

**Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic
until 2020**

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SUMMARY

In recent years policy makers have been under increasing pressure to rethink the starting points on the basis of which the organisation of education in the Czech Republic is determined and to set out priorities for further development of the education system. The *Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic until 2020* meets both these requirements as it assesses the current state of affairs and defines a new basic framework for further development of education. It should be binding for all education policy makers, primarily those at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, other central administration bodies and regional administrations whose remit includes education.

Despite some progress in various areas a number of objectives set out in the National Programme for the Development of Education (White Paper) of 2001 either have not been fulfilled or they have not been approached in a systematic manner. The level of awareness of interconnectedness between various parts of the education system has gradually decreased over this period. The development of the education system has not been anchored in a long-term vision and a comprehensive strategy, and the tendency was towards isolated and haphazard solutions. The result has been increased levels of uncertainty that, in recent years, have been further exacerbated by uncertainty as to what policy moves would be taken by the Ministry of Education and other policy makers. This has also weakened levels of mutual trust between various players in the education arena.

This Strategy is based on the assumption that a limited number of priorities must be set for the upcoming period that should be systematically pursued by education policy makers. In general, education policy in the Czech Republic is heading towards an education system following the concept of lifelong learning. This should fulfil the paramount purpose of education: personal development that is conducive to the quality of human life, the preservation and development of culture as a system of shared values, the pursuit of active citizenship as a prerequisite for democratic governance and preparation for employment.

Following a thorough evaluation of the current condition of the education system in the Czech Republic the Strategy sets out three priorities for the upcoming period reaching across all components of the system:

- Reducing inequalities in education,
- Supporting high-quality teaching and teachers as a prerequisite for such teaching,
- Governing the system in a responsible and efficient manner.

Over the last decade nearly all components of the education system have undergone major changes, the progressive effect of which will only come to fruition under stable conditions. In view of this the Strategy does not aim at a radical transformation of the existing system. Instead it focuses on targeted efforts to improve activities in all its component parts and at all levels, with a particular emphasis on the lowest levels.

The approval of the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 by the government means that the National Programme for the Development of the Education

System (White Paper) of 2001 is no longer valid. Follow-up strategic documents will be prepared to elaborate on the priorities and goals set out in the Strategy with a view to formulating specific measures.

1 INTRODUCTION: WHY DOES THE CZECH REPUBLIC NEED A NEW EDUCATION STRATEGY?

The primary purpose of education policy is to answer the question of how the education system should be organised and developed so as to contribute to the advancement of society, democratic governance, levels of employment, the self-realisation of individuals in a changing world and the competitiveness of the country. It is common in most developed countries that the basic principles, general objectives and the main directions for the development of education are articulated in advance in policy or strategic papers. These, once formally endorsed, then inform the specific action by policy makers at all levels.

In the Czech Republic it was the *National Programme for the Development of Education of 2001* that served as the document delineating the general education policy framework in the last decade. This so-called *White Paper* was written at the turn of the millennium as a result of broad-ranging public debate and many of its notions are still topical. However, policy makers have recently faced various developments that provide a major impetus for rethinking the underlying concepts on which the system is being developed. The most robust reasons that have prompted the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to prepare a new framework for education policy are as follows:

- Although no timeframe was set for the implementation of the *White Paper* and there has been no official announcement of its completion, the period envisaged by its authors for the fulfilment of the objectives (five years, and ten in some cases) has expired. The *White Paper* has not been replaced by a document of comparable significance, length and coverage.
- The context in which education takes place has changed considerably as compared to the period in which the document was written, particularly in terms of technology, the economy and politics.
- Independent evaluation has provided evidence that despite progress in some areas many goals set out in the *White paper* were not met and a number of measures were not implemented or their implementation differed from the original plan.
- Efforts aimed at pursuing a coherent education strategy were, after 2007, superseded by work on a number of strategic papers covering some but not all areas, the development and implementation of which was not sufficiently coordinated. As a result, the awareness of the interconnectedness between various components of the education system has gradually decreased. There was a tendency towards isolated solutions and an increase in the leverage of various interest groups and their effects on education policy.
- There is an insufficient level of understanding of the basic values, principles and orientation that should inform the long-term development of the education system. Key actors in education do not share these basic starting points, a fact which reduces the level of readiness for action pushing for changes at all levels.

- In recent years the education system has seen a growing level of uncertainty that has been further intensified by uncertainty over what policy moves would be taken by the ministry and other key policy makers (mainly organisations directly managed by the ministry, the Czech School Inspectorate, regional authorities, municipalities and municipalities with extended powers, schools and their headmasters, teachers, parents, pupils and students, trade unions, employers and, last but not least, the non-profit sector). Mutual trust between the various stakeholders in education, which can be seen as one of the prerequisites for a successful development of the education system, has been diminishing.
- Another reason why the Czech Republic needs a coherent strategic framework for public policy supporting lifelong learning is the establishment of appropriate priorities for funding the education system – both from the state budget and from European Structural and investment funds.

The overall concept and starting points for the Strategy

As with the *White Paper*, the authors of this Strategy build on the assumption that the development of the education system must be backed up by a general strategic framework that informs all partial policies, initiatives and specific measures. Accordingly, the Strategy is **conceived as a general foundation** for education policy-making in the Czech Republic in subsequent years that should be shared by all key actors. Rather than being a set of specific measures, it is a document that delineates priorities for further development of the education system. This means that the document is of a general nature, while the main priorities will be elaborated upon in more detail in implementation documents. The structure of these documents must be far more simple, transparent and interlinked than hitherto.

The Strategy embraces the concept of lifelong learning and aims to lay policy foundations for its development. This ambitious goal can only be reached if education policy contributes to the establishment of flexible links between various educational paths and to a higher degree of integration within the education system as a whole. Education policy must therefore pay appropriate attention to all main types of educational opportunity – i.e. not only within formal education, but also within non-formal and informal learning. Making lifelong learning a reality is also the main objective set out in the basic working plan for voluntary cooperation between EU member states in education and training until 2020 (the ET 2020 strategic framework). Two of its primary objectives – i.e. reducing the proportion of individuals who do not complete secondary education and increasing the proportion of those with higher education – have also been included within the main goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. The Czech Republic's Strategy for Education Policy until 2020 fully subscribes to these two European documents and the relevant commitments and undertakes to pursue their implementation in the years to come.

The priorities for education policy set out in this document are based on analyses of the Czech education system by Czech as well as international experts, comparative studies and data collected by the MoEYS, organisations directly reporting to the ministry and the Czech School Inspectorate. Moreover, the priorities have been derived from independent evaluation

of the implementation of the existing strategic and policy documents of the MoEYS, particularly the *National Programme for the Development of Education (White Paper)* of 2001 that was carried out in 2009.¹ In order to take account of the opinions of all key stakeholders in education as well as the general public, the process of developing the Strategy was, from the beginning, as open as possible. The writing of the actual text was preceded by a broad public debate on the general starting points. All the relevant actors (learners, their parents, teachers and school management, school organising bodies, representatives of the public, non-profit and business sector) and the public thus had an opportunity to contribute to the wording of the document through their suggestions and comments.

Terminology

In order to ensure a sufficient level of accuracy and comprehensibility for Czech readers the Strategy, although not being a legal document, tends to use terms embedded in national legislation. The nature of a strategic document does not allow for clarification of all contexts and variations where understanding the various terms that may occur is concerned. The meaning of some basic terms that, without further explanation, could result in a lack of clarity and resulting misunderstandings, is presented below.

For the sake of simplicity and clarity the term **teacher** is used throughout the document as an umbrella term that includes both pedagogical staff as described in Act No. 563/2004 Coll. on pedagogical staff and on the amendment to some other acts, and academic staff as described in Section 70 of Act 111/1998 Coll. on higher education institutions and on amendments and supplements to some other acts (the Higher Education Act).

Formal education takes place primarily in schools and leads to acquisition of a level of education (basic education – i.e. primary and lower secondary, basic special education, upper secondary education, upper secondary education with a vocational certificate, upper secondary education with a school leaving examination – “maturita”, tertiary professional education at conservatoires, tertiary professional education and higher education). Pre-primary education, basic arts education and language education also show characteristics typical of formal education in the Czech Republic. **Non-formal education** is focused on the development of knowledge, skills and competencies taking place in employers’ facilities, private training institutions and schools (e.g. education that is part of leisure activities focused on various topics), non-governmental, non-profit organisations, libraries and other institutions. Non-formal education also includes some leisure activities organised for children and youth as well as adults, such as various workshops, training and retraining courses and lectures. Implementation of non-formal education requires involvement of an expert lecturer, teacher or trainer. Unless the learning outcomes are recognised by the relevant body or

¹ For the sake of brevity we do not present a detailed description of the current state of affairs and extensive references to the sources of data used. Supporting arguments of a statistical nature are collected in the Analytical Background Material for the Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic until 2020.

institution, non-formal education does not lead to the formal acquisition of a certified level of education.

Informal learning can be understood as a process of spontaneous acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies based on day-to-day experience at work, in the family and in free time. It also includes self-education where the learner does not have an opportunity to verify the learning outcomes. Unlike formal and non-formal education, informal learning is not organised and coordinated at an institutional level. It is normally non-systematic and lacks the shaping influence of a teacher.

Further education is understood in the document as defined in Section 2, a) of Act no. 179/2006 Coll. on verification and recognition of further education results and on the amendment of some other acts (Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results). Further education is defined in the act as educational activities which are not considered to be initial education (i.e. which are not considered to be formal education as described above).

2 VISION

In most general terms the purpose of education may be defined through its four primary objectives:

- *personal development that is conducive to the quality of human life,*
 - *the preservation and development of culture as a system of shared values,*
 - *the pursuit of active citizenship as a prerequisite for the development of society based on solidarity, sustainable development and democratic governance,*
 - *and preparation for employment.*
-

Being aware of the responsibility for well-balanced implementation of all the aforementioned objectives, the education policy of Czech Republic pursues the development of an education system where:

- *education is of paramount interest to society as well as individuals and is considered to be of major value,*
- *people make use of various learning opportunities throughout their lives,*
- *quality, effective and fair education is accessible to all individuals, giving them an equal chance,*
- *children, pupils and students know what is expected of them at all levels and in each area of education and also what they can expect,*
- *children, pupils and students enjoy learning and are motivated to learn throughout their lives,*
- *teachers are well prepared for the practice of their profession, and they are motivated to assist children, pupils and students in using their full potential through targeted development,*
- *schools are open to systematic cooperation with the external community,*
- *education rests on the most up-to-date level of human knowledge, promotes creativity and meets the long-term needs of society and the labour market,*
- *any modifications in the organization, structure and content of education are evidence-based.*

Comparative research shows that education undoubtedly has a number of benefits both for individuals and for society as a whole, not only in financial terms but also in a number of other domains. On the other hand, a number of risks for society are associated with low levels of education. The available data provide compelling evidence, which applies internationally as well as to the Czech Republic, to show that more advanced levels of education not only result in more sophisticated knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes on the part of individuals, but also significantly increase the level of personal satisfaction related to a better labour market position and various non-economic benefits. People with higher qualifications have a generally better position in society, significantly higher income and they face a much lower risk of long-term unemployment. Moreover, they bring more economic benefit to society. Education also has a number of other positive effects. For example, more educated people have a higher life expectancy, they are less prone to health-threatening habits, they are more involved in civic activities and generally live happier lives. It is possible that, along with the growing proportion of people with more advanced levels of education, some advantages enjoyed by this group as compared to the rest of the population may weaken (e.g. the relative level of income), whereas many other advantages will not be affected by this development.²

The most recent findings of both international and Czech studies do not confirm that the educational attainment of young people in the Czech Republic has been decreasing. What they do show, however, is that Czech pupils and students still lag behind their peers in countries with the most successful education systems in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies. International studies reveal that the educational outcomes of Czech pupils generally tend to be average, inconsistent and stagnant over the long term.³ This may negatively affect individuals' chances of succeeding in life and the risks for the further development of society can hardly be overlooked. It is therefore a far-sighted strategy to provide effective education to young people at all levels so that they acquire knowledge and skills that will be conducive to their lives both as individuals and as citizens in modern society and that will help them secure good work opportunities both at present and in the future.

