



**PAVLA KATZOVÁ**

Acting Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports

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Dear Mr. Eckert,

I would like to inform you that the Czech Republic is joining the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and making the commitment under the Alliance, to increase the supply, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships.

Yours sincerely

**Detlef ECKERT**

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## EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIP MEMBER STATES – PLANNED REFORMS/INITIATIVES THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Considering the Council Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships of 15 October 2013, the Czech Republic will undertake the following measures to increase the quality, supply and attractiveness of apprenticeships.

### Main objectives:

- Increasing the involvement of employers in the process of initial vocational education and training
- Increasing the quantity and quality of the workplace training in three and four years educational programs
- Promotion of quality and attractiveness of initial vocational education and training
- Develop the standards of workplace training

### Explanation:

*There is no formal apprenticeship programme along the lines of the dual system in the Czech Republic, i.e. there is no programme that includes contract between the apprentice and the employer and there is no shared responsibility between employer and the school related to the training (as it the case e.g. in Germany or Austria). Schools are exclusively responsible for education and training and curriculum shows a high proportion of theory in comparison with practical training. However, practical, work-based training and work placements are integrated into IVET curricula as a mandatory part.*

*Under the School Act, the education provided by the secondary schools (three-years **secondary education with vocational certificate**- ISCED 3C; or a four-years **secondary education with matura exam** - ISCED 3A; or a combination of both- currently the possibility of obtaining both **vocational certificate as well as matura exam** is being pilot-tested within the framework of a four-year vocational education programme) contains two parts – theoretical and practical education. Practical education is provided either in schools (e.g. practicum in labs, school workshops or practice enterprises etc.) or in a real work environment (e.g. practical training in companies). Companies providing practical education conclude with the school the Agreement on the Contents and Range of Practical Training and Terms and Conditions of its Provision.*

*In the Czech Republic, **social partners** can influence vocational education at national and regional levels particularly through the co-operation on the preparation of curricular documents. Their representatives also participate in the final exam committees of the final examination of secondary vocational programmes (ISCED 3C) and co-operate at the newly introduced uniform assignments for final examinations (ISCED 3C) and profile (vocational) parts of matura exams (ISCED 3A). Enhancing the role of employers is one of current national priorities and ways how to increase their participation in VET are being discussed and piloted.*



## Description

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (has initiated actions aiming at increasing the knowledge of employers regarding the possibilities and benefits of cooperation with VET schools. To achieve this aim the Ministry of Education undertakes the following actions:

- In late 2012 a national system **project POSPOLU** (Fostering Co-operation between Schools and Enterprises with Focus on Vocational Education and Training in Practice; acronym Together) has been launched. It should pilot closer co-operation between schools and employers and subsequently draft new proposals for legislation and other changes in the system. Implementation of some elements from dual or apprenticeship systems is being discussed with a goal to strengthen the practical part of education and to increase its quality and interconnection with the real practice. The principal objective is to design systemic changes leading to more effective and flawless co-operation between schools and enterprises. Various types of co-operation are being pilot-tested in order to analyse the existing situation and, at the same time, to identify obstacles to co-operation and take these conclusions into account when designing systemic measures. Project POSPOLU seeks to raise schools' and enterprises' awareness of elements and principles introduced by the European tools ECVET and EQAVET that foster transparency and quality of training and internships and contribute to the improvement of quality of graduates' competencies and support the process of defining the required learning outcomes.
- In January 2013, the Government adopted a paper called **New measures fostering vocational education and training** that defines main steps related to organisation, administration and legislation planned for the next few years to enhance participation in VET and its quality.
- In August 2013, the MŠMT launched a new call under the operational programme co-financed from the ESF. It is aimed to **support technical and science fields** of education and similar issues. It provides financial resources to regions who propose their own design of the measure according to their needs and allocate the finance further to the schools.
- **Tax incentives**

