Liberties and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs No. 96/1998), members of national minorities are guaranteed the right to education in their mother tongue. Municipalities, regions and ministries have a statutory obligation to make sure this right is exerted.

The law provides that **education in the language of a national minority is guaranteed, provided that the relevant legal terms are met**, in those municipalities where, in line with Section 117b of the law on municipalities, a committee for national minorities is established (i.e. in those municipalities where at least 10% of the residents reported to belong to the national minority when the most recent census was conducted). This approach is in accordance with Article 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Education Act also sets down minimum numbers of children and pupils from

national minorities in schools and classrooms. The numbers are significantly lower compared to the ratios set for the mainstream population. The Act also makes it possible for several founding bodies to join in the provision of education for members of national minorities.

Moreover, the Education Act stipulates that, in order to support the interests of members of national minorities, the school director may designate, with the consent of the founding body, subjects or their sections in which bilingual instruction will be implemented (also in the language of the national minority). School reports, vocational certificates and “absolutorium” diplomas in schools where instruction is implemented in the language of the national minority are issued in two languages (i.e. in Czech and in the language of the national minority).

As suggested above, the existing legal regulations make it possible to establish schools, or classrooms, for the education of children of other than Czech nationality in their mother tongue.

The **Polish** national minority have their own education from kindergarten to secondary level. As regards the **Slovak** minority, their interest in instruction in the Slovak language at the level of basic and secondary education is small, which is, to a degree, the result of the exceptional proximity of the two languages. There is a large number of Slovak students at higher education institutions.

The **German minority** may propose that bilingual classrooms (schools) with German as the language of instruction should be established. As regards the **Hungarian and Greek national minorities**, the teaching of the mother language takes the form of an optional subject.

Other minorities do not have their own education. However, the Ministry is ready to take reasonable measures if interest is expressed to this effect.

➤ *Ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in access to education*

Issues concerning the elimination of inequalities and support for an equal treatment of women and men in all activities within the Community are embedded in the EC Treaty (Articles 2 and 3). Gender mainstreaming – i.e. incorporating the perspective of gender equality into all policy-making and decision-making processes – has begun to be pursued at the level of member states as well as at the level of the EU. The equality of men and women is embedded in major documents on EU processes such as the European Employment Strategy, social inclusion, research policy, Structural Funds and development co-operation.

The principal document in the CR in this area is the National Action Plan – “Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Women and Men” (“The Priorities”) approved each current year by the government and subsequently elaborated on by individual ministries. This document annually sets out a number of tasks that aim to reinforce equal opportunities for women and men in society. The “Priorities”, as elaborated upon by the ministries, have been evaluated since 2004 by non-government organisations. The outcome is “Shadow Reports on Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men”.

The enforcement of equal opportunities for men and women is a task the implementation of which is monitored and evaluated at government level. The policy of equal opportunities represented by the government paper “Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Women and Men” focuses on enforcing the principles of equality of men and women and increasing the level of legal awareness, ensuring equal opportunities in access to economic activities, equalising the social position of men and women looking after children and family members in need, taking account of women in terms

of their reproductive function and physiological differences, fighting violence against women and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of implementation of the equality principle.

In education this government policy focuses on the identification of and support for children's individual capacities regardless of whether they are typical of boys or girls, on encouraging alternative patterns that expand the range of future careers to choose from, and on equalisation of existing gender inequalities.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports formulates, for each calendar year, its objectives in the area of equal opportunities in a document entitled "Priorities and Procedures of the MoEYS in the Enforcement of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women". The impact of the MoEYS in terms of the enforcement of equal opportunities is of a supra-ministerial nature. The reforms that take place in the entire education system constitute a suitable platform for the pursuit of new topics including that of gender equality.

Paying attention to gender socialisation in school forms a necessary component of the development of modern education. Similar approaches must be taken to face stereotypes as to which occupations are designed for women and which should be performed by men, whether women can work in managing or top positions in highly specialised fields of research, etc. Education can increase gender awareness on the part of the youngest generations.

✓ There is a *working group for the equality of women and men* at the MoEYS consisting of employees of the Ministry and representatives of non-profit organisations. The group co-operates with non-profit organisations and expert academic organisations working in this field.