The overall aim of the Strategy is to improve the learning outcomes and motivation of children, pupils and students at all levels of the education system from pre-primary to tertiary education. The underlying notion is that education should help each individual to develop their potential to the highest degree. In order to achieve this, the education system should:

- ensure a secure and stimulating environment and motivate children, pupils and students and other learners to learn throughout their lives,
- establish opportunities for the education of children from early ages and support, by means of timely intervention, participation in pre-primary education, particularly of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and ethnic minorities,

² A comparative perspective is provided by *Education at a Glance 2013. OECD Indicators* (2013). A detailed evaluation of a number of economic and non-economic effects of education in the CR following from the PIAAC survey is presented by Jana Straková – Arnošt Veselý (eds.) in *Předpoklady úspěchu v práci a v životě. Výsledky mezinárodního výzkumu dospělých OECD PIAAC* (Preconditions of Success at Work and in Life. The outcomes of the OECD PIAAC international survey of adult skills) (Prague, 2013).

³ The most recent data is provided by Jana Palečková, Vladislav Tomášek et al. in *Hlavní zjištění PISA 2012. Matematická gramotnost patnáctiletých žáků* (The Main Findings of PISA 2012. The mathematical literacy of fifteen-year-old pupils) (Prague, 2013).

- ensure accessibility to education at all levels for all social groups and transferability between programmes at all these levels,
- not allow formal differentiation of educational paths at lower levels of education,
- support individual integration of children, pupils and students with special educational needs,
- reduce, mainly through an effective network of guidance services, the rate of drop-out from education and risks resulting from school failure,
- emphasize, particularly at lower levels of education, the development of basic knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that pupils can use as a foundation for further, more specialized education at any time,
- support such methods of evaluation as focus on the individual progress of each pupil and student,
- promote equal opportunities in the transition from secondary to tertiary education,
- establish foundations, based on an awareness of the demands of the labour market, for good long-term employment prospects for school leavers, and create conditions for a smoother transition to employment for those who complete programmes designed for direct entry onto the labour market,
- establish conditions allowing all individuals to complete, increase or expand their qualifications any time during their lives (special attention should be paid to individuals with incomplete education at lower levels).

The structure of the Czech education system, which faces increasing difficulties coping with current demographic, social, economic, political and cultural changes, is relatively far from being in an ideal situation. Although the system still benefits from its strengths – i.e. the traditionally low level of drop-out from initial education, a high rate of completion of secondary studies and, in the recent decade, also open access to tertiary education, some of its weaknesses have begun to show with growing intensity. The schools system in this country officially offers the possibility of transferring between all its components. However, in reality there are a number of dead ends that hamper progression through the system, perpetuate inequality and, last but not least, reduce the efficiency of the use of public resources. Key flaws in the system tend to accumulate at the interface between various levels of school education and between initial education and the labour market.

Dropping out from education does not, in general, pose a problem, as the Czech education system ranks among those with the lowest rates of drop-out (in 2012 it was 4.5%). Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue focusing on those target groups where the risk of leaving education early is high when compared to the rest of the population. In the Czech Republic these groups include children and pupils with special educational needs (i.e. with disabilities and physical or social disadvantages). Moreover, implementation of lifelong learning may also be hindered by some obstacles preventing return to education at a higher age. These barriers can be traced in the education system (e.g. formal admission requirements, inaccessibility of modes of study other than full-time) in other policy areas (i.e. insufficient coordination between education and employment policies) and, of course, on the part of learners (e.g. lacking motivation, the need to combine family and work duties). One area

worthy of special attention is the education of Roma children, pupils and students. In recent years the Czech Republic has stepped up interventions with a view to integrating members of this minority into mainstream schools and programmes and ensuring their better access to all levels and forms of education. In spite of this a number of challenges are still present and more attention will have to be paid to dealing with these challenges in years to come.

3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

One of the major weaknesses of the current education policy in the Czech Republic is the lack of clearly defined long-term strategic priorities. The body of policy and strategic papers that has, in recent years, governed education policy implementation is somewhat disorganised and contains a large number of partial objectives, interventions and measures. Many of these, apart from being insufficiently interconnected, show the absence of a hierarchical structure and linkages to entrenched priorities for the development of the education system as a whole. This makes the whole set of documents incomprehensible and inconsistent, leading to a limited capacity to fulfil the education policy goals as they are defined.

Over the last decade nearly all parts of the education system have undergone relatively important changes (decentralisation of governance and curricular reform in the schools system, a major increase in the number of students and introduction of three-cycle studies in tertiary education and the development of the National Qualifications System in further education). In this situation any plans for additional comprehensive systemic reforms normally entail high transaction costs (both financial and non-financial) and hardly ever result in the desired improvement in the quality of education. In fact, the more likely result is deterioration of quality in many respects. On the other hand, if there is sufficient stability in the system and support for its long-term, continual development, the progressive effects of the recent changes can become fully evident.

Although the MoEYS has, in recent years, tried to implement various measures in order to support implementation of the official plans, these measures have often been viewed as haphazard, ineffective and generally insufficient, particularly by schools and teachers. The Strategy therefore builds on the assumption that a limited number of priorities must be set out for the following period and that education policy makers should pursue these in a systematic and targeted manner. The following three strategic priorities have been set for the Czech Republic's education system as a result of a thorough evaluation of its current condition:

- Reducing inequality in education,
- Supporting quality teaching and teachers as the key prerequisite for this quality teaching,
- Governing the education system in an accountable and effective manner.

Education policy measures should consistently follow from evaluation of the current state of affairs and focus predominantly on continuous improvement of the quality of the existing

institutions, nurturing of relationships and synergy between various players in education and improvement of teaching and learning. The underlying goal of the measures described below is to develop an education system that will provide equal chances to all learners, enabling them to reach the maximum of their potential (be they children, young people or adults returning to formal education or pursuing other forms of education).

3.1 Reducing inequality in education

One feature typical of the Czech education system and, at the same time, one of its chronic problems is the persisting and even deepening educational inequality among children and young people. In line with the findings of a number of Czech as well as international expert studies, the main reason for this is the difference in educational opportunities and aspirations determined primarily by family background and often enlarged by early external differentiation of pupils in the education system.⁴ International comparative research studies (most recently PISA 2012, PIAAC and REFLEX 2013) repeatedly present evidence of a strong dependency of school performance on the pupils' family background and the quality of school they attend (i.e. tracking pupils into selective and non-selective schools based on family background). This has also been increasingly noted by the general public. Replication of educational inequality brings about a number of negative effects on individuals and on society as well. Apart from other things, it weakens the viability of lifelong learning, as participation in further education shows an above-average dependency on the level of formal education attained.

One primary objective of education policy is to achieve a significant reduction in the level of inequality in education through a comprehensive effort to promote quality within the entire education system. The Strategy focuses not only on formal equity in access to education, but also on the capacity of the education system to create conditions and offer effective ways to prevent and offset individuals' physical, social, cultural and other personal disadvantages, so as to ensure that inequality in performance is as little as possible determined by factors that they cannot influence and that all pupils and students achieve at least a basic level of knowledge and skills.

The Strategy aims to ensure that no social group faces a disadvantage in access to school education and that educational opportunities and outcomes are to the least possible degree influenced by factors such as gender, socio-economic status, region, nationality, cultural background (immigrants), etc. that one cannot influence. Specifically, the Strategy aims to reduce the proportion of children, pupils and students who fail to attain the basic level of expected learning outcomes. International studies suggest that the proportion of these low performers at the end of compulsory education has decreased as compared to the past, but still is relatively high. The education system must be designed so as to guarantee that schools develop the potential of all children, pupils and students to a maximum degree - i.e. including

⁴ Most recently in Michaela Šojdřová – Zonna Bařinkov – Irena Borkovcov – Radek Dlouh, *Rovn přístup ke vzdělávání v České republice: situace a doporučení* (Equal Access to Education in the Czech Republic: the situation and recommendations) (Prague, 2014).

those with learning difficulties and socio-cultural disadvantages, and, of course, those who are gifted.

The basic precondition for improvement in these areas is the availability of quality teaching for all children and young people in all schools. Specific attention will have to be paid to enlarging the range of educational opportunities for certain target groups so that their potential can be developed in full. The findings mentioned above suggest there is a need to compensate for the disadvantages resulting mainly from the learners' socio-economic and cultural background. School education in itself will hardly ever be able to fully make up for all the educational problems originating in the child's family. Furthermore, the potential of various forms of non-formal and informal education in reducing inequality has not yet been fully appreciated. On top of this, efforts to reduce inequality in education will have to be linked to initiatives under social and family policies in line with the *Social Inclusion Strategy 2014-2020*.

Reducing inequality in education does not only entail interventions to support children, pupils and students with special educational needs or other disadvantages. These measures, although being of paramount importance, do not suffice. The position of disadvantaged individuals in the education system will not improve unless the inclusiveness of the education system is systematically promoted.

3.1.1 Increasing the accessibility and quality of pre-primary education and early care

It was as early as 2001 that the White Paper set out several objectives related to pre-primary education – mainly ensuring that children have a statutory right to pre-primary education that is not limited to mere childcare. The overall objective was to support the motivation, talent and the best possible development of the diverse abilities of all children. Another objective was to increase the quality of pre-primary education with respect to its critical importance in the development of each child by means of setting a requirement for pre-primary teachers of having at least a Bachelor's degree. These objectives have not been met in full. As part of the schools reform the organising bodies for kindergartens (mostly municipalities) were assigned the legal obligation to provide a place in kindergartens for all children one year before they enter compulsory education. So-called “company kindergartens” as a corporate child care solution have been embedded in the legislation, although no incentives have yet been provided for their establishment by employers. In 2012 the Framework Educational Programme for Pre-School Education was complemented by a specification of expected outcomes that reflect more accurately current educational trends (although languages and science and technology were not included). The statutory right to pre-primary education has not been expanded beyond the last year before compulsory education, nor have the qualification requirements for teachers been increased. The rate of participation in pre-primary education in the last year before school is 88% of the age group, and it has slightly decreased over recent years (in 2005 it was 96%). The rate of participation of four-year-old children is similar and remains stable over the long term. However, in younger children the rate of attendance is far lower – 77% for three-year-olds and 27% for children younger than three. Moreover, larger age groups have reached pre-school age in recent years and capacity

problems have begun to occur as a result of this. In 2012 the MoEYS registered 59,000 rejected applications for kindergartens (the figure includes applications for more than one kindergarten), which is 3.7 times more than in 2007/2008 (13,000 rejected applications) and roughly 20% more than in 2011/2012 (49,000).

Unlike most European countries the Czech Republic lacks a working childcare system for children up to 3. The lack of capacity in day nurseries for children at this early age combined with a long period of parental leave and a considerable degree of rigidity in the labour market (shortage of part-time job offers) creates a systemic trap into which mothers on parental leave in particular may easily fall. Their potential is unused during this period, and, to make things worse, the knowledge and skills acquired earlier become weaker (the previous investment in their education is devalued). This has a significant impact on their employment opportunities later on. The results of empirical research do not support the deep-rooted view held by people in the Czech Republic that education in nursery facilities for children younger than 3 is harmful to the children.⁵ Particularly some children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from education provided by trained individuals which has the potential to eliminate some disadvantages flowing from the difficult conditions in which some children are brought up and, in this way, increases their educational chances. It is therefore a pressing task to provide a systemic solution to early childcare in the forthcoming period, and this will require coordination across ministries.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Making the last year of pre-primary education obligatory,
- Eliminating postponements of school attendance through early identification of the child's difficulties during the pre-primary period (on the basis of cooperation between parents, pre-primary teachers and guidance facilities, healthcare workers, children's social care services and, possibly, preventive social care services),
- Strengthening the network of kindergartens in a systematic way so that they can create conditions for securing a place in pre-primary education for each child whose legal guardians apply for it,
- Support the educational function of pre-primary non-parental childcare; alternative forms of childcare up to the age of compulsory education that do not have a strong educational mission (e.g. so-called "child groups") should only be supported as a temporary solution until the capacity of kindergartens or other educational facilities is sufficiently increased,
- Strengthen cooperation between school and family,
- Take targeted action to increase the rate of participation in pre-primary education of children from groups and localities threatened by social exclusion,

⁵ Hana Hašková – Steven Saxonberg – Jiří Mudrák, *Péče o nejmenší. Boření mýtů* (Care of the Youngest. Debunking the Myths) (Prague, 2012).

