



Introduction

This report has been drafted by the EQAVET National Reference Point of Czech Republic and describes the main quality assurance arrangements in vocational education and training.

SECTION A - DESCRIPTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Initial VET (IVET)

Introduction

Initial VET at upper secondary and post-secondary level in the Czech Republic is school based, with a large proportion of practical training (at schools, in workshops, practical training centres, and authorised companies) and/or work placements. The main body responsible for IVET is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT). However, practical training and work placement forms an integral part of curricula. Lower secondary level IVET programmes (EQF Level 2-3) represent a minimal segment of secondary VET, as they are designed primarily for students with special needs. Upper secondary level vocational and technical programmes last either three years, and are completed by a final examination leading to 'vocational certificate (EQF Level 3), or four years, and these technical programmes are completed by a "Maturita" examination at EQF Level 4, which entitles their graduates to apply for higher education. Both programmes enable direct entrance into the labour market.

Graduates of three-year vocational programmes at the EQF Level 3 with vocational certificate may enrol to follow-up courses of two years duration that are organised by secondary schools. They may also enrol after a period of work experience. The two year course is completed with a "Maturita" examination (EQF Level 4). For those who have already completed upper secondary education and intend to acquire a qualification in a different field, or have secondary general education and intend to get a vocational qualification, "shortened programmes" have been designed. Candidates with "Maturita" (EQF Level 4) may get a vocational certificate or another "Maturita" certificate in a different field. Candidates who have a vocational certificate (EQF Level 3) can only get another vocational certificate in a different field. Shortened courses are suitable especially for adults and last one to two years. Tertiary professional programmes prepare the secondary school graduates (with a "Maturita" certificate) for qualified performance of demanding professional tasks (such as nutritionist, dental assistant). Studies last three to three-and-a-half years and are completed by an "Absolutorium" (EQF Level 6). These

programmes provide more practically-oriented tertiary education and are closely linked to employers.

1.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in IVET (include information on work-based learning)

- National Framework for quality assurance in initial VET – who is in charge of what?

At national level, the institutions in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Czech School Inspectorate. The Czech School Inspectorate (CSI) is a state agency responsible for external evaluation and further information on the school system. Its tasks are determined by the act Nr.561/2004 Coll.

According to the School Act the CSI:

- a) acquire and analyse information on the education of children, pupils and students, on the activities of schools and school facilities registered in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the educational system;
- b) determine and assess the conditions, course and results of education in accordance with relevant school educational programmes;
- c) determine and assess to what extent the school educational programme is met and whether it is in compliance with legal regulations and the framework educational programme;
- d) perform state checks to determine whether legal regulations relating to provision of education and school services are met;
- e) perform a public-legal audit focused on the use of funds allocated from the state budget.

Standard and quality of provided education is assessed from the perspective of a child/pupil/student's personal development support and from the perspective of required educational outcomes achieved by individual schools.

- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in initial VET systems
Representatives of the Ministry of Education, regional authorities and VET schools have a role in the QA process regarding definition of qualification standards (CVET) and in the process of framework for educational IVET programmes development and also within the development of school educational programmes. Social partners have an advisory role in national policy making on VET. They have to be consulted on legislative changes and issue an opinion (which is not binding). They are also consulted when it comes to strategic planning of education and training reforms and policies (long term development plan). They should also be involved in the formulation of regional education strategies.
- Requirements for evaluation and review
The Czech School Inspectorate publishes yearly its evaluation criteria to educational institutions, these are called Criteria for Evaluation of Conditions, Course and Results of Education. In addition to these criteria, which have to be approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, there are also thematic investigations, aimed at particular types of schools or particular issues. The Inspectorate publishes summary comments on the state of the educational system in its annual report.

Approved criteria are formulated for the needs of external evaluation of institutions and create a logical framework that allows for an assessment of the conditions, course and results of education and educational services at school level, educational programmes, and management of the educational process. This framework enables the monitoring of the achievement of education goals through the school educational programmes and an evaluation of the progress of schools over time. Aggregated data are the basis for assessing the effectiveness of the educational system and their parts. Approved criteria are based on a so-called "Quality School" prepared by an expert group consisting of representatives of the Czech School Inspectorate and external experts. Widely discussed, agreed and accepted criteria guarantee the permanence and stability of the national framework for the evaluation, which was a long-standing demand of national experts not only in education but also in international institutions (including e.g. the OECD report on the evaluation of education in the Czech Republic in 2012). The criteria are processed in modifications for nursery and primary schools, as well as for secondary and tertiary professional schools and are framed in such a way that they can gradually be also used in the context of self-evaluation within individual schools and school facilities and for research carried out by the founders.

- Identification of training needs

Representatives of the labour market are involved in field groups, which work together with the National Institute for Education in defining national framework curricula for VET.

- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

All educational institutions have to be registered in the school register. Schools can be set up by public or private legal entities. The conditions for setting up a school are clearly defined in the Education Act.

Among a range of documents regarding the capacity of the institution to deliver educational activities, the legal entity concerned has to provide a statement of the region and of the municipality (if these are not the legal entities setting up the school) about the setting up of the school. At secondary level, VET programmes in schools follow national curricula framework educational programmes). This is not the case in post-secondary VET. Post-secondary VET programmes are developed by the providers themselves (without a national reference) and they have to be accredited by the Accreditation Commission for post-secondary VET. The accreditation process follows a formal framework, which defines the aspects of VET programmes and of the provider that are judged by the Commission during the accreditation process. Postsecondary VET falls under the remit of the School Inspectorate.

The enrolment of schools in the Register of Schools and School Facilities brings with it the right to provide training and education services, and to issue documents on education; it also entitles schools to an allocation of funds from the state budget or the budget of the regional governance. Regional authority passes the data from the register to the Ministry of Education for recording and publication.

- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)/monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The Czech School Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the quality of education and training provision of Czech schools – from pre-primary to upper secondary, based on a set of criteria (indicators) common to all types of schools. Indicators are grouped into the following areas:

- Equal opportunities to access education;
 - School curriculum;
 - School governance and management;
 - Human resources;
 - Equipment;
 - Financial situation;
 - Effective organisation of education;
 - Effective support for personal development of pupils and students;
 - Partnership;
 - Effective support to development of functional literacy;
 - Systematic assessment of individual and group education outcomes;
 - Systematic evaluation of education results at school level.
- How is the quality assurance implementation monitored?
Quality assurance is monitored by school organising bodies which are regional bodies (in case of primary schools these are the municipalities).

1.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in IVET

- Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)
As a part of the recruitment process for school principals, the principal has to draw up a long-term development plan for the institution, which is approved by the School Council.
Each school has to develop own school curricula (school educational programme). School curricula have to be approved by the School Council, which is the governing body (or board) of the school.
Schools also have to draw up annual activity reports that are also approved by the Council.
School Councils are composed of elected representatives – 1/3 is designated by the legal entity setting up the school, 1/3 is elected by students or representatives of minors and 1/3 is elected by teachers.
In addition to the above, School Councils have to approve the following:
 - Rules for student assessment;
 - School development plans;
 - Budget;
 - Inspection report;
- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
Initial VET providers in the Czech Republic are VET schools. The quality assurance at the level of VET schools comprises a school inspection report and possibly also a self-assessment report, which is no longer obligatory. The Education Act 2004 states that schools are required to carry out self-assessment (but the form and criteria to be used were not prescribed). The requirement to carry out self-assessment each year was removed from the legislation in 2011. The Czech School Inspectorate follows criteria that are common to all types of schools. At secondary level, VET programmes in schools follow national framework curricula. This is not the case in post-secondary VET where programmes are developed by the providers themselves (without a national reference) and have to be accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Post-secondary VET. The accreditation process follows a formal framework, which defines the aspects of VET programmes and of the provider that are judged by the Commission during the accreditation process. Post-secondary VET falls under the remit of the School Inspection

- Certification, assessment and validation of learners

There are three main qualification types in IVET:

- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF Level 3 – these result in the achievement of the vocational certificate;
- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF Level 4 – which result in the upper secondary leaving certificate that gives access to higher education (“Maturita”);
- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF Level 6 – these are post-secondary VET qualifications.

These are qualifications of the formal VET system and can only be achieved through formal training.

Ultimately all should be defined in terms of qualification and assessment standards as well as framework curricula as defined in the national qualifications system. The definition of these standards is still an ongoing process.

For all types of qualifications there is a national definition of the composition of the assessment jury for final examination that leads to certification. For qualifications at EQF Level 3 the jury has to comprise a representative of the profession.

The final examination for qualifications at EQF Level 3 was reformed with a view to putting in place a common assessment tasks/ descriptions for all those preparing for the same qualification in order to ensure greater homogeneity across VET providers. General education components of qualifications at EQF Level 4 (Czech language, foreign language, mathematics) are assessed using centralised external examinations. The professional subjects/modules are based on the assessment defined by schools. Schools also define the assessment process for VET qualifications at EQF Level 6.

- Stakeholder involvement

Social partners can influence VET at provider-regional level particularly through co-operation on the preparation of the school educational programme and the graduate’s profile. Their representatives participate in the final exam committees of upper secondary vocational programmes, cooperate on the newly introduced uniform assignments for final examinations (EQF Level 3) and profile (vocational) parts of the “Maturita” (Leaving Certificate) exam (EQF Level 4) in study programmes at secondary, technical and vocational schools. Enhancing the role of employers and increasing their participation in VET is one of the current national priorities.