✓ The MoEYS *co-operates with non-government organisations* dealing with equal opportunities for men and women (e.g. Gender Studies, the Open Society, Žába na prameni (The Fly in the Ointment) civic association, Forum 50%, ROSA), and participates in events held as part of their projects. Co-operation with other organisations consists in *monitoring the observance of equality principles in the provision of services* (e.g. Drop In and Sananin).

✓ The MoEYS was involved in the development of the *EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP EQUAL)* document, the main objective of which is to pursue innovative solutions to problems related to discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

✓ The systemic project "*The Development and Enhancement of the Integrated Diagnostic, Information and Guidance System in the Area of Education and Career Choice (VIP-Kariéra)*" is currently underway. The following themes are included in the education category: equal opportunities in the education of boys and girls, non-traditional occupations in the education of girls, family violence.

✓ The MoEYS was the national co-ordinator of the campaign of the Council of Europe "All Different – All Equal". It continues to co-operate with various NGOs (e.g. Amnesty International). The campaign was aimed at supporting human rights as part of the "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All – towards a just society".

✓ The MoEYS is also involved in projects that encourage a higher level of participation of women in research and their involvement in research projects (e.g. within the EUPRO programme as part of which the National Contact Centre – Women in Science was set up).

✓ The principle of equality of men and women is incorporated within all framework education programmes, and it is one of the criteria monitored and evaluated on a continuous basis. The MoEYS supports gradual implementation of equality principles in school education programmes.

✓ One of the criteria for granting MoEYS's approval to the publication of textbooks is

implementation of the principle of equality of men and women.

- ✓ In 2007 the MoEYS continued implementation of training programmes for teachers and pedagogical staff in the area of equal opportunities for men and women with a view to equipping them with efficient methods for delivering gender-sensitive instruction.
- ✓ In 2007 the MoEYS also continued evaluation of the effectiveness of measures concerned with gender equality adopted within its purview. Monitoring the situation and proposing measures on the application of equality principles in tertiary education are the subject of projects implemented by the Centre for Higher Education Studies at both national and international levels. These issues are also included in the research plan of the Centre for 2005-2010 entitled "Tertiary Education in the Knowledge Society" under the heading "Quantitative Aspects of Systems, Development Trends – Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in Education, Science and Management of Higher Education Institutions".
- ✓ The MoEYS awarded grants to support an information campaign of organisations co-operating with the Ministry in science and research concerned with the possibility of participation in the 7th Framework Programme of the EU entitled "Science in Society", where there is a separate chapter entitled 'Women and Science'.
- ✓ The Czech Steering Committee (a national version of the Helsinki Group at EC level) operates at the MoEYS. It was set up in 2000 and deals with problems of women working in science and research.
- ✓ As part of its grant policy the MoEYS continues providing support (since 2001) for the EUPRO programme of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the CR, within which the National Contact Centre - Women in Science was established.
- ✓ In 2007 implementation of the three-year project of the MoEYS "Monitoring Gender Issues and the Age Structure of Employees in Education" continued.
- ✓ EU standards for equal opportunities of men and women are transposed into the Employment Regulations for Employees of Schools and School Facilities.
- ✓ All fields of education within the Czech Education system are made accessible for both girls and boys.
- ✓ The syllabi and textbooks used in schools have been inspected in terms of their contribution to the creation and reproduction of gender-based stereotypes and prejudices in schools and school facilities. Issues related to the position of men and women in society are represented by new thematic areas not only in civic education and history, but also in vocational subjects (psychological, legal and economic contexts).
- ✓ In order to increase the competitiveness of women in the labour market the MoEYS supports the development of training and retraining programmes making it easier for women to find suitable employment. The implementation of education and the results of activities of individual schools are subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation by the Czech School Inspectorate.

