

Country Reports

Turkey

1) Turkish Education System and VET

The education system in Turkey consists of two subsystems called formal and non-formal education according to the Basic Law on National Education No. 1739. In Turkish, "örgün eğitim" is used for formal education and "yaygın eğitim" is used for both non-formal and informal education.

Formal education is regular education provided in schools to individuals in a certain age group at the same level through the programmes prepared to meet the purpose. Formal education covers the preschool education (3-5 years old), 8 years compulsory primary education (6-14 years old), secondary education, and higher education.

The aim of secondary education is 'to give students a minimum common culture, to acquaint them with the problems of the individual and the society, to teach how to search for solutions, to raise awareness in order to ensure their contribution to the socio-economic and cultural development of the country and to prepare the students for higher education, for professions, for life and for business in line with their interests and skills'. All students completing primary education are entitled to attend secondary education. The number of students in secondary education has increased from 2.1 million to 3.3 million in the period 1997-2007. This corresponds to an increase of 50%. The gross enrolment rate of secondary education is 85.55%.

The secondary system in Turkey can be broadly classified as general secondary education and vocational and technical secondary education. The distribution of students at the secondary education level among the General High Schools and Vocational and Technical High Schools constitutes a continuous problem. Turkey has had the goal to increase the proportion of students in vocational and technical schools at the secondary education level for more than 20 years. The aim was to direct 65 % of children at the secondary education level to technical education and 35 % to general education. However 61 % of the students attend General High Schools, 39 % of the students attend Vocational and Technical High Schools.

1.1. Vocational and Technical Education

The vocational and technical education system in Turkey includes two main dimensions: theoretical (school training) and practical (in-company training). Vocational training policies and activities are mostly carried by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) within the framework of Vocational Training Law No. 3308, which came into force in 1986 and Law No. 4702 of 2001, which brought about changes to the system, establishing new and strong links of co-operation with industry and commerce. The vocational education system includes:

- Vocational and technical high schools providing training in more than 130 occupations and giving access or leading to the qualification of specialized worker and technician;
- Apprenticeship training, which is a combination of mainly practical training provided in enterprises and theoretical training provided in vocational education centres;
- Non-formal education can be provided primarily through vocational education centres.

Vocational and technical secondary education includes at least 19 different kinds of schools, in addition to vocational education centres, Open Education as well as special private schools. The MoNE is responsible for oversight of all vocational and technical schools whether or not they are under the jurisdiction of the MoNE.

There are 4.450 vocational high schools. Only 22 of them are private vocational and technical schools. Rest of them are public schools which are belong to MoNE. The MoNE is responsible for oversight of all vocational and technical schools whether or not they are under the jurisdiction of the MoNE. The VET system is under the reform process. In vocational and technical schools modular programs are applied and a flexible structure the facilities the vertical and horizontal transitions between the programmes is now available.

Non-formal education provides educational services other than the formal education services in line with the general aims and basic principles of national education to citizens who have entered or who are at a certain level of the formal education system or who have left formal education. Non-formal education is mainly the responsibility of the MoNE, Directorate General of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education. The Directorate General governs the non-formal education services through 925 public education centres and 303 vocational training centres that are found across the country.

Other ministries, official institutions and organizations, universities, municipalities, employer associations, trade associations, foundations, and volunteer organizations and private education institutions can also offer non-formal education activities and they can open courses and award certificates of accomplishment. According to Law

no. 1739, other non-formal education suppliers must get permission for their education activities from MoNE.

Informal learning is a very new concept in Turkey. It is considered to be the sum of all overall skills individuals have acquired through work, organisational activities and family life in society. It is considered to be very important for an individual to acquire a qualification on the basis of learning which takes outside formal education and training.

1.2 Validation and Certification (present situation)

Turkey has regulations and implementations related with enabling recognition of prior experience within the VET system; however the country does not have a standard validation methodology in place to enable individuals to get their in formal and non-formal learning identified, assessed and recognised in a way that would lead to nationally acknowledge competency.

1.2.1 Formal vocational education

Vocational and technical high schools provide diploma to those who successfully complete secondary vocational and technical schools. Graduates of vocational and technical high schools are given a "certificate to open a work place" alongside their diploma. Those who possess the diploma may start work at an enterprise or continue their education in higher-education institutes. Graduates who have received a diploma from vocational and technical high schools may either attend mastership courses organized by MoNE or directly enter mastership examinations. Those who are successful in these examinations receive a "mastership certificate".