2. Continuous VET (CVET)

Introduction

CVET in the Czech Republic is rather fragmented and only parts of it are regulated – those publicly funded and/or those relating to regulated professions of different ministries. There are no quality assurance requirements or guidelines on CVET that is fully privately funded by individuals or companies. These providers can choose to develop a quality assurance framework (such as implied by the ISO certification) but they are not required to do so.

2.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in CVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in CVET – who is in charge of what?

The competent ministries define the conditions under which CVET (retraining) courses can receive public funding (i.e. they define the need for accreditation, set up the accreditation committee and define the rules for accreditation).

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports defines the division of responsibilities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This is clearly set out in Act Nr.179/2006 on recognition of learning outcomes from further learning.

The main reform in quality assurance in CVET regards the systematic linking of retraining programmes to nationally defined qualifications standards within the National Register of Qualifications (NSK).

- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in CVET systems

Sector councils are involved in defining and developing the qualification standards of qualifications. These standards serve also as the basis for recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The main reform in quality assurance in CVET consists in the systematic linking of training programmes to nationally defined qualifications standards as part of qualifications system development. The main instrument for ensuring the quality of publicly funded CVET courses for the unemployed (which constitute the major part of publicly funded CVET) is the accreditation by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The accreditation procedure has become linked to the qualifications system in the past years.

- Requirements for evaluation and review

No specific requirements.

- Identification of training needs

Sectoral councils bring together representatives of employers, professional bodies, and experts on human resources in the sector. They monitor labour market needs in terms of qualifications; identify changes in the sector and related arising needs; guide and ensure the development of materials that describe the professional/labour market conditions of a given profession (or group of professions) which are used as basis for developments in the education system. Their work is supported by an agreed methodology approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Sectoral councils define the basis for the development of qualifications and assessment standards of qualifications integrated in the National Register of Qualifications. The linkage with their work and the qualifications for the formal VET system is still in the process of development.

- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

The requirements for the accreditation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are based on a specific decree (176/2009). The decree defines what aspects of the CVET programme, capacity of the CVET provider (equipment, staff), assessment and certification process, are examined as part of the accreditation process. In case the programme prepares for performance of a profession or activities for which there is a qualification standard in the National Register of Qualifications, the programme has to correspond with the qualification

standard and the assessment has to follow the assessment standard and to be carried out by an authorised body/person.

- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Act Nr.179/2006 on recognition of learning outcomes from further learning clearly defines the process of validation. Based on this legislation the National Register of Qualifications was established and Sector Councils were involved in this process. For each qualification in this Register, the qualification and assessment standards have been developed on the basis of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (for the assessment).

The quality assurance for the award of these qualifications is based on the principle that the assessment and award of the qualification can only be carried out by an authorised person/body. The criteria for the authorisation are defined in the above mentioned legislation (Act Nr.179/2006) and the emphasis is on the professional competence, experience and capacity of the person/body.

Increasingly, retraining courses are also expected to lead to qualifications listed in the National Register of Qualifications.

- Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

As part of the quality assurance at system level, the Ministry of Education carries out regular monitoring of accredited retraining programmes. The information monitored concerns:

- Numbers of C-VET providers and their distribution across the territory;
- The legal form and economic activity of providers;
- Size of providers according to staff employed;
- The numbers of accredited programmes and the extent to which the programmes were actually delivered (taught) in the year monitored;
- Funding sources for the programmes taught;
- Amount of funding received for the programmes taught;
- Thematic and sectoral coverage of programmes taught;
- Data on participants;

The monitoring is based on a survey of CVET providers (lifelong learning providers according to the Czech terminology).

- Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in first section)

There are no quality assurance requirements or guidelines on CVET that is fully privately funded (whether by the individual or a company). The different CVET sub-systems fall under different ministries (Home Affairs, Health Care; Education, etc.). In most cases, quality assurance is ensured through programme accreditation. Each ministry has its own accreditation commission for these purposes.

2.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in CVET

- Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

CVET providers in the Czech Republic are not regulated by the state. However, quality criteria of retraining courses have to be approved by the accreditation committee, which is an independent body of experts from the CVET field. In the Czech Republic, several ministries are entitled to carry out accreditation procedures for educational programmes or educational institutions regulated by legislation. These are: The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for retraining programmes, in-service training programmes for teachers and sports field educational programmes; The Ministry of the Interior for educational programmes

for civil servants of territorial self-governing units; The Ministry of Health for gaining and acknowledging competence for performing health professions. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for the social services field. According to the Employment Act, retraining courses can be provided only by the institutions with accredited educational programmes, by schools providing education in a field incorporated in the register of schools and school facilities, by higher education institutions with accredited study programmes according to a special legal regulation or by an institution with an educational programme according to a special legal regulation. This type of education can also be provided by the company training departments.