➤ ***Unemployed graduates and their rates of unemployment***

Combating social exclusion as one of the central components of modernisation of the European social model involves a number of factors that should play their part in national strategies. Besides employment policy a great degree of importance is attributed to social protection, education, housing, health, information and communication, mobility, etc. The

best safeguard against social exclusion is employment. It is therefore necessary to enhance employability, particularly by means of policies supporting acquisition of qualifications and lifelong learning. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion in the Czech Republic, which is in the making, also sets out measures in the area of education. These concern, above all, elimination of barriers in access to education for disadvantaged groups of the population, for example children from socio-culturally disadvantaged environments or people with disabilities.

It may be said that the number of unemployed graduates has been showing a positive trend in recent years. The number of graduates registered at labour offices has been decreasing.

The numbers of unemployed graduates are largely dependent on periods during the school year. In September, after the end of the school year, **their numbers peak**, while **the lowest numbers are reported in April and May**. The absorption capacity of the labour market is at its height during this period and, also, a sufficiently long time has elapsed since September and many unemployed graduates have managed to find a job.

Graduates of **secondary education with a vocational certificate** predominate in the ranks of unemployed school leavers: in April 2006 the number was 11,300 – i.e. 34.5% of all unemployed graduates. Their number has been high since 1998.

The second most numerous group consists of graduates of secondary technical schools: in April 2006 there were 7,900 of them – i.e. 24.2% of all unemployed graduates.

On the other hand, the **lowest number of jobless graduates** come from **tertiary professional schools** (900); then **secondary grammar schools** (1,700 – it should be noted that an overwhelming majority of graduates of secondary grammar schools continue studying at higher education institutions and tertiary professional schools and conservatories, and they do not enter the labour market).

The number of unemployed basic school leavers has also been stable, ranging, in the long term, from some 4-6,000. This is a group where the “rule” of September increases and a subsequent decrease does not apply. Most jobless basic school graduates are those who entered some form of secondary education but did not complete it for various reasons.

The highest rate of unemployment is among graduates of studies focusing on trade, personal services, catering and hotel management, as well as technical disciplines such as polygraphics and paper processing, leather products and footwear manufacture, textile production and building construction. Graduates of programmes in ecology and environmental protection also face difficulties in the labour market. Graduates of studies in healthcare, agriculture, business and administration, as well as transport and communications, metallurgy and mining are in a relatively better situation in terms of seeking a job. Moreover, graduates of technical disciplines, particularly chemical engineering and the chemistry of silicates, electrical engineering, telecommunications and computer technology, food processing and interdisciplinary programmes fare well in the labour market.

In terms of comparison with EU countries the Czech Republic is characterised by a **very low proportion of young people who do not acquire any vocational qualification and leave the education system after completion of basic school**. This proportion has been around 6% in recent years. This situation is the result of a strong tradition of vocational education offering a relatively wide range of two- and three-year programmes leading to a vocational certificate. This makes it possible for low performers and those who do not complete basic education to acquire secondary education with a vocational certificate in less demanding two-year programmes.

The employment of *disabled school graduates* varies to a large degree depending on individual circumstances. The overall rate of employment among disabled people is affected by the situation in the labour market and the job structure. The transformation of the economy has caused a radical decrease in the number of the low-skilled jobs into which, in the past, a majority of mentally disabled graduates of secondary schools were placed. As a result, these juveniles are normally registered as long-term unemployed, or they get a disability pension and often end up in the social net. At present schools and other educational institutions offer an increasing range of training and retraining programmes which make it possible for school leavers to enhance and acquire the skills they need to perform various jobs. Disabled school leavers who do not find a job in the open labour market may work in a sheltered working environment.

The *development of the guidance system and increasing the accessibility of guidance* play an important role in enlarging access to education and solving problems related to social exclusion. Considerable attention is also paid to the identification of pupils at risk and to prevention of their dropping out of education. The key players in this respect are educational advisors, newly established school guidance facilities (with sufficient capacity in terms of human resources), and pedagogical-psychological guidance centres.

The systemic project VIP Kariéra (co-funded from the European Social Fund) represents another contribution to the prevention of dropping out. In 2006-2008 the project involved a number of activities supporting retention in education. The web-based Information System of the Situation of School Graduates in the Labour Market was developed (ISA, available at www.infoabsolvent.cz). The system increases the general awareness of educational and employment opportunities on the part of pupils and their parents. In this way it assists them in making qualified and responsible decisions on their further educational and career paths. The system also contains a specialised section offering assistance in solving problems during studies. Last but not least, a number of full-time courses and an e-learning course were developed for guidance practitioners to enhance their competencies.