- Launch discussion about the content of teacher training for pre-primary teachers and the possibility of increasing the qualification requirements for the practice of this profession,
- Propose a systemic solution, in cooperation with other relevant ministries, concerning the education and care of children aged up to 3.

3.1.2 Reducing external differentiation in basic (primary and lower secondary education) and pursuing effective integration of pupils into mainstream education

As concerns its official objectives, the education policy in the area of integration of pupils and students into mainstream schools has been consistent over the long term. The *White Paper* articulated the intention to integrate various segments of basic education and to head towards education for all pupils while providing for sufficient differentiation of teaching within heterogeneous groups (school, class), and for gradually eliminating the tracking of children into specialised schools or classes.

In spite of this, the early selection and specialisation of children have not been tackled in a satisfactory manner in recent years. The proportion of pupils implementing their compulsory education in the lower years of six- and eight-year grammar schools should, at national level, reflect the aptitudes of pupils at this level so that their outflow from basic schools does not have a negative impact on the quality of lower secondary education provided by basic schools. Although the new Education Act of 2004 has brought about a certain reduction in the number of educational paths, the process of their integration (particularly as concerns specialised and mainstream education) is very slow. Moreover, the system of support that is absolutely necessary for the successful integration of disadvantaged pupils has turned out to be very inadequate. The Czech education system still shows a high degree of external differentiation from the onset of compulsory schooling. One of the consequences of the early tracking of children into various educational streams is the strengthened influence of family background on the choice of educational paths. This results in many young people not being allowed to use their potential to the fullest. External differentiation of educational paths does not result in higher-quality education (i.e. in better educational outcomes for all pupils). Instead it leads to enlargement of differences in the performance of those who attend selective schools and classes and those who do not.⁶

In terms of comparison with other EU countries, the Czech education system has for long been tackling a higher degree of differentiation from the very beginning of compulsory schooling. In addition to this there is a high rate of postponement of compulsory education that lacks proper justification and that, in many cases, makes transition to school more complicated. Another point where external differentiation occurs is in the 5th grade of basic education, with a portion of pupils transferring to eight-year grammar schools. Parents can also choose for their offspring various selective classes (e.g. with extended language teaching) to which pupils are admitted on the basis of entry tests that bear the signs of entrance examinations. Moreover, there is a growing trend, from as early as pre-primary education,

⁶ OECD: *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (2012).

towards offering above-standard educational services within public education that are provided for payment and therefore they are not accessible on an equal basis (e.g. extended language teaching, alternative educational approaches, clubs and other extracurricular activities). Not even the admission procedures within the compulsory sector of schooling can ensure equal opportunities for all pupils. The admission process to six- and eight-year grammar schools, in particular, puts pupils from less educated and lower income families at a major disadvantage. The reason for this is that the motivation for learning, the attention pupils get while studying at home and doing out-of-school activities and, consequently, their learning outcomes are increasingly determined by the educational attainment and the socio-economic status of parents. Educated parents not only sign their child up for the entrance examinations, but are also able to prepare him/her for the exam. In contrast to what is commonly believed, the six- and eight-year grammar schools effectively do not produce more thoroughly developed young people and the value they add in terms of knowledge and skills is relatively small. There is evidence that a major part of pupils at six- and eight-year grammar schools have average or below-average outcomes, while a number of talented pupils do not even want to study at these schools. At present the six- and eight-year grammar schools often provide education to children from families with a higher socio-economic status rather than serving as schools designed to speed up or promote the development of gifted pupils.⁷

The Czech Republic must head towards a system that will not stream pupils based on cognitive abilities into classes and schools with more/less demanding curricula. Instead, it should provide opportunities for all pupils to develop their potential to the fullest in a system of high-quality and inclusive public education. As in years to come increased pressure on the capacity of basic schools may be expected due to demographic developments, this is a major challenge and ambitious goal both for policy makers at all levels and, most importantly, for schools and teachers.

Major emphasis should be placed on raising the awareness about this issue on the part of parents and society at large, and on the education of teachers, headmasters and officials. The role of six- and eight-year grammar schools in the system should be rethought and efforts should be made to find common grounds for the understanding of quality in pupil and teacher performance. Moreover, there should be support for continuous assessment of learning outcomes that will not lead to early streaming of pupils, and a system should be designed for specialised educational, social and psychological services that will assist teachers in dealing with pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted. Furthermore, attention must be paid to learning and behavioural disorders in children so as to prevent the growing incidence of risky behaviour. This, again, requires emphasis on the training of teachers and the development of educational-psychological guidance services that will provide the necessary support for integration of pupils into mainstream education.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

⁷ Jana Straková, „Přidaná hodnota studia na víceletých gymnáziích ve světle dostupných datových zdrojů“ (The Value Added through Studies at Six- and Eight-Year Grammar Schools in the Light of Available Data), *Sociologický časopis* 46 (2010), s. 187–210; Jana Straková - David Greger, „Faktory ovlivňující přechod žáků 5. ročníků na osmileté gymnázium“ (Factors Affecting Transition of Fifth-Graders to Eight-Year Grammar Schools), *Orbis Scholae* 7 (2013), č. 3, s. 73 - 85.

- Eliminate postponements of compulsory education, or allow these only in exceptional cases while linking them to the system of preparatory classes,
- Establish conditions, in line with demographic trends, for enlarging the capacity of basic schools on a continuing basis,
- Focus specifically on improving the quality of education at Stage 2 (lower secondary) of basic schools as part of the process of mainstream education,
- Make a comprehensive review of the mechanisms supporting external differentiation of educational paths at the point of transition from pre-primary to primary and primary to lower secondary education (these include, in particular, diagnostic tools and admission procedures in the case of six- and eight-year grammar schools) with a view to eliminating the groundlessly high rate of streaming of children outside mainstream education,
- Present more accurate definitions of various types and degrees of disability and aptitudes in pupils and introduce the corresponding support measures including funding,
- Compensate for all types of disadvantages and support the development of all types of talent through individualised assistance,
- Introduce a system for identification (diagnosing) special educational needs for children and pupils from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds that will make it possible to assess the measures aimed at supporting their education,
- Make sure that sample testing of basic school pupils organised by the state should focus exclusively on providing feedback (to pupils, their parents, teachers, schools and policy makers) and to ensure that the testing platform is also available for schools, teachers and pupils if they wish to use it on a voluntary basis,
- Support out-of-school education and its links to formal education in the group of children and pupils aged 6-15,
- Promote effective and targeted activities within primary prevention designed for pupils and teachers with a view to minimising the incidence of risky behaviour,
- Develop and include in the educational process effective activities guiding pupils towards healthy life styles,
- Support links between school and out-of-school education,
- Level off conditions for access to out-of-school educational opportunities, resources and services while focusing specifically on localities and groups at risk of social and cultural exclusion or exclusion due to language barriers.

3.1.3 Strengthening the common elements in secondary education programmes

The main notion the *White Paper* embraced as concerns secondary education was to introduce a modular system for secondary vocational programmes that would be linked to general mainstream education and that would allow for easier horizontal and vertical transfers between the programmes as well as for continuation within further education. The long-term plans that were subsequently approved focused primarily on inter-connecting secondary vocational education with employment through the requirement of work experience gained at the real life workplace.

The goal of reducing the degree of external differentiation of secondary education and increasing its transferability has only partially been met as part of school reform. Following the introduction of Framework Educational Programmes the number of educational programmes has been cut down significantly, but there are still nearly three hundred of them. The new challenges for secondary education result from the changes in its position within the education system that have taken place in recent years. As distinct from the situation in which the *White Paper* was written, nowadays a large proportion of the relevant age group goes on to tertiary education. This has a major impact on what is required of secondary education. However, its current structure corresponds much more to a situation where most school leavers head directly to the labour market.

Most weaknesses occur when secondary education is not completed by the “maturita” examination (upper secondary education and upper secondary education leading to acquisition of a vocational certificate). The major decrease in the number of schools, pupils and graduates is far from being only the consequence of the growing range of other educational opportunities at secondary level. To a large degree it is the accompanying feature of long-term problems in this sector. The results of international comparative studies (most recently PIAAC published in 2013) testify to the generally low (and still deteriorating) standards of basic skills on the part of vocational programmes graduates. For example, on average their reading literacy scores are approximately the same as those of basic school leavers and their ICT problem-solving scores are even lower. The reasons for this appear to be rather comprehensive and include wider social and economic factors as well as problems pertaining specifically to the secondary vocational education sector. Although the poor learning outcomes in these pupils likely have their roots in compulsory education, it is clear that in terms of its quality, effectiveness, relevance and attractiveness the sector is facing major threats that, in the future, can turn into major problems. These include legal restrictions concerning the award of business licences, diminishing demand for low-skilled workers (due to technological advancement graduates of some of these programmes are in this category) and a limited level of adaptability to fast changes in the labour market. Graduates of vocational programmes without “maturita” have, in recent years, been experiencing a constant threat of a high unemployment rate and generally show a low level of satisfaction with the qualifications they have acquired. The experience of employers confirms this and so do the conclusions of international studies where pupils in vocational programmes leading to a vocational certificate show very poor results compared to the national average (particularly in reading literacy). The studies also reveal that targeted preparation for specialised occupations often misses its goal since 5 years within completion of their education the majority of

graduates work in a field other than they studied. Moreover, a large part of those who complete vocational programmes without “maturita” continue studying follow-up courses leading to “maturita”. The system used by these courses has been ineffective over the long term (low rate of completion and high rate of unemployment among graduates). It is therefore primarily the sector of vocational education without “maturita” that requires a profound conceptual change that will not only guarantee its attractiveness, relevance and benefits for young people nowadays, but also give them what they need for life in the 21st century. First it will be necessary to ensure that all pupils in secondary vocational programmes get a level of skills that will make it possible for them to continue pursuing their professional development and lifelong learning. Specifically, it is desirable to improve the quality of basic literacy and general skills, knowledge and competencies as their importance for the lives of the graduates is paramount – be it in terms of labour market position, involvement in further education or the capacity to deal with common life situations. This is also important in terms of the effectiveness of the system. Financial resources must not be spent on too early specialisation of the pupils that does not and cannot bear fruit in the long term.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Strengthen the common base of programmes of secondary education, secondary education with a vocational certificate and secondary education with “maturita” consisting in the development of basic knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes so as to ensure the graduates’ long-term employability and more success in further studies as well as in their personal lives,
- Avoid increasing the number of secondary vocational programmes and link them more effectively to labour market needs,
- Include mathematics as an obligatory subject as part of the “maturita” examination starting from 2020 at the earliest, after systemic changes are carried out in the teaching of this subject at primary and secondary level,
- Carry out a thorough reform of programmes following upon vocational programmes without “maturita” with a view to enhancing their quality and effectiveness,
- Support the further professional growth of vocational education graduates by means of introducing a master craftsman examination that could be taken no earlier than 3-5 years after graduation and the successful passing of which would allow for entry to tertiary education.