Participants of work pedagogy courses, after receiving mastership competence, are given a "master trainer certificate" upon successfully completing the course. Holders of this certificate have the right to take responsibility for practical training of apprentices and vocational high school students at enterprises.

1.2.2 Apprenticeship training in non-formal vocational education

The principles and procedures of testing-assessment and certification in apprenticeship training and non-formal vocational education show important differences.

The theoretical training of candidate apprentices is assessed by trial tests. The main objective of these tests is to help students see their own progress. Tests also allow the trainers to see how much of what has been taught has actually been learned by the students. Candidate apprentices and apprentices may continue their training without repeating a class no matter what grade they get from these tests, so long as their agreement is in place. The grades that the apprentice gets in these tests are not taken into account during the journeyman examinations.

Trial tests may be written, oral or applied according to the characteristic of the subject. The written tests may be questions with short answers or multiple-choice questions. The average of end-of-term grades for each subject becomes the end-of-year grade for that subject.

Journeymen attending mastership courses take written and practical tests at the end of every course they attend. These tests are given by the trainer teaching that subject. In order for the candidate masters to be counted as successful, the arithmetical average of all their grades should be at least five (at least five points from each

subject or even if they obtain less than five points from a number of subjects i.e. apart from occupational ones). The tests taken at the end of each course the journeymen attend is not sufficient to receive a mastership certificate. These tests are important to see whether or not a person has successfully completed the mastership course. In order for an individual to attain journeyman or mastership proficiency he/she has to enter journeyman or mastership tests and be successful in them.

There is no structured testing assessment and certification in non-formal education as there is in apprenticeship training. In general, a test is given by teachers at the end of each course. There are mid-term tests in courses of long duration. A successful completion certificate is awarded to those who are successful in these tests and those who are not successful receive a course participation certificate.

1.2.3 Equivalence

The principles and procedures for evaluating the occupational knowledge and skills acquired during formal and non-formal education in transition to apprenticeship training and vice versa have been determined by regulations. According to Law No. 3308, graduates of formal upper-secondary vocational and technical schools and institutions, and non-formal secondary vocational and technical schools and institutions, may directly apply to sit mastership examinations. Of the graduates of secondary vocational and technical schools and institutions or vocational and technical training centres, those who have received a certificate from a two-year non-formal education institution connected to the ministry in their own fields, are directly given a mastership certificate. In addition, independent workplace-opening certificate which carries the responsibilities and authorities of mastership certificate is given to graduates of technical high schools and graduates of secondary vocational and technical schools and institutions.

On the other hand, journeyman, masters and general high-school graduates may receive a diploma of their occupational field upon completing remedial training whose content, conditions and duration are determined by the ministry. Certificates received from foreign countries and vocational training institutions in Turkey as well as schools and institutions connected to other ministries, whose equivalence is accepted by the Ministry of National Education, are evaluated during transition to apprenticeship, journeyman and mastership and mastership training.

Equivalence is determined according to Law No.3308 and 'Regulation on the Evaluation of Certificates and Diplomas in Apprenticeship and Vocational Training'. A number of changes have to be made in the regulation concerned - in line with the latest amendments made in Law No.3308

2. Lifelong Learning (LLL) and National Qualification System (NQS)

2.1. Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning includes formal learning, non-formal, informal learning. Therefore, lifelong learning can be achieved at schools, at universities, at work, at home, and in any other place in society. The term of lifelong learning is new concept in Turkey, although the idea is ancient, "education is from cradle to grave". There is a common opinion that people need to acquire, extend, renew or replace their skills continuously to compete in the labour market, and cope well and learn fully in different fields of their lives. However, it does not serve yet as an integrating part of changing patterns of learning, living, and working in Turkey. As stated above, the concept has not been understood yet by as a common guiding principle in current Turkish educational and labour market policy. The SVET project, EU funded

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"Strengthening the Vocational Educational Education and training System in Turkey" project, is providing support in this field. A comprehensive concept for the development of lifelong learning in Turkey has been prepared within this project as a basis for the development of a national policy in this field. The approach is also relevant in the process of accession to EU.