Various forms of support as regards the education and employment of people who have dropped out of education and face the risk of social exclusion due to their low level of educational attainment, long-term unemployment, a disability or a social disadvantage are also provided by **non-profit organisations and civic associations**. There are several projects funded from the ESF and the state budget of the Czech Republic that support the acquisition and development of social and professional competencies in the groups at risk. These projects involve, for example, fieldwork in Roma communities, guidance for migrants and social rehabilitation schemes.

One of the comprehensive projects is **Modern Society – Inequalities in Chances for Education: their scope, causes, social and economic implications, strategies for their solution** which is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2004-2009. A number of research studies are being carried out as part of the project that aim at mapping the problems related to access to education in the Czech Republic and proposing suitable instruments to resolve them. One of the project outputs in 2006 was the publication “Young People Dropping Out of Education: the scope, problems, causes and prevention” (National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education - NITVE, 2006). Another output mapping the social backgrounds and low educational aspirations of various risk groups was a survey among juveniles who left the education system as early as after completion of basic school, who are long-term unemployed and face the risk of social exclusion. The study is entitled

“Social Aspects of the Long-Term Unemployment of Young People with Low Levels of Education” (NITVE, 2006).

(d) The initial training of teachers, their recruitment, placement, working conditions and further professional development

The initial training of teachers is implemented in accredited study programmes provided by higher education institutions. In accordance with Act No. 563/2004 on pedagogical staff and amendment to other laws, **fully qualified teachers** at basic and secondary schools must be graduates of a Master study programme in education.

In agreement with the position of the Accreditation Commission, which evaluates study programmes, **the system of programmes in education is being structured** so as to meet the requirements of the Bologna process – i.e. Bachelor programmes, follow-up Master programmes and Doctoral study programmes. The only exception is study programmes for teachers at Stage 1 of basic school. This structuring has made it possible for graduates of Bachelor programmes in educational sciences (e.g. informatics with a focus on education, mathematics with a focus on education) to continue a follow-up Master programme and to achieve a full teaching qualification. Possibly, they may continue studying a different follow-up programme in the relevant area (e.g. informatics, mathematics, etc.).

Faculties of education at higher education institutions offer accredited study programmes (Bachelor, follow-up Master and Doctoral programmes) as well as lifelong learning programmes with study modules **preparing future teachers and educators for work with children, pupils, students and also learners from socio-disadvantaged backgrounds, including work with Roma students at HE institutions**. The programmes are provided by eight faculties of education across the CR and focus, among other things, on the following: complementary education for *teacher assistants* as part of lifelong learning, Master and Bachelor programmes in *special education*, specialised studies in *special education with a focus on prevention and re-socialisation, extracurricular activities and non-formal education, educational guidance, special education for basic school leavers, special education for secondary school leavers, special education for tertiary professional school leavers, special education for graduates of programmes in education at Stage 1 of basic school, social education, social policy and social work – charity work, etc.*

The continuing training of teachers focusing on enhancing competencies related to work with children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds

The continuing training of teachers in this area is implemented in **accredited programmes** provided by organisations directly managed by the Ministry of Education, public HE institutions, school facilities and non-profit organisations. The content of education, which supports the creation of an inclusive environment in schools, aims both to boost implementation of the curricular reform, and to promote specific topics helping teachers strengthen their competencies in the integration of children and young people with special educational needs into mainstream education. In the past, for example, the National Institute for Continuing Education carried out an analysis of the training needs of teachers and pedagogical staff. Emphasis was placed on the training needs in the area of pathological social disorders, multicultural education and media education. The outcomes of the analysis provide information as to which target group is interested in particular programmes, or what type of audience a lecturer in the programme can expect. The key components of the analysis are profiles of various educational areas. They are presented in the form of methodology sheets

describing the target groups and optimal characteristics of each programme so as to facilitate potential strategic decisions concerned with the continuing training of teachers in the following years.