3.1.4 Guaranteeing free access to a wide range of tertiary education

Although the recent comprehensive revision of tertiary education in the Czech Republic focused mainly on universities, it affected the whole education system and considerably changed the substance and meaning of several other education segments, especially secondary and tertiary professional education.⁸ The accessibility of tertiary education, especially for the

⁸ Summarized in Libor Prudký – Petr Pabian – Karel Šima, *České vysoké školství. Na cestě od elitního k univerzálnímu vzdělávání, 1989 – 2009* (Czech Higher Education. From elitist to mass education) (Prague) 2010).

young population, has increased thanks to a consistent effort to increase the capacity of higher education institutions, the unprecedented rise in the number of students in higher education and the favourable demographic trend. Still, tertiary education remains rather inaccessible for certain disadvantaged groups in the population, still showing excessive dependence on socio-economic status and the parents' level of education. Similarly, despite a substantial improvement in recent years, the conditions for applicants and students with physical disabilities remain unsatisfactory. Easier access to tertiary education after the removal of certain entrance barriers increased the importance of differentiation mechanisms, leading to increased school failure.

Together with the growing number of students, tertiary education institutions made a great effort to offer a wider range of study programmes which would better satisfy the diverse inclinations, ambitions, wishes and goals of this very heterogeneous group of applicants. In recent years, the Czech Republic has nearly completed the restructuring of higher education study programmes as defined by the Bologna Process. The original five-year master's degree programmes have been divided into two cycles - the bachelor's degree programme and the follow-up master's degree programme. Some study programmes, however, failed to achieve more than a simple administrative separation of the two cycles - with no methodical definition of the mission and the expected goals of the individual phases for individual target groups of students. This is most probably the main reason why most students continue their studies after achieving the bachelor's degree, although the original estimates expected about fifty percent of bachelors directly to enter the labour market.

Tertiary education gives people a number of advantages, such as better response to the increasing qualification requirements in a number of professions, better position in the labour market for graduates from tertiary professional or higher education, as well as a number of non-economic benefits. All this clearly shows the enduring need for unrestricted and easy access to tertiary education. Following a decade of extremely rapid quantitative expansion, the field of tertiary education will need some time in order to regain sufficient stability and create conditions for the gradual completion of mechanisms designed to improve the performance of the system and ensure its high quality, fairness and efficiency.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Uphold the open access to tertiary education in order to keep the number of newly enrolled students within the whole tertiary education system at roughly two thirds of each one-year age cohort. It is vital to grant easy access in particular to bachelor's degree programmes, either in the form of the lower cycle of higher education or as the educational programmes of tertiary professional schools. On the other hand, access to master's degree programmes (both "long" and "follow-up programmes") should be even more selective,
- Enable secondary vocational school graduates with vocational certificates to continue their studies at tertiary vocational schools by means of introducing a master craftsman examination,

- Create conditions for easy transfers between profession-oriented bachelor's degree programmes at higher education institutions and educational programmes of tertiary professional schools,
- Allocate more capacity in higher education institutions to the education of persons who could not access or failed to finish their tertiary studies at a time when there was a restricted and elitist approach to tertiary education,
- Facilitate the path from secondary to tertiary education for socially or physically disadvantaged students,
- Create conditions for the development of a wide range of study programmes at higher education institutions, both in terms of content and form of education,
- Review the existing instruments of higher education policy which currently hold back the diversity of tertiary education programmes (typically the current model of public higher education funding and the system of study programme accreditation),
- Encourage higher education institutions to reduce the rate of school failure and drop-out (but not at the expense of high quality and standards of education).

3.1.5 Creating conditions for easier entry of graduates into the labour market

The percentage of unemployed graduates and young people in general stays much higher than the average national unemployment rate. It is, moreover, rapidly growing in several segments (especially in the case of vocational school graduates with vocational certificates and graduates of follow-up courses). Although the chances of fresh graduates finding a job are generally much higher than in other European countries, the group should still be considered one of the most fragile in the labour market. It is vital to create better conditions for a smooth entry of graduates to the labour market and for their permanent employment. In view of this, the schools should focus on strengthening their students' ability to learn new working skills and adapt to the changing conditions and requirements of the labour market. The education system must not only provide young people with the ability to learn and develop specific skills needed in specific jobs, but also teach them to be flexible enough to alter their qualification by acquiring new knowledge and skills in order to be able to change their profession if needed.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Reform the system of secondary vocational education in order to allow for more intense and efficient development of soft skills and to include a greater share of vocational training in the last stages of the study programme, in order to provide students with extensive professional experience,
- Update Framework Educational Programmes for Secondary Vocational Education with respect to the descriptions of professional qualifications as specified in the National Qualifications System,
- Motivate higher education institutions to increase the proportion of students in profession-oriented study programmes, to expand the offer of profession-oriented

courses in life-long education, and to increase the proportion of experience-based learning in profession-oriented study programmes,

- Create conditions for better systematic use of the educational potential of public research institutions, such as the Czech Academy of Sciences,
- Encourage methodical use of internships and work placements in companies as an effective tool of employment support,
- Promote partnership between schools and employers in order to facilitate the transfer of graduates from schools to the labour market.

3.1.6 Increasing the quality and accessibility of further education

The 21st century is distinguished by rapid changes in the social, economic, technological and cultural conditions of human existence. Instead of passive acceptance of these changes, it is desirable that people take up the reins and actively shape their lives and public affairs. The education system needs to respond to this development by offering people suitable support in order to help them adapt to the ever-changing world. The changes have had a considerable impact on the labour market. The technological development and unpredictable economic trends in various industries produce radical changes in the skills required for individual jobs, making it more demanding for job-seekers to adapt to the changing conditions. Many people change jobs or even professions several times during their productive life and the number is constantly growing. There is often a vast gap between the skills and knowledge that graduates have acquired at schools and those demanded by employers. Interventions in the formal education system are usually inefficient in dealing with these disparities, while further education and encouragement of active citizenship and social cohesion can produce a stronger effect on the personal development of people and their future position in the labour market.

Recent years have witnessed the implementation of several measures which effectively supported further education. These included mainly the enactment of Act no. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, as well as the subsequent processing of a system for verification and recognition of previous education based on the National Qualifications System. Some schools have also begun to change into centres for lifelong learning, offering further education services in addition to initial education. The aspects that need to be emphasised in the years to come include the improvement of further education quality, methodical stimulation of the demand for further education by means of a comprehensive information service concerning the opportunities and benefits of further education, and strengthening the role of career counselling in professional life.

The education policy continues the mission of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic of 2007, in emphasising the role of further education within the concept of lifelong learning. This tendency is also supported by the EU's Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020).

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Create conditions for the development of a sufficiently extensive offer of further education,
- Release information stimulating the demand for further education, especially with respect to low-qualified and socially disadvantaged segments of the population,
- Support and extend the activities of schools, other educational institutions and libraries in the field of lifelong learning, encourage schools to offer further education services in addition to initial education for pupils and students; such further education services should include professional training, education developing personal interests or active citizenship, and retraining courses for the adult population, including the elderly; the courses should comply with the system of recognition defined in the National Qualifications System,
- Encourage further education to relate to the needs of the labour market, to comply with the National Qualifications System, and to allow for interaction with the instruments of Active Employment Policy (e.g. retraining courses).

3.1.7 Customising the provision of guidance services

One of the key purposes of the *White Paper* was to make guidance and counselling services focus on the personal development of students, support of exceptionally gifted students and mutual interaction between pupils and teachers; all of these with greater emphasis on the preventive role of counselling. Specialised counselling facilities should respect the counselling provided by schools and interact with other facilities providing counselling for children, young people and families. From a long-term perspective, the strategic documents repeatedly suggested that general counselling (especially career counselling and educational and psychological guidance services) should be integrated directly into the school structure, while the current independent institutions should provide mainly specialised counselling.

Counselling is one of the key sore points of the Czech education system. Ever since the establishment of the independent Czech Republic, the counselling services have not been centrally managed and monitored for their content and standards. Clients have no means officially to question and reverse the decisions of the counselling facilities. The system displays a number of fundamental flaws. One of them is the fact that financial resources for the support of pupils with special educational needs are allocated to schools (rather than to the pupils). The system also suffers from weak mutual relations between various fields of counselling. Although the counselling services are designed to compensate for the disadvantages (or support special talents) of pupils, paradoxically, the current system promotes selective elements in education. The field of counselling services is also burdened by a lack of both financial and human resources, especially with respect to the needed widening of the range of services. In addition, most schools fail to secure a sufficient volume of services provided by school psychologists and educational counsellors. Career guidance is often provided by insufficiently qualified teachers whose work is rarely adequately rewarded. To date, education policy has focused predominantly on career counselling, while educational guidance has been limited to dealing with special educational needs. The attention paid to the systematic support of pupils and schools has been totally insufficient and has not even made it possible to fulfil many of the declared goals of education policy (e.g. working with a wide range of pupil and student groups). Several projects aimed at the improvement of the quality of, and accessibility to, counselling services for adult applicants or students have been launched in recent years and it will be an important task for the forthcoming period to develop them further and evaluate their success.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Encourage counselling services to satisfy the individual needs of children, pupils and students, and provide additional support to children, families and schools,
- Guarantee sufficient accessibility to counselling services directly at schools in order to provide effective assistance to all children, pupils and students; continuously improve the quality of counselling at all stages of the educational system - from pre-school to university education,
- Support the services of school psychologists and special needs education specialists in ordinary mainstream schools,

- Develop and support efficient counselling services in the area of primary prevention of socially risky behaviour in children, pupils and students,
- Publish information about schools, especially their character and specialisations, on the media allowing for remote access; widen the offer of educational counselling to help pupils, including exceptionally gifted pupils, select the right school and the most beneficial options within curricular and extra-curricular education and in order to help them understand the offer of after-school educational resources and services,
- Improve the methodology for the management of counselling facilities,
- Set up an efficient and transparent system of funding for measures addressed to those with special needs based on a reliable psychological and educational diagnosis, and secure stable regular allocation of resources from the state budget,
- Create conditions for better collaboration between various types of counselling facilities, encourage a better connection between educational and psychological counselling and preventive, social, healthcare and employment services,
- Improve the accessibility and quality of career counselling, emphasising the development of skills needed for the management of one's professional path,
- Develop informational, educational and methodological support of guidance services from a lifelong perspective; encourage accessible and high-quality counselling services for adult applicants for formal or further education.

3.2 Supporting high-quality teaching and teachers as a prerequisite for such teaching

High quality teaching is a vital precondition for children, pupils and students to develop to the full. To increase the quality of education, a majority of the population must understand educational goals and needs, and all actors involved in the education process must be motivated and committed to continuous improvement of teaching, and they must have the necessary skills and conditions to do that.⁹

The common thread running through all education systems widely regarded as successful is the considerable attention paid to the selection of teachers, their initial training and permanent professional support. Numerous studies show that, in addition to high levels of professionalism, teachers also need prestige and social respect in order efficiently to influence the development and study results of their pupils and students.¹⁰ The school system in the Czech Republic faces a number of serious issues in the area of training, employment and further development of teachers. One of the crucial problems is the generally low attractiveness of teaching jobs in so-called “regional education” (schools up to tertiary level) caused by the low average salary (not only in an international context, but also compared to

⁹ Ben Levin, *System-wide Improvement in Education* (Paris, 2012).

¹⁰ McKinsey&Company, *How the world's best performing school systems come out on top* (2007).

the average income of the university-educated population in the CR). Other issues include limited opportunities for career development, as well as a generally accepted view of teaching as unchallenging and undervalued. In addition, key actors in the field of education have not been able to agree what role teachers should actually play in the current dynamically developing world of education. The above factors add to a number of disconcerting trends recently associated with the teaching profession, most notably increasing age and gender imbalance within the profession. The Strategy builds on the assumption that the necessary improvement of learning and everyday teaching and managing practices at schools can only be achieved through the improvement of initial teacher training, as well as a substantial input into the continuous improvement of teachers' professional skills and their further professional development. This challenge applies also to the field of university education. Although academics enjoy much higher social recognition, they rarely receive systematic support to improve their teaching.¹¹

Experience from successful education systems shows the elementary need to clearly define the basic criteria for judging the quality of schools and to specify the methods for continuous improvement of teaching. High-quality education requires the regular upgrade of educational resources and infrastructure, with the increasing influence of information and communication technologies. Deeper integration of modern technologies into the teaching process offers excellent opportunities for fully individualised use of effective learning processes, but it also significantly facilitates lifelong learning and prepares people for life in the world affected by rapid development of digital technologies.