3.2. National Qualification System

Vocational Qualifications Authority Law No. 5544 entered into force in 2006 to establish National Qualification System (NQS). The objective of the Law is to determine the principles of national qualifications in technical and vocational fields and to establish Vocational Qualifications Authority. The national qualifications system is a structure which includes basic functions such as developing and publishing the occupational standards, improving the general and vocational qualifications, competency based assessment and certification, accreditation of institutions and organizations which issue certificates, accreditation of personnel who are to perform the assessments on candidates. Each function here is directly connected to the others and can be under the authority and responsibility of one or more institutions and organizations.

The basic rationale for the development of a validation system is to enable the transition between different types of vocational training for individuals. The individual can utilise his/her competences gained through non-formal training and the formal training. Therefore, validation of non-formal training will be enable attainment of a nationally recognized certificate. Since, the regulations related with the framework has just been issued, the implementation has not started yet. The main characteristics of the system are as follows.

The basic goals of national qualifications system are:

- Facilitating the mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas at the international level including the European Union countries
- Developing a qualifications system based on the balance of demand and supply
- Having a consistent Vocational Education and Training System
- Standardization of the levels and contents in the Vocational Education and Training System
- Having a valid, reliable and transparent vocational qualifications assessment
- Making the progress paths more open and easier and facilitating the transition between careers
- Improving the recognition of prior learning/ present competency in all the professions.

The national qualifications system will include the following in the beginning: Vocational and Technical School Diplomas; Apprenticeship Training Documents and Certificates; Professional Skills Documents and Certificates

The national qualifications system will require the performance of five functions:

1. General Management

- Planning the implementation of national qualifications system
- Controlling and assessing the implementation of national qualifications system
- Information the Ministry's national qualifications system policies and regulations

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- Recording the qualifications to the qualifications framework
- Information on the national qualifications system and promoting the national qualifications system

2. Accreditation

- Accrediting the standard setting bodies so that they are authorized to develop the occupational standards for certain sectors
- Accrediting the occupational standards developed by the standard setting bodies
- Accrediting the educational institutions so that they can provide the qualifications of the national qualifications system

3. Developing the training programme and qualifications

- Developing the training standards/ training programmes based on a the national occupational standards
- Developing the qualifications (made up of measurable outcomes and units) based on the educational standards/ training programmes.

4. Assessment

- Carrying out the external assessments (including the examination commissions)
- Giving grades to the examinations
- Carrying out the internal assessments
- Managing the harmonization process in the internal assessment

5. Certification

- Keeping the statistical records on the development and acquisition of qualifications
- Certifying the candidates
- Considering the issues which appear as a result of the outcomes

The framework levels will be related to the European levels. At present, both ISCO and ISCED frameworks as well as the European 5- level framework are being used by the EU. Discussions are held on the proposals regarding an 8- level framework. Levels of the Turkish Framework will be arranged inline with these vocational levels unless the other developments taking place in the EU make another series of references more suitable.

The qualifications in the framework will be modular and the units making up these qualifications will have credit values. The credit points will be used to in order to measure the learning and give a value or point to this learning. The adopted credit system will be in harmony with the European vocational credit framework, which is being prepared for the time being.

There will be two types of external assessments for the main vocational qualifications in the framework certificates: theoretical and practical examinations to be applied by the examination commissions. The National Vocational Qualifications Authority will have the full responsibility for the standards of these assessments and will maintain the quality The National Vocational Qualifications Authority will be able to transfer or assign to other through contracts the professional and/or administrative duties required by these assessments.

As for the practical examinations to be performed by means of examination commissions at the regional or provincial level, the responsibilities will be as follows: establishing and managing the examination commissions, the process of assessing the candidates, assessment criteria, the emphasis put on different

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characteristics of the assessments, and recording and gathering the commission decisions so as to guarantee transparency and consistency within the system.

In the beginning, every certificate will be issued by the educational institutions, which keep the candidates' records for the purpose of assessment as it is applied today. However, the National Vocational Qualifications Agency will take the responsibility of preparing the draft and regulations on the process right away. It will be possible to develop a single and central certification process only after the main studies on starting the national qualifications system are completed.

Institutional accreditation serves two basic purposes: To make sure that the programmes which lead to the issuing of national qualifications system qualifications are provided with acceptable national standards. To support the development and maturation of institution by encouraging to focus on the institutional quality improvement.

Romania

Introduction

In this moment, in the field of continuous professional training, a variety of institutes and social partners are involved, further on imposing the development and diversification of partnerships between the employers' organizations and trade-unions, professional associations, non-profit organizations and the civil society at all levels: local, regional, national and European.