In the past the following educational events, among others, were implemented as part of the continuing education of teachers:

- *Equal chances in the education of children at preschool age and younger school age*

The seminar was focused on the special importance of preschool and younger school age for the development of tolerance. The topics discussed included the role of adults – view of own attitudes, developing openness towards children; the role of peers – how to use knowledge in social psychology to support mutual acceptance; working with a child that is different; equal access to both genders as a specific issue in the equality of chances. The seminar involves social psychology training techniques in order to identify individual attitudes and to enhance the quality of work with children.

- *Meeting people from different worlds at school – intercultural education in school education programmes*

The seminar was focused on intercultural education in schools in the context of developing and implementing school education programmes. It was concerned with the integration of pupils from specific social groups (the disabled, foreigners, etc.). By means of workshops, practical examples and the use of interactive techniques the participants could seek inspiration for their work with pupils and students – how to teach about integration, how to present this topic.

- *The topical problems of the Roma in the CR, and how schools can contribute to their solution*

The objective of this training programme was to draw teachers' attention to the ways in which schools can improve co-existence between various cultures. The following topics were of key importance: How to include information about the Roma within the subject matter; How to achieve key competencies using this information; The issue of individual identity and how school affects the development of that identity. How should teachers work with stereotypes?

- *Multicultural education and its inclusion within teaching, the school atmosphere*

An overview of topics: What is culture and how does it influence us? Models of co-existence between various groups; Objectives, methods and topics within multicultural education; Work with prejudices and stereotypes; The most frequent prejudices in Czech society; How not to support prejudice in education. The seminar combines informative methods (lectures) with discussion, group work and training in specific methods that can be applied at basic and secondary schools.

- *The CZECHKID project implemented by Charles University in Prague*

The project is implemented as part of the European Social Fund – Operational Programme Human Resources Development, Measure 3.1. Support Programme B, Developing the Training of Teachers and Other Educators. The objective of the project is to

design training courses for teachers and other educators that will promote a positive change of school climate. The training programmes combine physical attendance with on-line forms of study. Another objective of the project was to develop the CZECHKID web portal. In 2005 a web application was created containing information and interactive components aiming at increasing the awareness of multicultural groups in the Czech Republic. It was possible to provide interactive answers to basic questions about the relationships between these groups and their relationship to mainstream society. The content builds on true stories of children from various cultural groups in various countries that cast light on the main ingredients of the life and problems of specific characters (although they are presented as fictitious model characters aged 12-15).

On the basis of Act No. 563/2004 Coll. on pedagogical staff and changes to other laws, as amended, and Decree No. 317/2005 on the continuing training of pedagogical staff, the accreditation commission and the career system for pedagogical staff, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports issued *Standards for Awarding Accreditation for the Continuing Training for Pedagogical Staff*. The National Institute for Continuing Education is currently working on a *comprehensive system for monitoring the continuing training* of pedagogical staff that will focus on the provision of training programmes.

The MoEYS also initiates *development schemes in the area of the continuing training* of pedagogical staff focusing, for example, on the training of teachers at Stage 1 of basic school, teachers in regions or training in connection with the introduction of the new “maturita” examination.

As regards policy concerning the continuing professional development of pedagogical staff, work is underway on the *Long-Term Plan for the Continuing Training of Pedagogical Staff* in the Czech Republic. It is a medium-term, strategic document that should contribute to the improvement of the continuing training of teachers and make the provision more transparent. The Long-Term Plan is intended to set clear rules for implementation of the continuing training of pedagogical staff and to define the responsibilities of various bodies involved in the process.

1.3. The Role of the Education System in Eradicating Poverty and Other Forms of Social Exclusion and Cultural Marginalisation

- *What are the main challenges as regards inclusion in education and in society?*

As regards inclusive education, the challenge is, above all, to **integrate and complement the existing single measures** and instruments into a coherent and comprehensive system at national level.

✓ Another challenge consists in **legislative support** for inclusive education, particularly in the context of the Education Act and, most recently, the Anti-Discrimination Bill, as well as the development of a national strategy for inclusive education. The CR still does not have a document of this kind.