3.2.1 Completing and implementing a career system for teachers and improving conditions for their work

The quality of teachers' work is generally considered one of the key aspects shaping the learning outcomes of pupils and students and determining the quality of the education system as a whole. That is why education policies in most countries focus predominantly on the rules and mechanisms regulating the selection and career development of educators. Career systems in education define formal qualification requirements for the teaching profession and describe the rules for personal development, both vertically (in terms of increasing teaching quality and creating adequate opportunities for efficient learning leading to better study outcomes) and horizontally (specialization, widening of teaching qualification, improving teaching skills, etc.). Most career systems are closely interrelated with professional standards for teachers. Those define the required teaching skills for individual levels and specialties and outline the opportunities for skill formation, further development and formal verification.

The Czech Republic seeks to complete and implement a career system which would motivate all teachers constantly to improve their teaching skills. This should be supported by a motivating remuneration system with transparent rules. The whole system should consist of four levels: the first level for novice teachers; the second level as the qualification threshold

¹¹ Karel Šima – Petr Pabian, *Ztracený Humboldtův ráj. Ideologie jednoty výzkumu a výuky ve vysokém školství* (Humboldt's Lost Paradise. Ideology of unity of research and teaching in higher education) (Prague, 2013).

for regular teachers; and the last two levels providing opportunity for career development and professional growth. In addition, it should create suitable conditions for the professional growth of teachers who have previously worked in other professions. Career development should be interlinked with a system of ongoing education to motivate and support teachers in developing their teaching skills and abilities. To achieve this, the career system should include support mechanisms, such as assistance from mentors, best practice sharing and systematic support for the qualitative assessment of their own teaching and learning. Suitable methods should be employed to evaluate teachers' progress and provide grounds for their promotion to higher career levels or the broadening of their teaching qualification.

The career system for headmasters should create a stimulating, secure and transparent setting for the selection, evaluation and further professional development of headmasters, emphasising ongoing enhancement of their school management skills to achieve better educational results.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Complete the professional standards for teachers, tackling the crucial aspects of high-quality educative work, supplemented by the ongoing formative evaluation of teachers focused on support for and improvement of their educative work,
- Complete the proposal for a career system for teachers, and pilot test all its components (use of professional teaching portfolios, evaluation, training),
- Outline a strategy and obtain resources for the gradual implementation of the career system based on the experience gained from the pilot testing and other relevant input,
- Interlink the career system for teachers with the system of initial and further teacher training,
- Create professional standards for headmasters describing essential skills and abilities for high quality school management, with special emphasis on the management of education and improvement of the education system through enhanced collaboration between schools,
- Supplement professional standards for headmasters with a framework for selection and evaluation of headmasters by the organising body and/or the Czech School Inspectorate, with the key goal of providing headmasters with stimuli for the further improvement of their work,
- Improve the protection of teachers, possibly using “protected person” status,
- With regard to economic development, endeavour to secure more financial resources for the salaries of educators and other school employees.

3.2.2 Modernizing the initial training of teachers and headmasters

The need for modernization of the system of initial teacher training has been set out already in the *White Paper* and some of the follow-up strategic documents, which specified the requests

for clear definition of the content, forms and methods of initial teacher training, especially in relation to the goals of the curricular reform. The suggestion for initial teacher training modernisation can be found in numerous independent recommendations for Czech education policy. The main areas for development include more intense practical training, which currently takes up merely 4% of the curriculum for future teachers, and development of teaching skills with respect to inclusive education. Experience from successful education systems (Finland, Ontario, Singapore etc.) indicates that the common thread running through successful education systems consists in recruiting teachers from the best secondary school graduates. This shows the need to emphasise the aptitudes of applicants for teacher training.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and teacher training study programmes for the most gifted applicants,
- Within teacher training study programmes, allow enough space for the development of teaching skills necessary for classroom work (e.g. use of diagnostic methods, work within the classroom climate, adapting one's teaching to pupils' individual needs, monitoring of individual learning progress, use of summative and formative evaluation, teaching heterogeneous classes, efficient use of information and communication technology, open educational resources etc.),
- Significantly increase the quality and share of reflective practice as a vital part of teacher training study programmes,
- Strengthen collaboration between teacher training facilities and schools providing practical training, as well as schools that employ fresh teacher training graduates,
- Review the content of initial headmaster training, placing special emphasis on development of education leadership skills.

3.2.3 Strengthening further education and methodological support for teachers and headmasters

To be able to increase the quality of their work, teachers mainly need proper motivation and methodological support that will respect their style of teaching, as well as their own learning style. This calls for more intense teacher training directly within their classroom work. Schools express a strong demand for the greater use of training elements such as mentoring, supervision, sharing best practices, or more opportunities for further teacher training. The current offer cannot cover this need. In addition, services in the field of further teacher training are currently unavailable to a significant number of schools, due to organisational (difficulties with supplying absent teachers) and financial concerns (costs of hiring supply teachers, limited resources for further education). At the same time, it is necessary more efficiently to motivate teachers to embark on further education. More attention should also be paid to further education and continuous support of headmasters, as they can and should play a crucial role in the processes leading to higher quality of education.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Ensure that every teacher has access to further education programmes and individual support at any point of their career. This individual support should be built upon careful consideration of the teachers' own practice under professional leadership,
- Remove the barriers to wider availability of further education services,
- Support efficient forms of sharing experience between teachers; explore cases of sharing experience at Czech schools and publish them for inspiration,
- At higher levels of the career system, define the criteria for mentors and create a scheme for developing mentor skills. Mentor positions should be taken by teachers who have achieved a high level of skill in particular fields (regardless of age or seniority) and are able to educate others,
- Ensure that each novice teacher is supported during the induction process by an experienced colleague with mentor skills,
- Provide overall support to leading teachers, including adequate rewards and an opportunity to cut down the number of hours they teach in order to allow them to work as mentors at schools,
- Create a comprehensive system of professional development for headmasters, respecting the varied needs at different stages of their career.

3.2.4 Increasing the significance of high-quality teaching in tertiary education

Among various roles of tertiary education, teaching should be seen as the most important one. A recent steep rise in the number of students in tertiary education gave rise to new initiatives and approaches to teaching. Despite substantial progress achieved with respect to resources and technological equipment available at schools, we should always keep in mind that it is teachers – i.e. academics - that play the central role in helping students accomplish their goals. Recent years have seen an increase in the ratio of students per academics, as well as growing heterogeneity of the student population. These trends bring new challenges and call for new approaches to the role of academics. At the same time, new questions arise about the adequate number of academic staff, desired qualification standards and the application of various teaching styles in the pursuit of tertiary education goals. A special challenge is created by the need for enhancing the international context of the Czech tertiary education in order to allow as many students as possible to meet with international peers and lecturers within study programmes organised both in and outside the Czech Republic, and to establish the international dimension as one of the defining criteria for high-quality tertiary education.

Although most strategic documents in the field of tertiary education speak about strengthening the role of high-quality education, they rarely pay significant attention to the development of teaching skills in academic staff and to the support of high-quality teaching. Quite the contrary. The quality of teaching has been overshadowed in recent years by practical measures implemented through tertiary education and research policies that

emphasised the importance of performance-oriented quantitative parameters in the field of research (number of associate and full professors and volume of publications).

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Win a more important position for teaching quality within tertiary education policy instruments (especially financing of public tertiary education institutions and accreditation),
- Create suitable conditions for support of teaching activities of academic staff,
- Enrich study programmes with educational elements built on the professional or research experience of students and/or academics,
- Use all available instruments to support the international dimension of the studies as an essential component of tertiary education.

3.2.5 More clearly defined educational goals

The clarity and relevance of educational goals have long been recognised as a vital task for education policies. The school reform in “regional education” has replaced the former curricular system with a more flexible concept of Framework Educational Programmes governing school-specific educational programmes. The Framework Educational Programmes set out a new curriculum for pre-school, primary and secondary education (although the curriculum for the smallest children failed to receive sufficient attention) and defined the expected output levels. The implementation of the programmes in large measure encouraged the educational autonomy of individual schools. Their use in practice, however, shows that the descriptions of expected outputs lack detail and do not sufficiently distinguish between primary and secondary goals. While educational programmes offer effective guidance for teachers, pupils and parents, they provide few reference points for the tracking of learning success. In this respect, the newly implemented Standards for Basic Education also fail to fulfil this function, as they were developed in too close a connection to the intended testing of pupils at all levels with implications for their future educational opportunities. Therefore, the Standards mainly focus on determining the lowest acceptable performance level, which limits their use as a guidance and feedback source. To date, there have been no mechanisms for the systematic collection of ideas for the modification of curricular documents and no representative expert platform that could provide an objective review of such ideas.

Tertiary education faces a similar lack of clarity where legitimate expectations of study outcomes are concerned. Changes during the past decade (e.g. implementation of structured curriculum and the growing number of students) have eroded the traditional shared notion about the desired qualifications of applicants, students and graduates, but also about the role of academics in educating an increasingly diverse student population.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Clearly define the expected educational goals as easy-to-use reference points for teachers, pupils, students, parents, employers, as well as the general population; educational goals should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but should include more general skills and attitudes that predispose students for active citizenship, environmental awareness and democratic governance,
- Create an umbrella curricular document for pre-school to tertiary education that would describe the expected outputs and educational goals of the individual stages,
- Using the instruments and methods of educational research, evaluate the curricular reform within pre-school, primary and secondary education in terms of practical experience,
- Create a mechanism for the collection of various suggestions for modifications of the curricular documents, as well as an expert platform for their assessment,
- Gradually implement the National Qualifications Framework for tertiary education to support the systematic use of educational goals within tertiary study programmes,
- At all levels of the educational system and using learning outcomes as the starting point, develop mechanisms for transparent recognition of earlier formal and non-formal education (including education completed abroad) and informal learning for the purposes of subsequent study.

3.2.6 Modernizing the evaluation system at the level of the child, pupil and student

Research studies imply that evaluation at the individual level of pupil and student can significantly influence learning, both positively and negatively, since it may either encourage or discourage the individual's learning strategy. Assessment can either add to the pupil's motivation to learn or cut it back, it can turn the pupils' and teachers' attention toward important educational goals or lead to an undesirable reduction of the educational content. That is why education policy must cautiously define the evaluation system in a way that supports its positive influence on learning processes. Evaluation should serve as an effective source of feedback for pupils, students, parents, teachers and schools, helping them achieve all important educational goals and supporting the self-evaluation of pupils and students. The Czech education system has traditionally favoured summative assessment, namely school marks, which represent an arbitrary and subjective method of evaluation with very limited added value for pupils and students. Such evaluation only compares pupils to one another or to a pre-defined standard which is, moreover, rarely clearly communicated to the pupils (only adjusted by the teacher). Formative evaluation combined with consistent monitoring of pupils' and students' progress is still rather rare. With increasing diversity among study groups, the need for individual progress monitoring and formative feedback becomes more urgent. Teachers need to be given maximum support to learn to give effective feedback. Prior to that, it is necessary to synchronize teachers' views on the quality of pupils' performance and the signs pointing to the pupil's having started to acquire the required levels of knowledge and skills under assessment. To offer teachers effective assistance with the evaluation of

pupils' progress, it is vital to develop a set of evaluation instruments to be used at the school level, supplemented by regular methodological support for teachers focused on increasing the added value of education for every pupil.

Examinations conditioning completion of a particular level of education represent a specific form of evaluation. In the Czech Republic, this mechanism is employed mainly in secondary and tertiary education. In recent years, the severest controversies concerned the reform of secondary school leaving examinations. The school-specific part of the examination has been supplemented with a national part as of 2010/11. In years to come, both parts of the examination will remain, but they should get more into line with the Framework Educational Programmes for secondary education. The first and second stage of basic education should remain free from any final national examination. The goal of any evaluation at these levels should consist exclusively in rendering feedback to pupils and their teachers.

