



## Czech Republic

Eva Bartoňová  
State Secretary – Vice Minister of Education, Youth and Sport



*Mrs. Eva Bartoňová was appointed the State Secretary – Vice Minister of Education, Youth and Sport in 2006. Before that she was a Director of Youth Department at the Ministry. Mrs. Bartoňová was born in 1956 in Železný Brod. She graduated from the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague. She started her career as the Head of Information Department of the Research Institute of Anorganic Chemistry. Then she worked as a Chief Executive Office in the Municipal Office in Česká Lípa. Between 1995 and 2000 she was the Head of Guidance in the Employment Office in Česká Lípa and from the year 2001 to 2004 she was a Vice-President of the Liberec Region responsible for education and youth. Mrs. Bartoňová is married and has two daughters.*

### **Inclusive Education – Towards Equal Opportunities in Education**

Achieving good education is a right that should be guaranteed to all children and young people. High quality preschool and basic education is a prerequisite for setting on any educational path an individual chooses to pursue. One of the priorities of education policy in the Czech Republic in the following period is to establish the necessary conditions for high quality education of all children in mainstream schools. The objectives of the measures that are being prepared in the CR are realized step by step.

Equal access to education is declared in the preamble of the Education Act and pervades all its provisions. The Act regulates the education of members of national minorities, pupils with special educational needs and exceptionally gifted pupils by means of a special provision. It contains no provision that could be interpreted as discriminatory.

Curricular reform launched in 2004 creates room in mainstream schools for individualisation of instruction and for improving the quality of their work. Great emphasis is also placed on cooperation between school and pupils' parents, and on creating a positive school atmosphere.

The education system makes use of the tools provided for in the Education Act in order to support successful inclusive education of children with special educational needs. These measures include the availability of teacher assistants for children with disabilities and social disadvantages, guidance that comprises the services of psychologists and special education teachers, the continuing training of pedagogical staff, support for refurbishing buildings to make them barrier free, and providing schools with special compensatory and didactic materials for the education of pupils with special educational needs.

One precondition for increasing the level of inclusion in education is the development of support measures in the education system and at school and local levels. Children with special learning needs should be educated primarily in mainstream schools, and they should attend special schools only if this is their best interest.

There are programmes for disabled children and their parents that start in infancy and include high quality preschool education. The programmes are implemented



by teams of special education teachers, psychologists and social workers. The system must be expanded to include children from different cultural and social backgrounds and children at risk of social exclusion and their parents.

One important factor in the development of an inclusive environment and education is a high level of competence of teachers and special education teachers who work with the children. The Ministry is preparing programmes which also involve emphasising the principle of respect for diversity in framework and school educational programmes and the setting of social/inclusive values.

In guidance, which is one of the support services, it is necessary to focus on the development of approaches sensitive to cultural and social differences and on multidisciplinary methods so that the recommendations of guidance facilities aim at the setting of effective support measures for children and their parents. In this respect it is necessary to strengthen regional resources and to create a cooperating network of specialists. This is one of the objectives of the national project “Inclusive Education Support Centres” that will be launched in 2009.

The prerequisite for increasing the level of inclusion in the education system in the Czech Republic is to pursue the principle of cooperation and partnership in order to bring the policies of various stakeholders in social inclusion into line with one another. The care for children at risk of social exclusion, in particular, involves the work of residential social workers, field social workers, low-threshold facilities, the non-profit sector, teachers, and pedagogical-psychological guidance centres. Cooperation at sectoral, regional and local levels is an absolute must in this case.

The measures are designed so as to establish a system of inclusive education in the Czech Republic where equal conditions will be created for the education of all children with regard to their special educational needs and cultural and social backgrounds, and where effective systemic support will be provided for a full development of their potential.