✓ The establishment of preconditions for developing and ensuring a climate conducive to successful inclusive education is also a **political challenge**. This challenge consists in **convincing political representatives** about the importance and benefits of inclusive education as a key foundation of a modern education system. There must be political will to ensure a successful transformation of the education system into a modern inclusive system of education.

✓ Another challenge lies in the increasing diversity of society as a whole. There is a growing number of pupils in the CR who are of a different ethnic origin than the majority population. European trends clearly suggest that there must be a systemic response to this reality. **Meeting EU standards** in this area can therefore be seen as another challenge.

- ***What are the main obstacles to inclusive education?***

Successful implementation of inclusive education requires that the sentiments in society should be assessed in a realistic manner – both those concerning the groups of population most at risk of exclusion, and also those relating to the principles of modern society in general. The Czech Republic has been criticised by European institutions for its attitude towards the Roma community in particular. The long-term process of doing away with rooted stereotypes and prejudices in society has not been successful. However, as a result of pressure exerted by the non-profit sector and several well-known figures, the views of society have been changing since recently in favour of ethnic minorities. Social events (festivals, exhibitions, concerts, etc.) held in the spirit of multiculturalism and tolerance have been attracting more and more people. In spite of this, we are witnessing an unprecedented level of activity on the part of the ultra-right extremists, the neo-Nazis in particular, who repeatedly attack Jewish and Roma citizens in their statements.

In all modern countries the non-profit sector is an equal partner in the implementation of inclusive education. All Czech ministries make intensive efforts to pursue this co-operation – particularly in the form of re-distributing grants, not only those which come from the EU.

- ***What specific approaches and measures have been taken to make the education system more inclusive?***

✓ ***The Anti-Discrimination Bill*** (currently under discussion by the legislature) stipulates: equal treatment and equal access to education must be ensured for all. If enacted, the law would become the cornerstone of promoting the principle of inclusive education.

✓ **Amendment to Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (the Education Act) regulating the access of foreigners to education;** in force from 1 January 2008;

The government of the CR adopted Resolution No. 1029 of 30 August 2006 as a response to the suggestion of the Council of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights concerning equal and effective access of foreigners to education and school services. In this Resolution the government assigned the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (the “Ministry”) the task of presenting an ***amendment to Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (the Education Act)***. The Education Act stipulates that all foreigners who reside legally in the Czech Republic shall have access to basic, secondary and tertiary professional education upon the same conditions as citizens of the Czech Republic, including education within institutional education and protective education. The Amendment to the Education Act provides that, in addition to the above, foreigners shall have access to preschool, basic art and language education, and to extracurricular educational activities and school services upon the same conditions as citizens of the CR. This also concerns citizens of third countries who reside legally in the Czech Republic.

Moreover, the new wording of Section 20 of the Education Act ensures access to basic education for all individuals who are not citizens of the CR under the same conditions as citizens of the CR, regardless of whether or not they are legally residing in the CR.

✓ Further provisions promoting the inclusiveness of the education system are contained in ***amendments to some legal regulations*** - for example Decree No. 73/2005 Coll. on the

education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and exceptionally talented children, pupils and students, etc.

✓ ***Grant schemes***

are of key importance for the workings of the non-profit sector as one of the main advocates of inclusive education. The MoYES plays a major part in the funding of these activities through its grant schemes “Support for Education in Languages of National Minorities”, and “Support for the Integration of the Roma Community”. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, together with the Prague City Hall, administers the response to calls issued by the ESF for grant applications. Schemes within the 2007-2013 programming period constitute another integral part of the European grant system.

✓ ***The Long-Term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System in the CR 2007***

The Plan sets out equality of opportunities in education as one of its strategic objectives. This objective is further specified as ensuring equal educational opportunities for all and providing chances for people to develop their educational potential in a safe school environment. This involves the following partial objectives: creating conditions for improving the education of socially disadvantaged pupils and pupils from not very stimulating family backgrounds; creating conditions in schools for multiculturalism in education as a way of preventing xenophobia, racism and dropping out; creating conditions for improving the education of disabled and disadvantaged individuals; preparing diagnostic tools for guidance practitioners for identification of exceptional talents, and the relevant educational methods for teachers; developing school guidance facilities providing comprehensive services to pupils in the area of pedagogical-psychological and career guidance, including prevention of pathological social disorders; creating sources of labour market information for school leavers; creating a favourable school environment to alleviate negative social influences; and improving the quality of programmes of specific primary prevention implemented by school facilities and non-government, non-profit organisations.