No general system of accreditation of institutions has yet been developed. Other institutions are (by law) neither evaluated nor sufficiently monitored. In some fields, however, respective entities take part in other independent systems of quality evaluation.

There are no formal requirements concerning the work of teachers in continuing education, nor is there a systematic approach to the continuing training of trainers and lecturers who then provide continuing training. A vocational qualification in the Register of National Qualifications entitled Adult education teacher has been approved, but is not a necessary prerequisite for performing the work of teacher in CVET.

SECTION B - INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE and EQAVET

- National Reference Point – Introduction

Since 2016 the EQAVET National Reference Point in the Czech Republic has been represented by the National Institute of Education (NÚV). NÚV encompasses both general and vocational education up to tertiary level. NÚV also represents the EQF NCP and the National Coordination Centre for ECVET, and the EQAVET NRP is linked to these tools. The key partner is the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI), as it is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and analysing the conditions and quality of education in all types and levels of Czech schools – from pre-primary to higher professional schools which have fulfilled prescribed conditions and have been entered into the Register of School and School Facilities.

- National approach to enhanced quality assurance

There is no separate national document dedicated to EQAVET implementation as such. The approach followed in the Czech Republic is to focus on ensuring that enhancing quality assurance in VET is embedded into strategic national policy documents on education and training and VET more specifically. Quality assurance is explicitly mentioned in the Long-term Development Plan for Education and Training 2015-2020. Emphasis is placed on the development of pedagogical staff, including the criteria of quality in the financing of education and the linking of external evaluation and self-evaluation of schools. This document contains indication of measures to strengthen quality assurance.

In 2013, the Government adopted a paper called New measures fostering vocational education and training, that defines the main steps related to the organisation, administration and legislation planned for the next few years to enhance participation in VET and its quality.

The Czech School Inspectorate piloted several selected EQAVET indicators in its external evaluation activities (indicators 1a (share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance); 2 a & b (share of teachers and trainers having followed continuous training and the resources invested) and 8a (share of disadvantaged learners)).

The National Institute for Education implemented a large-scale national project (ESF funded) called 'Together' (2012-2015), which focuses on cooperation between VET schools and companies. This project developed framework guidelines with elements of EQAVET (a quality assurance cycle with emphasis on the review) for cooperation between schools and businesses. An earlier national project called 'Path to Quality' (2009-2012) developed self-evaluation tools and guidance for VET providers.

- Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The theme of the quality of vocational education and training has been on the policy agenda in the Czech Republic since the end of 90s. Changes to national quality assurance were made in the Education Act 2004, which imposed the requirement for schools to carry out self-evaluation, including requirements for more systematic quality assurance at system level. It reflected the cycle approach of planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

The Amended Education Act (Nr.472/2011) removed the requirement to carry out self-evaluation every year from the legislation as part of efforts to reduce the administrative burden on schools. However, many schools still prepare the self-evaluation report every year.

As a result of the above-mentioned national project on self-assessment, there is a range of guidance materials available to schools to support their self-assessment.

After a long debate, in 2010/11 the state "Maturita" (EQF 4) was launched. Since then it has been made obligatory for all secondary schools. It consists of both common (state) and profile components (different for individual schools). The Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing the standardised part of the exam.

The reform ended the former practice when schools prepared own exams, thus making exams more objective, comparable across schools/programmes and increasing their role as a reference tool. For programmes concluded with vocational certificate (EQF 3), standardised final examination assignments are being developed since 2009; a uniform component of the examination for each study programme which is in accordance with national curricula (Framework educational programmes) and also the qualification standards of vocational qualifications of the National Register of Qualifications was developed jointly by vocational school teachers and experts with practical experience. This new model of final examination is mandatory since the school year 2014-2015. In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, employer representatives may influence the selection of final examinations topics in terms of existing needs and requirements in practice and the final examination may also take place in a real company workplace.

Support cooperation between VET schools and businesses:

European cooperation on quality assurance was influential in setting the national agenda on this topic, in particular in the early 2000s and at the time of the accession of the Czech Republic to EU. Also the recommendations of OECD were taken into account.

The development of qualification standards within the National Register of

Qualifications was an important trigger for quality assurance. It also triggered further development of quality assurance through decentralisation and the fact that schools were delegated important competences regarding school management.

The most evident effect of EQAVET at national level was the fact that it motivated the main stakeholders in the country to regularly discuss the topic of quality assurance. The existence of the ENQA-VET network led in 2010 to the establishment of a national network on quality assurance, which has to be reconstructed in the upcoming period in order to work more efficiently. As a result, national stakeholders will be regularly informed about EQAVET.