The Government approved the Regulations of tax incentives for companies co-operating with the schools within the area of VET, the Regulations are effective since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. Deductions aimed at fostering VET has been incorporated in the Act on Income Tax in order to enhance co-operation between employers and schools particularly in the area of sharing the means of production, exchanging experiences and enabling the pupils / students to acquire working habits directly on employers' (tax-payers') premises. Tax regulations increase the limits on tax deductibility of incentive allowance (including mostly scholarships, boarding and accommodation allowance, transport allowance, safety equipment, etc.). Among other innovations, the adjusted Regulations introduce deductible amount of CZK 200 per hour of practical training or work placement carried out on the tax-payer's premises per pupil / student. Employers often face additional costs related to assignment of staff, reservation of premises and machinery for the purposes of vocational training, which might create obstacles to their engagement in the VET system. The principle objective of the

measure is to compensate, at least partially, for the incurred costs and motivate new companies to commence co-operation with the schools. Additional deduction of 50% or 110% of the costs of assets acquired and at least partially used for the purposes of vocational training should also help to achieve desired development. The actual amount of the deduction will depend on the extent of the usage for educational purposes. This particular incentive will ensure that the pupils and students are trained on the same machinery, which the relevant companies currently use. In this case, the tax-payer is an individual or a legal person who has concluded with the school an Agreement on the contents and scope of practical training and on whose premises is the practical training or a part of accredited study programme implemented, provided that they are authorised to perform activities related to a given field of study or study programme.

- **New final examination in fields with vocational certificate** will be **obligatory** since the school year 2014/2015

Objectives:

- to enhance comparability of learning outcomes and quality of education in particular vocational fields (study programs at the level of ICED 3 C);
- to increase credibility of vocational certificate and attractiveness of vocational education as such (i.e. to foster the interest of students and parents in vocational fields);
- to involve the experts from the practice while determining the contents of final examinations in order to match as much as possible the actual requirements of the practice (employers' needs);
- to simplify teachers' preparation for the final examinations

Until now, the schools have been developing their own assignments of final examination topics for qualifications with vocational certificate. Uniform assignment of final examination topics in particular vocational fields will secure comparable levels of the examinations. The schools are testing the pupils in the same topics and accordingly to that they need to adjust the quality of education. Employers have the opportunity to influence the contents of final examinations in order to match better the current needs of the practice.

These are the topics of the written, practical and oral parts of the examination in particular vocational fields covering the national framework of fields of study. The aim is to establish uniform assignment of final examination for all vocational fields achieving thus comparability of final examination within each field. Topics of final examinations are developed under the organizational and methodological support of the National Institute for Education (NÚV) by teams of pedagogues who teach the relevant vocational programs at schools. The representatives of employers assess developed materials in terms of existing needs in the practice. Developed topics are provided to all schools on yearly basis – for each vocational field there is a set of topics comparable in terms of contents as well as complexity level.

### **Planned steps**

- Preparation of the **master craftsman examination (mistrovská zkouška)**.

The master craftsman examination is being discussed with important stakeholders and preparation of the content should start in 2015. The overall aim is to support the professional development of graduates with the vocational certificate and strengthen their social prestige. It is expected that this exam should strengthen and increase a



social status of the graduates with vocational certificate and also guarantee the quality of their work at the labour market. The master examination is being thought as a tool which could: in connection with respective legislative changes support establishment of small/family companies and creation of new job opportunities, increase the quality and prestige of the manual work and also support the attractiveness of such fields of study among young people, help to keep job positions for the group 50+, etc.

- MŠMT declared **2015 the year of technical education**. Together with the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic and other social partners the detailed programme is currently being prepared (especially media campaigns, seminars, open days, conferences, etc.).
- Among other issues is being discussed also a possibility of inter-connecting IVET (revision of national curricula) with the National Register of Qualifications.

### **Added value**

The added value is a higher involvement of social partners, strengthening the quality of practical training provided by employers and reflecting the labour market requirements. The national project which is being implemented is aiming to identify weaknesses and barriers of cooperation among schools and social partners and suggests measures to be undertaken as well as legislative changes.

### **Partners**

At national level the actions will be organised in cooperation with employers' associations, trade unions, regional authorities, schools and school authorities, Confederation of Industry, Chamber of Commerce

### **Contact information:**

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