✓ ***The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015***

The Decade of Roma Inclusion is an international initiative by eight countries of Central and South Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro) running from 2005 and continuing until 2015. This is a political commitment of the participating countries, offering a unique opportunity for addressing poverty, social exclusion and discrimination against Roma communities at regional level. The Decade is not a new institution, nor does it bring additional bureaucracy or need for financial resources. Activities as part of the Decade will be financed from the state budgets of the participating countries.

The Czech government decided to join the Decade in its Resolution No. 136 of 26 January 2005. By joining the Czech government expressed a clear political commitment to address the issue of the situation of Roma communities not only at national level, but also internationally.

- ***What new approaches to teaching and learning are adopted in order to ensure enlarged educational opportunities for all, better learning outcomes and reduced inequality?***

The Policy for Roma Integration is the principal policy document of the Czech government in the area of integration of Roma communities. It is periodically updated and

always adopted in the form of a government resolution. In the Policy the government of the Czech Republic sets out its main aims regarding the integration of Roma communities.

The objective of compensatory procedures in the education of the Roma is a fundamental change in the existing situation where a large number of Roma children only achieve the lowest possible levels of education. A comprehensive approach to Roma children before they enter school is the subject of the ***Policy on Early Intervention for Children from Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Backgrounds***. These children need preparatory programmes and targeted assistance in order to overcome their socio-cultural disadvantages.

An optimal form of such assistance is preparation for entering school provided by kindergartens in groups consisting of both mainstream and minority children. If the socio-cultural disadvantages are to be overcome, ***it is necessary that Roma children attend kindergarten for the entire three-year period***, i.e. from the age of three. If this is not feasible, it is necessary to opt for a proven form of preparatory programme – preparatory classrooms for children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds (“preparatory classrooms”). ***Targeted assistance*** also takes the form of ***the use of teacher assistants*** who, in most cases, come from Roma communities. Teacher assistants help pupils, in line with the teacher’s instructions, adapt to the school environment and facilitate the teacher’s communication with the pupils, their parents or, possibly, the entire Roma community.

In the area of secondary and tertiary education there are instruments such as scholarships that assist in overcoming social disadvantages faced by students.

The process of overcoming education-related handicaps also involves the education of adults who, due to socio-cultural disadvantages, completed remedial school or completed basic school before they reached the ninth grade, which closed their path towards further education. ***Courses aimed at completion of basic education*** have been developed for these adults. However, they must be promoted more actively and they also need to be more focused on skills applicable in the labour market.

Other nation-wide programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are implemented in accordance with ***Government Resolution No. 98/2002 Coll. which lays down conditions and procedures for allocation of state subsidies to support activities of members of national minorities and the integration of members of the Roma community***.

- ***Specific measures designed to ensure enlarged educational opportunities for all, better learning outcomes and reduced inequality***

- a) ***Preparatory classes at basic schools and education in final years of kindergartens that is free of charge***

Preparatory classes at basic schools should serve, above all, as an instrument for bringing the skills and competencies of children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds more into line with the rest of the children. In these years pupils should prepare for entering the first grade of basic school. Emphasis is placed on eliminating language-based disadvantages.