The Czech Republic has lately made great progress in developing sets of test instruments, parts of which are already available in electronic form. These instruments should facilitate extensive surveys and effective confirmation of education outcomes. At the same time, however, it is vital systematically to monitor the associated risks and eliminate possible undesirable effect on the education system.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Create a platform for supporting formative evaluation of children, pupils and students,
- Develop evaluation instruments for monitoring all (i.e. not only knowledge-based) aspects of pupils' performance, set up detailed specifications of skills needed to achieve the required performance level, with examples of evaluated pupils' work. Evaluation instruments must include not only testing, but also observation and content analysis of pupils' work and output,
- Encourage more consistent use of summative evaluation,
- Design amendments to the current model of school-leaving examination to accommodate the specificities of individual educational programmes leading to the school-leaving examination, and commence the transfer to electronic form of the common part of the school-leaving examination,
- Encourage tertiary education institutions to implement modern evaluation methods conforming to their educational goals and methods.
- Assess the influence of pupil performance testing on the education system and prevent any possible negative impact of test instruments on teaching and learning,

3.2.7 Implementing modern methods of school evaluation

The Czech education system defines two basic forms of school evaluation: internal evaluation and evaluation completed by the Czech School Inspectorate or the school's organising body

(in the case of kindergartens, basic schools, secondary schools and tertiary professional schools) or the Accreditation Commission (in the case of higher education institutions).

The main purpose of evaluation is to provide feedback that helps individuals and schools improve their work, i.e. has a formative function. Through motivating relevant persons to review and enhance their performance, evaluation should make them feel more responsible for their own results. It is wrong to presume that merely ensuring inspection at output level can improve the results of education without paying equivalent attention to the wider support of the education process itself. International experience clearly shows that checks of education results never lead to their improvement, unless the evaluation supports learning through feedback and is complemented by systematic and thoughtful teaching support.

Systematic support of professional development is as important for evaluation tool designers as for their users. The near future should see work with both groups aimed at enforcing their awareness of the available evaluation instruments and enhancing their ability to draw conclusions from evaluation.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Create and publish criteria for evaluating schools and encourage their consistent use,
- Harmonise the evaluation criteria used by the Czech School Inspectorate with the general criteria for school assessment, develop a clear methodology, and encourage the use of these criteria within inspection activities and evaluation of schools by their organising bodies,
- Emphasise formative aspects in school assessment conducted by the Czech School Inspectorate to support improvement, and provide schools with methods that are meaningful in the pursuit of quality and in the self-evaluation processes,
- Define more specific rules for assessment of schools by their organising bodies,
- Limit activities that produce ranking scales of schools with no additional context,
- Encourage quality assurance processes (internal and external) as a link between the autonomy of higher education institutions and their responsibilities – strengthen the importance of internal quality assurance mechanisms at higher education institutions and reinforce their connection with external evaluation and the accreditation process.

3.3 Governing the system in a responsible and efficient manner

Management of the school system has experienced radical reform within the last 15 years, especially in “regional education”, which went through significant decentralisation (transfer of powers from central or national level to regional and municipal bodies) and an increase in school autonomy, as planned in the *White Paper*. These changes opened up new space for innovation and the participation of all actors within the education system. On the other hand,

the decentralisation resulted in significant decline in the system administration, fragmentation of support capacity, and problems with the coordination of education policies at the national, regional and municipal level. Higher levels of autonomy granted schools more independence, but also encumbered them with excessive responsibilities without any prior training or support for headmasters and other school managers. Earlier strategic documents failed to pay sufficient attention to management. The *White Paper* has tried to tackle the question of management in relation to the education system as a whole, but other categories have been largely overlooked. A typical example is the entirely disregarded area of extra-curricular, after-school education which has developed dramatically over the last decade.

3.3.1 Strengthening elements of strategic management in education policy

The transfer of decision making powers from the central administration to the regional or municipal level is the most groundbreaking change in management of the Czech education system. Consequently, it is the key area for interventions aimed at strengthening strategic management principles at all levels. The reform caused several side-effects, such as extensive fragmentation and even disintegration of central and regional management. There are an enormous number of organising bodies, most of whom are responsible for only one school. This leads to fragmentation of resources, misrepresentation of information or communication, and weakening of mutual trust between individual stakeholders. At present, it is necessary to continue and deepen the systemic reform carried out in accordance with the *White Paper* by supporting individual bodies engaged in strategic management. The Strategy directly responds to the changes in the administration of the education system and the proposed measures focus on strengthening its resources and streamlining mutual communication and coordination of education policies. The administration of the Czech education system is heavily burdened by frequent fundamental changes. Research studies report an alarming fluctuation of employees within the central bodies of public administration in the Czech Republic, including the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. This represents a considerable hindrance for any systemic changes in education, as they can only be successfully put into practice under sufficiently stable conditions.

The group of key actors in education should specifically include all school executives, i.e. not only headmasters, but also their deputies, administrators, officials of central bodies, politicians and many other persons who manage or lead others in any way. The ability to lead others is not to be taken for granted. It requires meticulous preparation, acceptance and constant development. The Czech Republic still lacks any system of training for management in education, or any central institution that would prepare people for management positions in education (including positions in public administration). The responsibility for the training and professional development of managers in institutions involved in education cannot be left up to the institutions, or even up to the individuals. There is an urgent need for a document similar to the *Standards of Training for Headmasters and Managers of Educational Facilities*, which would define standards of training for other management positions in the field of education and outline a system for their further education and professional development.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Ensure more consistent development within the education system and improve the quality of strategic and methodological management by the government, especially the Ministry of Education.
- Reduce the range of strategic documents and arrange them into a clear hierarchy,
- Focus on long-term plans and unify their scope of validity to 5 years in order to help synchronise their preparation,
- Always explicitly specify the goals of education policies for the relevant period and the proposed methods for evaluation of their success; the level of accomplishment has to be assessed for each policy,
- Evaluate the implementation process and impact of every measure proposed by the education policy and make sure that the evaluation is not just a formal process, but that it conveys practical information to help enhance the implementation process,
- Create a national system that will monitor the success level of all important educational outcomes using sample surveys and other tools,
- Prepare a framework of professional standards and educational programmes for managers in education (especially ministerial officials, employees in directly managed institutions, the Czech School Inspectorate, representatives of organising bodies etc.),
- Establish the National Council for Education as an expert advisory body of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, to uphold continuity within the national education policy.

3.3.2 Enhancing availability of information and encouraging research in education

High quality management depends on relevant information and knowledge. Although the *White Paper* emphasised the development of information and a knowledge base for management and educational practice as one of the crucial measures, implementation lags considerably behind the plans. It is vital to secure better and stable conditions for research and analysis in education. With regard to the priorities of the education policy and global research trends, it is necessary to ascertain and regularly update the need for information and knowledge. Research and development in education, including research done by directly managed organisations, should be subject to thorough quality control, and the results should be efficiently employed to help develop the education system in the Czech Republic.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Make important data easily accessible to all stakeholders in all types and forms of education,
- Complete the data collection system providing information about the conditions and

progress of children, pupils and students through pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education, especially for the purposes of system monitoring,

- Ensure better coordination of research and development in the field of education and clearly define its priorities in order to set up conditions for systemic research into key aspects of education and the creation of the tools needed for further development of the education system,
- More efficiently integrate findings from educational research conducted by universities and other research institutions.

3.3.3. Strengthening evaluation of the education system

Systematic evaluation of the development of the education system has been largely neglected in the Czech Republic. On the other hand, the Czech Republic can boast high quality statistics in education that currently provide a wide and stable range of information about the performance of the Czech education system. The national data are used in annual reports on the development of the education system and on the state of tertiary education. Important data concerning the development of the education system are regularly published in authoritative international reports (e.g. Education at a Glance, Key Data on Education). Although these instruments are fairly efficient, the data produced are rarely used for comprehensive evaluation of achievements and fulfilment of pre-defined goals.

While many features of the system are monitored by regular research studies, some aspects remain poorly tracked (especially pupils' performance and the development of inequalities in education). In these areas, the information is provided mainly by regular evaluation and monitoring done by the Czech School Inspectorate. Some data can also be mined from international studies (PISA, PIAAC, PIRLS, TIMSS etc.), although these do not focus specifically on the needs of the Czech education system. The system fails sufficiently to use the findings from educational research conducted by universities and other research institutions.

One of the key problems of the national education policy in recent years has been the lack of specific goals and vague description of the expected effects of successful policies. There are no clear specifications of optimum levels and no target values - or at least desirable trends - defined at the national level. The effort to use indicators to express specific systemic goals has been limited merely to several selected areas and rarely involves direct reference to any strategic documents.

Another significant weak point where evaluation at the national level is concerned consists in the absence of targeted assessment of the implementation process and the effects of the measures implemented. It is essential to keep in mind that evaluation processes represent a considerable opportunity for all actors in those evaluation processes gradually to improve their competence.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Create a comprehensive system of indicators for evaluation of the education system based on pre-defined criteria,
- In relation to the cycle of long-term plans, periodically assess the fulfilment of priorities and goals of the education policy and publish reports on the basis of such evaluation,
- Develop and implement mechanisms for regular acquisition of nationally representative data on pupils' results, including context information,
- Systematically use the findings from sample studies of pupils' results to produce feedback for the education system,
- Use the input from the Czech School Inspectorate and international studies to complete tasks related to evaluation of the education system, and strengthen the expert background for such evaluation.

3.3.4 Stimulating communication between all stakeholders in education, including the general public

Successful development of the education system largely depends on permanent collaboration between all actors taking part in its operations. This is twice as true in countries that devolve a substantial part of the responsibility for education from central government institutions onto other levels of administration. Considerable decentralisation of the education system and growing general interest in education bring about increasing need for continuous dialogue between all stakeholders in education. This calls for creating effective communication platforms to allow the discussion about education policy to include people, groups and institutions coming from diverse environments and having varied experience.

All the more profound changes to the education system, especially those affecting lower school levels, require intense prior communication activity aimed at parents and the general public. Schools, teachers, headmasters, deans, officials, representatives of various levels of administration and politicians naturally tend to adapt their decisions to demand that, in a democratic system of governance, is articulated most vigorously by parents (for pre-school, primary and secondary education) and students, and indirectly also by other interest groups and voters in general. The outdated views of many parents who are not aware of or do not understand contemporary educational goals and plans represent one of the key barriers to the efficient implementation of changes.

Although the *White Paper* of 2001 addressed the area of coordination and communication between various stakeholders at different levels of administration or of participation in the system, and even suggested structured communication with social partners at all levels, so far no strategic documents have introduced any specific proposals.

In years to come measures will be taken aiming to:

- Emphasise the role of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and organisations directly reporting to it as an active methodological centre and coordinator of education

policies,

- Strengthen cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other central administration bodies with shared responsibility in the field of education, especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry for Regional Development and Ministry of Culture.
- Create suitable conditions for regional networks or associations of schools and their organising bodies. Such networks and associations should emerge “bottom-up” based on the free will of their members and participants,
- Clearly define relations between schools and their organising bodies,
- Create platforms for communication between schools and employers,
- Pay more attention to the systematic, honest and understandable presentation of the prepared and implemented education measures for parents and the general public.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Education policy often gets confused with the documents that define it. Independent reviews of the *White Paper* made in 2009 show that its limited success in terms of the implementation of its priorities cannot be blamed fully on the unclear wording of the original document and the changes in external (especially political) conditions. Closer examination shows that the weakest point in the Czech education policy is not the definition of goals, but their implementation. This is largely due to the approach to education policy which prioritises theoretical work on strategic documents over the process that should gradually produce improvements to the education system. In other words, there has been too much focus on the definition of the policies at the national level, and too little focus on discussing and applying each element of the policy within the respective study programmes, educational programmes or at the level of individual schools and classes.¹²

Education policies work in three stages that influence the development of the education system:

- Identifying problems and defining goals (*what needs to be changed and why*),
- Institutional structure of the system (*who will implement the changes*),
- Instruments of the education policy (*how should the changes be implemented*).