In the final year of kindergarten children should develop key competencies necessary for entering Stage 1 of basic school. However, it has been revealed, recently, that this measure is not used by the target group to the extent expected, and its abolition is being considered.

b) Roma teacher assistants

Roma teacher assistants ensure an individual approach to Roma children in basic schools. The objective of their work is to prevent these pupils from dropping out and to improve their school performance. The knowledge of specific features of the Roma community facilitates communication with them. At present teacher assistants can be trained at some secondary technical schools (a programme with “maturita”), and Masaryk University in Brno is developing a full-time Bachelor programme in this field.

c) Minority Integration Centres (SIM)

This is a pilot project aiming to test a support system for pupils from socially disadvantaged and culturally different backgrounds. For details see <http://strediskasim.cz/index.php?mod=news&op=NewsForm&IdNode=98>

d) Prevention of dropping out and support for socially and culturally disadvantaged pupils and students in secondary education (PROPOS)

The objective of the project is to prevent pupils from dropping out and to provide support for socially and culturally disadvantaged pupils in secondary education. For details see <http://www.vos-oamost.cz/projekty/propos.htm>

e) VIP Kariéra

This is a systemic project of the MoEYS that should contribute to improving pedagogical-psychological and career guidance at schools. For details see <http://vipkariera.ippp.cz/>

f) How the education of pupils with special educational needs is treated in education programmes

All school education programmes should contain a chapter dealing with the education of pupils with special educational needs describing, above all, the conditions under which the school can educate these pupils. Schools are not yet capable of satisfying various conditions such as barrier-free access, provision of special aids for pupils with sensory disorders, special education subjects (e.g. sign language, Braille, spatial orientation, etc). According to the Education Act a teacher assistant may work in a classroom with integrated pupils. Schools show a large demand for this service, but there is often lack of financial resources to pay the assistant.

- ***How are education programmes designed and implemented so that they respond to the diversity of learners?***

a) Framework Education Programme for Basic Education

The topic of inclusive education is related to the cross-curricular theme of multicultural education that is under development. The long-term objectives are integration of pupils from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, protection of their minority culture and support for success in mainstream society. Emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher in creating an appropriate climate for the education of pupils with social disadvantages and cultural differences.

b) The Manual for the Development of School Education Programmes in Basic Education

One entire chapter of the Manual is concerned with ways of providing education to

pupils with special educational needs. This chapter also covers the education of gifted pupils and does not classify or specify types of special educational need. It is stressed in the chapter that by listing specific conditions the school shows it is ready and open for changes. The chapter also mentions that, if need be, an individual education plan is developed.

c) Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education

It is stated in the programme that framework objectives and aims of preschool education are universally applied for all children. As regards the education of children with special educational needs, the programme stresses the need to establish optimal conditions for the child's development. Moreover, it states that, in the case of these children, it is necessary to reckon with **their lower level of social adaptability** or more intensive educational needs. It mentions the possibility of using preparatory classes at basic school.

d) Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education

The document defines the concept of special educational needs. It warns against too demanding a curriculum in the initial years, which may lead to children dropping out. It also states that it should be the school's long-term objective to ensure the integration of pupils from different and disadvantaged cultural and social backgrounds, protection of the pupils' minority culture and support for their success in mainstream society. The school must also provide for specific materials and aids, use teaching methods suitable for various learning styles and various ways of organising instruction. Instruction must be planned so that it is based on the interests, experience and needs of pupils from various cultures, ethnic groups and social backgrounds. Again, the teacher is highlighted as the most important agent in the education of pupils from different cultural and social environments.

e) Special education

Pupils who were earlier excluded from education are now educated in line with the Rehabilitation Programme for Auxiliary Schools. At present the Framework Education Programme for Special Basic Schools is being finalised. It is designed for pupils with severe and profound mental disabilities and multiple disabilities. In order to help pupils with language or physical disabilities there are preparatory classes and a preparatory stage at each auxiliary school. Both these institutions are designed for pupils to enter compulsory education with success.

• How to make formal and non-formal education more effective so as to ensure inclusion of all learners

✓ The existing measures and activities in the area of inclusive education must be **consolidated in order to create a coherent movement**. This change should create room for further elaboration of the topic of inclusive education and its incorporation into strategic documents of the government.

✓ **Co-operation with the non-profit sector should be further enhanced**. The non-profit sector can and should work as a source of non-formal and informal education.

✓ In formal education it is necessary **to continue the tradition of curricular documents, an integral part of which is chapters dealing with the education of pupils with special educational needs**. Moreover, the concept of cultural and social diversity in education must be promoted at all levels of society.

✓ It is necessary to support **international co-operation with countries whose education systems support inclusive education** with a view to communicating expert knowledge and experience.

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