Fundamental changes to a system are not always generated by interventions from the top, but rather occur as a result of a number of minor modifications at the bottom of the system. In view of this, and with respect to the current state of the system, the Strategy does not recommend any radical institutional changes. Instead it aims to provide a clearer definition of the problems and goals and more efficient use of the tools. Ingrained as it might be, the notion

¹² General overview: Ben Levin, *System-wide Improvement in Education* (Paris, 2012); specific to Czech conditions: Arnošt Veselý, „Vzdělávací reforma v Ontariu: kritické shrnutí a inspirace pro vzdělávací politiku ČR” (The Education Reform in Ontario: critical review and inspiration for education policy), *Orbis scholae* 7 (2013), no. 1, pp. 11–28.

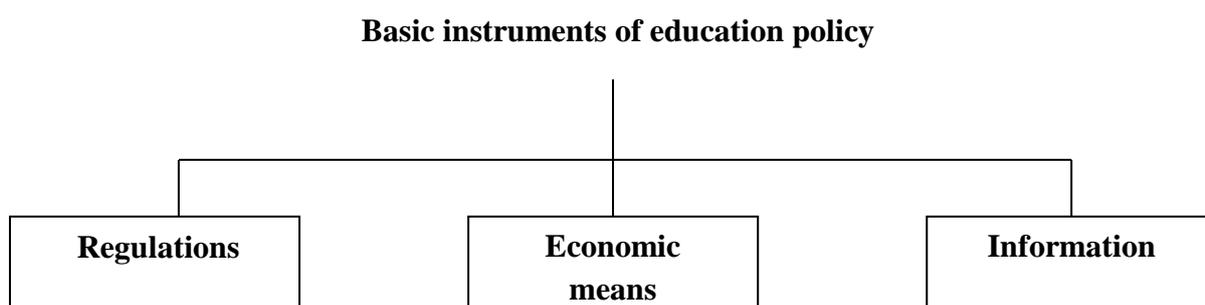
that gradual minor changes can only result in partial outcomes is completely wrong. The slightest alteration to a core element of a system can trigger a fundamental qualitative change. In the same manner, a large number of individual decisions or attitudes can jointly cause a significant shift of the whole system.

4.1 Education policy instruments

Education goals can only be reached using the right combination of instruments. Every measure suggested by the Strategy requires meticulous planning of the instruments and processes to be employed. To achieve the general objectives, it is necessary to set up demanding targets and support pupils, teachers, headmasters and other actors in their efforts to fulfil them, rather than impose a radical change of the current system and its mechanisms.

The Strategy expects the education policy to use a wide range of traditional and established instruments, although if needed the instruments might be modified to some extent, especially with respect to their design and application. Should there be a demand for any new instruments, the Strategy will insist that all new instruments used at the top level must be pre-tested in real situations, or at least there must be a reliable model of their effects on the education system. When making any modifications to the education system, it is vital carefully to consider the scope of such changes - whether they should be imposed from the top or whether they should be encouraged to evolve gradually based on the free will of the actors. It appears that in recent years, the Czech Republic has overrated the effects and benefits of the former approach in many respects. It often resulted in the formal fulfilment of the imposed tasks, rather than in any tangible changes.

In discussing the general features of the suggested interventions, we will use the following typology of public policy instruments:



The instruments will most likely be applied as follows:

Regulations (legislative framework)

Within the forthcoming years, no new laws are planned in the field of education. The existing laws govern the fields of “regional education” (especially Act no. 561/2004 Coll. and 563/2004 Coll.), tertiary education (Act no. 111/1998 Coll.) and further education (Act no.

179/2006 Coll.). These are all relatively new laws forming a stable foundation for further development of the education system in the Czech Republic. The recent dramatic development of extra-curricular education might necessitate a new legal regulation in the future, but it is too early to predict the details.

Any legislative adjustments are likely to take the form of amendments to existing laws. The planned steps include the completion and enactment of amendments to the Education Act and the Higher Education Act. These amendments prepare a legislative foundation for the implementation of several goals outlined in this Strategy. The forthcoming years are also expected to bring several changes to government regulations. We should hope that these changes are designed very cautiously to prevent any unnecessary build-up of red tape.

Economic means

Education policy should seek to make the allocation of financial resources stable and consistent, and it should encourage better coordination of the individual steps. This should be the key maxim of the preparations for the planned comprehensive reform of the funding of regional schools from the state budget, which is to begin in the immediate future. Minor changes are expected in relation to the system of formula funding of public higher education institutions.

Many reviews criticise the education system for excessive use of project-based management and funding. This is largely due to a huge number of specific development activities, programmes and projects, which are very difficult to coordinate due to their narrow focus. The crucial task for the forthcoming years is to find the balance between specific-purpose and general-purpose funds to allow for adequately flexible management, to reduce the problems caused by the recent project boom (especially the administrative burden) and to support and encourage promising projects which were supported in the past to continue in the future. New programmes and projects should be strictly checked to make sure they clearly define their significance, compliance with education policy priorities and relation to previous activities. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports should pay more attention to the coordination of development initiatives in the field of education.

Information

The provision of information within education policy presumes that the behaviour of individual actors in education can be influenced through targeted communication designed to raise people's awareness of problems, to develop their skills and adopt their own stances towards various issues. In the long run, changes of this kind can have a dramatic impact on the entire education system. These changes can never be imposed or enforced. They can only be encouraged through the considerate and methodical transfer of information and knowledge, public education, endorsement of common values, etc.

These education policy instruments should be the priority for the near future because there is a strong demand within the education system for a smoother flow of information and better public education addressing teachers, schools and parents, as well as pupils and students. All these tasks need both thorough consideration and strong support.

The key term of this approach to changes is “capacity building,” which can be defined as the increase of the specific abilities of individuals, institutions and the whole education system, resulting in more efficient learning on the part of each pupil and student. In other words, if the pupils are to learn well, and teachers to teach well, they all need suitable conditions to be able to do that.

4.2 Financing

The measures suggested by the Strategy should be funded mainly from the state budget or the European Structural and Investment Funds, which also require a contribution from the state budget. Some funding will also come from the community programme Erasmus+, other community programmes or existing schemes for the support of international mobility and institutional collaboration (e.g. the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme, EEA and Norway Grants).

Funding of the main initiatives within the Strategy for Education Policy

Initiative		Source
3.1.1, 3.1.2	Strengthening the network of pre-primary and primary schools	SB, EFRD
3.1.2	Improvement of Stage 2 (lower secondary) education at basic schools	ESF
3.1.2	Compensation for disadvantages	SB, ESF
3.1.3	Changes to the format of the school-leaving “maturita” examination (to include mathematics)	SB
3.1.3	Introducing a master craftsman examination	SB
3.1.4	Support for disabled students in tertiary education	ESF
3.1.5	Support for vocational programmes in tertiary and life-long education	ESF
3.1.4	Reduction in the drop-out and school failure rate	ESF
3.1.3	Modernisation of secondary education	ESF
3.1.5	Placements in companies	ESF
3.1.5	Partnership between schools and employers	ESF
3.1.7	Guidance services	SB, ESF
3.2.1	Implementation of career system	SB
3.2.2	Reform of initial teacher training	ESF
3.2.3	Modernisation of further education for teachers	ESF, SB
3.2.4	Internationalisation of tertiary education	ESF, Erasmus+, SB
3.2.6, 3.2.7	Modernisation of evaluation methods	ESF
3.2.3	Reform of quality assurance for higher education institutions	ESF
3.3.2, 3.3.3	Sample research of education outcomes, educational research	SB
3.3.2	Reform of data management	SB
3.3.4	Support for regional school network	EFRD

The impact of the proposed measures on public resources and the state budget will be specified in more detail in the follow-up implementation documents (see Appendix 1).

4.3 Follow-up implementation documents

The presented Strategy forms a framework for education policy for the next 7 years, setting up priority targets and outlining desired tendencies and suitable methods. The document intentionally remains very general, since it presumes that the details on specific measures will be discussed in lower-level strategic documents which will be more closely related to the implementation of the individual measures. Unlike in previous years, the number of policy and strategic documents in the field of education will be strictly limited. All documents expected to evolve within the upcoming period are listed in Appendix 1.

The endorsement of the *Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic* by the Czech Cabinet will invalidate the *National Programme for the Development of the Education System (White Paper)* of 2001. Other currently valid strategic documents remain binding until the relevant dates that mark the end of their validity (see Appendix 2).

After 2015, the principal implementation documents shall include mainly the *Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic*, and the *Long-term Policy Objectives of Education, Science, Research, Development and Innovation, Arts and Other Creative Activities in Higher Education* (both valid until 2020) which describe the details of the planned measures. Both documents are to be appended with detailed implementation plans. Several selected areas will be covered by additional in-depth documents. These should work as action plans detailing the methods to be used in solving specific topical problems in education policy. The validity of these documents shall not exceed three years.

4.3.1 Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for 2015-2020

The *Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic* (hereinafter Long-term Objectives for the CR) are to be developed by the MoEYS in accordance with Section 9 of Act no. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act). The framework and contents of Long-term Objectives for the CR on the national and regional levels, as well as the due dates for submission and publication are governed by Decree No. 15/2005 Coll. on the Requirements for Long-term Objectives and Annual Reports, as amended.

The Long-term Objectives for the CR outline the basic strategic tendencies and targets for future development, and plan the measures on the national level designed to harmonise education policies of the state and all 14 regions. The regional authorities are asked to process the national-level trends and targets to include the specific conditions and needs of each individual region, and to submit their proposals and justify their suggestions.

The Long-term Objectives for the CR need to be discussed by the Ministry and the relevant professional bodies, employers' associations and regional authorities, before they are submitted by the Ministry to the Cabinet for endorsement. Once endorsed, the Long-term

Objectives for the CR must be published in a manner that allows for remote access. The Cabinet is submitting the Long-term Objectives for the CR to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic for discussion.

Expected priority points

- Better accessibility and quality of pre-school education,
- Higher quality of education in State 2 of basic school,
- Optimisation of the network of secondary and tertiary professional schools
- Support for secondary vocational education
- Labour market and education – position of graduates in labour market, forecasts
- Evaluation in education
- Education for children with special needs
- Teacher – professional standards and career system for teachers
- Modifications to the educational guidance system
- Further education – National Qualification System, transferability between initial and further education

Timing

2014	
August – October	processing of the initial proposal
September – October	discussion about the proposal with heads of regional education departments
October	discussion at the meeting of the MoEYS management
by 1 December	due date for comments from regions and other institutions
2015	
February – March	interdisciplinary consultations
by 31 March	submission to the Cabinet for endorsement
April	Publication

4.3.2 Long-term Policy Objectives of Education, Science, Research, Development and Innovation, Arts and Other Creative Activities in Higher Education for 2016 – 2020

The *Long-term Policy Objectives of Education, Science, Research, Development and Innovation, Arts and Other Creative Activities in Higher Education* are to be developed by the Education Ministry in accordance with Section 87, b) of Act no. 111/1998 Coll. on higher education institutions and on amendments and supplements to some other acts (the Higher Education Act). The Long-term Objectives are to be updated annually to specify the goals and re-define methods. The updates will be used as short-term action plans for higher education.

The Long-term Objectives produced by the Education Ministry and their updates are used as a foundation for school-specific long-term objectives defined by individual higher education institutions. These must subsequently be discussed with the MoEYS.

Expected priority points

The Long-term Objectives will follow the trend set by the *Framework for the Development of Higher Education until 2020* and specify details concerning the following points:

- Support for implementation of the amendment to the Higher Education Act, especially in terms of quality assurance and the accreditation process,
- Profiles of study programmes,
- Easier access to higher education for disadvantaged students,
- Reduction of study failures and drop-out,
- Internationalisation of higher education,
- Changes in the funding of public higher education institutions.

Timing

2014	
June – September	processing of the initial proposal
October – December	completion of the proposal within a working group of experts from the MoEYS, higher education institutions and other stakeholders
2015	
January	official negotiations about the proposal with representatives of higher education institutions
February	approval at the meeting of the MoEYS management and publication
October	submission of institution-specific long-term objectives of individual higher education institutions
October – December	negotiations about the institution-specific long-term objectives of individual higher education institutions with the MoEYS

4.3.3 Framework for the Development of Higher Education until 2020

The *Framework for the Development of Higher Education until 2020* will be one of the strategic documents of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. It is planned to lay down the essential priorities for the development of higher education in the Czech Republic and provide analytical and strategic background for further development of the whole system.

Expected priority points

- strategic management of higher education institutions

- quality assurance and evaluation of higher education institutions
- educational activity of higher education institutions
- internationalisation of higher education
- research, innovation, arts and other creative activities of higher education institutions
- participation of higher education institutions in the social and economic life of society
- support activities

Timing

2014	
by 30 June	internal consultations within the MoEYS
July	discussion at the meeting of the MoEYS management

4.3.4 Strategy for Digital Education

The Government Ruling no. 790 of 16 October 2013 obliges the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports to develop a comprehensive *Strategy for Digital Education*. The development of this document should satisfy the Education Minister's commitment to take part in the creation of the *Strategy for the Increase of Digital Literacy and Development of Electronic Skills* requested by the Government Ruling no. 203 of 20 March 2013.

The work on the *Strategy for Digital Education* began in January 2014 and is coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and sports and by the National Institute for Education in cooperation with a group of more than 50 experts on digital education from the academic, education and business sectors.

Expected priority points

- non-discriminatory approach to digital education resources
- development of digital skills and computational thinking of pupils
- development of digital skills and computational thinking of teachers
- development and modification of school infrastructure to facilitate digital education
- support for the development and distribution of innovations

Timing

2014	
June – September	expert consultations about the proposal completion of the proposal
September – October	approval at the meeting of the MoEYS management
October	submission to the Cabinet for endorsement
October - December	in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: integration of <i>Strategy for Digital Education</i> in the wider <i>Strategy for the Increase of Digital Literacy and Development of Electronic Skills</i>
2015	
June	submission of the <i>Strategy for the Increase of Digital Literacy and Development of Electronic Skills</i> to the Cabinet for endorsement

4.3.5 Data and Information Policy in Education

The key strategic goal of this policy is to secure sufficient structured data on the education system to provide efficient assistance for the administration of education in the Czech Republic. To do that, it is necessary to establish unified methods and standards of data acquisition, as well as central administration of the collected information, to ensure the system only collects data that are necessary for the execution of public administration or the national statistical services, and that the data are available at times when they are really needed by the relevant institutions. It is also necessary to make sure that all the collected data are fully shared, to prevent the public administration from repeated collection of the same information. This should be guaranteed by a single central location that will store and distribute the data and make them available (partly as open data).

Timing

2014	
July – September	preparatory phase, analyses aimed at optimisation and consolidation of data sources in education, including metadata on data sources in education
August – October	processing phase, development of a detailed proposal for the implementation of the information system in education - one of the key initiatives within the policy
November	completion of the document, internal consultations
November – December	discussion at the meeting of the MoEYS management, implementation of the individual steps

4.3.6 Action Plan for Inclusive Education in the Czech Republic

The *National Action Plan for Inclusive Education (NAPIE)* was passed in 2010, in reaction to the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights of 2007 in the case of D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic. The objective of the Action Plan was to encourage inclusive approaches in the Czech education system – i.e. to increase the effort to prevent exclusion of individuals and social groups, and to facilitate the integration of disabled or disadvantaged individuals into the social, political and economic activities of civil society.

In 2012, the *National Action Plan for Inclusive Education* was reviewed and replaced with a document called “Equal Opportunities” which actually worked as an action plan for the execution of the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic. The Action Plan was accepted without amendments by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in December 2012.

The document inspired an amendment to the relevant educational legislation, as well as a series of support activities and projects. To rectify the situation described by the European Court of Human Rights, however, it is necessary to make a long-term methodical effort. The

Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic until 2020 attempts to create a strategic framework for such efforts. Since the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports considers this a high-priority area, all the planned measures will be thoroughly reviewed and re-defined every three years, always creating a new Action Plan for the following three years.

Expected priority points for 2015-2017

- conditions for equal opportunities in education for all
- diagnostic tools – activities and roles of the school guidance facilities
- supervision mechanisms for inclusive education
- records and statistics of pupils educated in an inclusive environment
- inclusion in pre-school education
- reduction in the drop-out rate from education

Timing of the action plan for inclusive education for 2016 - 2018

2014	
December	discussion about the proposal within an ad-hoc working group
2015	
February	internal consultations
March	discussion at the meeting of the MoEYS management
April	Publication

4.3.7 Policy of Support for Youth for 2014-2020

The implementation of the *Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic until 2020* is related to the implementation of the *Policy of Support for Youth for 2014-2020*, which specifies strategic goals of the national policy related to youth. The main issues concern education, mobility, employment and business opportunities for young people, as well as culture, creativity, social participation, healthcare and healthy lifestyle, problems of disadvantaged young people and volunteering.

In view of the goals specified in the *Strategy for Education Policy in the Czech Republic until 2020*, the main contribution of the *Policy of Support for Youth* lies in the area of non-formal education (including education developing personal interests, as stipulated in Section 111 of the Education Act). The Policy supports recognition of the outcomes of non-formal education by employers, central and regional administrations, formal education institutions and organisations working with young people.

The document was endorsed by the Czech Cabinet on 12 May 2014.

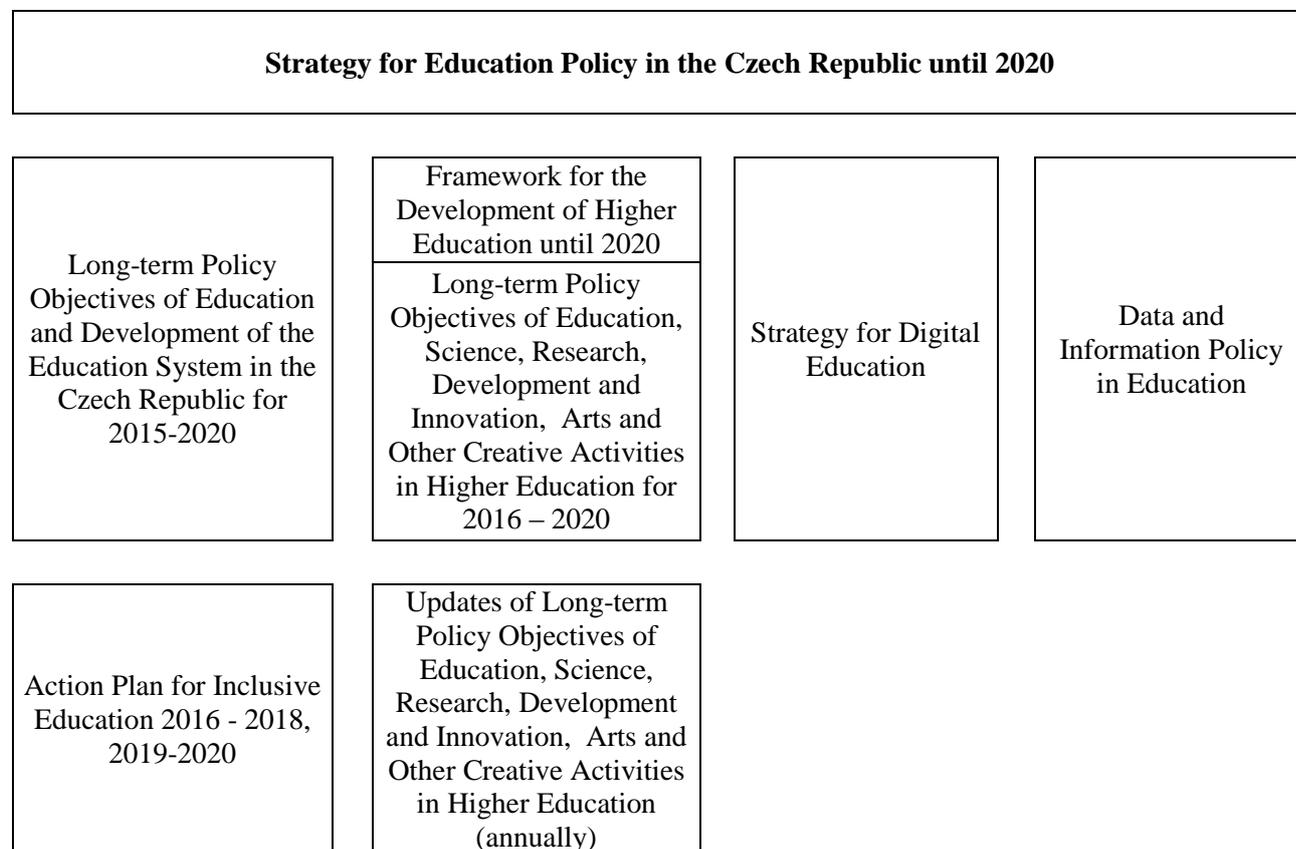
4.4 Monitoring and assessment

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy. Every two years, the Education Ministry must present an assessment of the degree to which the Strategy has been implemented to the Cabinet. The first assessment report is due on 31 August 2016.

One of the crucial setbacks to education policy in the Czech Republic in recent years was the inability of the central administration to specify the goals and clearly describe the desired effects of the systemic measures. In 2014, following the endorsement of the new Strategy, the MoEYS plans to compile a structure of indicators for the development of the educational system. The indicators are designed not only to facilitate assessment of the current development, but also explicitly to define the desired outcomes or at least trends in the key areas of the Strategy with respect to its successful implementation by 2020. The core of the structure should be formed by indicators that the Czech Republic has undertaken to fulfil within the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (Education and Training 2020 - ET 2020) and within the EU strategy Europe 2020 for the years 2010 - 2020. Other relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators will be added as needed.

Appendix 1. Structure of strategic documents in Czech education

(as from 2016)



Appendix 2. Relations between current and planned strategic documents

2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | **2014** | **2015** | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020

National Programme for the Development of the Education System (White Paper)	Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020
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	Long-term Objectives in Higher Education (2011-2015)	Framework for the Development of Higher Education until 2020
		Long-term Objectives in Higher Education (2016-2020)
Strategy of Lifelong Learning		Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic (2015-2020)
	Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic	
Strategy for the Prevention of Sociopathic Phenomena in Children and Youth in the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports		
Action plan for early care for children from socially disadvantaged environment		
Education for Sustainable Development Strategy		
Policy of Care for Exceptionally Gifted Children and Pupils for 2009 - 2013		
		Strategy for Digital Education
Policy of Information and Communication Technology Development in Education		Data and Information Policy in Education
National Policy of Children and Youth for 2007 - 2013		Policy of Support for the Youth for 2014-2020

	Update of Long-term Policy Objectives in Higher Education for the year					Update of Long-term Policy Objectives in Higher Education for the year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
National Action Plan for Inclusive Education	Action Plan for the Execution of the D.H. Judgement					Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2016-2018			Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2019 - 2020	
Action Plan of the Support of Vocational Education										

Appendix 3. Structure of curricular documents

(as from 2020)

Umbrella curricular document									
Framework Educational Programmes for Pre-School Education RVP PV	Framework Educational Programmes for Basic Education RVP ZV	Framework Educational Programmes for Special Basic Schools RVP ZSŠ	Framework Educational Programmes for Secondary Education RVP G RVP GSP RVP DG RVP SOV	Other Framework Educational Programmes RVP ZUV RVP JŠ	Educational programmes of tertiary professional schools	Bachelor's degree study programmes of higher education institutions	Master's degree study programmes of higher education institutions	Doctoral degree study programmes of higher education institutions	National Qualifications System
School Educational Programmes									Qualification and evaluation standards for professions