1) European and National Context

1.1. European context

The education and professional development systems are in the middle of change and transition towards the economy and society based on knowledge and that is why their continues adaptation is imposed. The memorandum of the European Committee, concerning lifelong learning, adopted in October 2000, invites states to identify coherent strategies and practical measures for the development of continuous learning, the key messages being:

- New basic competences for all
- Achieving some superior investments in human resources
- Encouraging innovation in teaching and learning
- Valuing learning
- Rethinking orientation and counselling
- Bringing learning nearer to the residence

The development of educational systems, initial and continuous training, objectives subsequence from the European Union has taken into consideration, in a specific way, the established priorities through the Declaration of European ministers of education and training and the European board, arranged on the 29th and 30th of November 2002, regarding the consolidation of the European cooperation in professional training - "The Declaration from Copenhagen" meaning: European dimension, transparent, information and counselling, recognition of competences and qualifications, quality assurance in formation.

Romania has adopted the reviewed European Employment Strategy, the essential instrument for coordinating the priorities from the employment politics domain at the European Union's level, the politics in the domain of employment being in accordance with the objectives and the guidelines of this strategy. The global objectives established at European level are: achieving a general employment rate of 70% and of employment among women of 60%, until 2010.

1.2. National context

In the mid-2000, in Romania, the macroeconomic tendencies have improved due to the attempts of structural reform, the opening of economy and competitions on the market and the adoption of a more equilibrate and adequate politics.

In the coming years, the employment's evolution will be influenced, on one hand, by the foreign investments flux, which will generate new work places, and on the other hand, by continuing the restructuring and privatisation process which will mislead to

1) European and National Context

pressures upon employment. The structural unemployment remains the main cause of a tension on the labour market.

The labour market of Romania has suffered significant transformations in the process of economic transition, manifested especially through the reduction of the active population and of the employed population, and the maintenance at relatively constant values of the unemployment rate and through the increase of the long term unemployment rate which is affected especially by the limited capacity of creating new work places. The slow, but continuous process of demographic ageing, has determined a "pressure" increase of the elderly population on the adult population potentially active and implicit on some important society systems (health, social assistance, the budget for social insurance).

The actual structure of the employed population after a training level reflects a deficit of people with superior studies, in these conditions, even the few sectors with high added value from the Romanian economy are confronting with problems in satisfying the qualified work force's demand. This justifies the necessity of focusing on the investment in professional education and, especially on the continuous training.

Establishing Romania's objectives in the National Employment Strategy for the Work Force 2004 - 2010, approved through the Government Decision no. 1386/2004 was made according to the three major interdependent objectives of the reviewed European Employment Strategy: full occupation, work quality and productivity, social cohesion and inclusion.

In the context of the strategic national documents in accordance with the European Employment Strategy, the future priorities of employment politics are:

- Promoting the adaptability of the work force, of lifelong learning and of continuous professional training (CPT)
- Fighting the structural unemployment's effect, resultant of the process of economic reorganization;
- Promoting social cohesion and inclusion.

Romania has elaborated and implemented The National Plan of Action for Employment 2004 - 2005, which provides proper measures and actions and also institutional responsibilities for them.

The Romanian Government and the European Commission have signed, on the 28th of October 2002, The Joint Assessment Papers for the politics of employment (JAP), which presents an agreed set of objectives concerning employment and the labour market, necessary for promoting the transformation of the labour market in Romania so that it can be able of implementing the European Employment Strategy and to prepare it for the accession to UE.

1.3. Technical and professional teaching

The initial training of Romania is structured on two main branches: technological and professional. Graduating high school on one these two routes offers the change of employment based on certified competences and also the change of continuing the studies in higher education (with the condition of passing the baccalaureate exam) in order to obtain a level 4 and 5 of qualification or (unconditioned by the baccalaureate exam) in the education after high school for a level 3 qualification which is more specialized.

2) FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE CONTINUOUS

Reported difficulties in the organization of professional and technical teaching depend on the economic differences between urban zones and rural zones, as well as the lack of educational equipment in schools located in small and medium locations and also partnerships which are limited between school and company.

In 2002, the Strategy for Pre-college Teaching Development for the period 2001 - 2010, was updated, which defines the strategic priorities for the Ministry of Education politics, for which a set of programs and projects is used for implementation. For the future, we will be able to observe the need for implementing measures that concern the increase of IPT quality, assuring access to lifelong training and promoting the transparency of the initial training, the involvement of the TVET system for putting it into practice, starting from scholars and continuing with adults, with the concept lifelong learning.

2) FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL TRAINING (CPT)

In the Roadmap for the accession of Romania to UE (November 2002), medium term recommendations were made from a structured system of training, especially of continuous training, in order to support the improvement of the work force's quality and adapting it to the new requirements of the changing market, in order to support the economical development and the society modernizing. Nevertheless, until now we can't talk about a coherent legal framework which will settle the qualification system, applied in the initial training, as well as the continuous one.

The periodic report upon the progress recorded in Romania concerning the accession to the European Union - 2004 makes a positive evaluation to the reform system of training which reflects important changes regarding the integration of the initial training with the continuous one and the implication of the social partners. Nevertheless the report underlines the fact that access to education and training continues to be an important matter, which Romania has to resolve in order to able to join the European Union.

2.1 Current situation

2.1.1 Legal framework

In recent years, in Romania, actions have been made for elaborating the standard regulation framework concerning the continuous training.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family along with the Ministry of Education and Research, the National Agency for Employment and National Council of Adult Training have finished the legislative framework for adult professional training, normative acts being adopted through which the following were approved:

- The Authorization Methodology of suppliers of adult training;
- The Certification Methodology of adult training;
- The nomenclature of qualifications for which programs with qualification certificates can be organized;

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- The evaluation and certification procedure of professional competences obtained through other means different from the formal ones, which regulates evaluation and certification of competences attained through a non-formal and informal way.

Elaborating these normative acts has based on the experience accumulated by implementing some projects with international technical assistance, like:

The Phare projects for the reform of professional and technical teaching, The World Bank projects for elaborating employment, information and counselling concerning carrier, founding of training regional centres, consolidation of NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT VOCATIONAL TRAINING, bilateral projects for quality assurance in continuous training etc.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family implements right now the Phare Project RO 02/IB/SO/03 "Support for the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family for continuous training, concerning the elaboration of the national politics for continuous training, improvement of the necessary institutional and legal framework, which will assure a high quality and efficient supply of continuous training, promoting the partnership with the formation suppliers, the private sector and social partners.

In order to facilitate access to training programs, organised by the National Agency for Employment, and to increase, the participation to training, the Law no. 76/2002 regarding the unemployment insurance system and stimulation of employment was modified and completed later, expanding the categories of people that could benefit of financial support for their training.

Law no. 53/2003 from the Labour Code, with ulterior modifications and addenda, stipulates the employer's obligation to assure periodic access for employees to training. Employers have to elaborate annual training plans with union counselling or, by case, with the employees' representative. The training program is an essential part of the work collective's contract. Nevertheless, these regulations from the Labour Code concerning CPT did not become a current practice of employees. In order to facilitate access for young people to continuous training, a law project was elaborated concerning apprenticeship at work place.

2.1.2 Institutional responsibilities

The Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family in collaboration with relevant ministers and institutions elaborate politics and strategies in the field of continuous training. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family assures that initial professional education and training are in accordance with the labour market's needs and that the initial training is linked with the continuous one. The National Agency of Employment implements and finances from the budget of the unemployment insurance, active measures for stimulating employment, including those of counselling, orientation and training.

The training programs are organized by the district agencies of employment through their own training centres, regional centres of adult training and through suppliers of training, authorized by the law's terms. The training centres of employment agencies and the regional adult training centres are open mainly to people which are in search of a job, but also to employees or to persons who are interested.

An important role comes to the National Council for Adult Training (NCAT), a tripartite organism composed of Government representative, employers and unions - with advisory role in elaborating politics and strategies for adult training. Starting with 2003, NCAT also has a decisional role in the quality assurance of the training and competence evaluation system.

NCAT has integrated through the law, in its structure, another tripartite organism namely the Council for Employment Standards and Accreditation (CESA). As a result of the Memorandum approved on June 2004 through the Prime Minister's decision, Law nr. 132/1999 was modified, law regarding foundation, organization and functioning of the National Council of Adult Training, with the ulterior modifications and addenda, assigning to this institution the role of National Authority for Qualifications with the purpose to a transparent qualification system in training. It is necessary to have coherent solution of the actual initial profession formation system and to continue from the lifelong learning perspective, with full participation of the social partners, through the agreement of district partnership.

The suppliers of training, public or private, have the role to organize, implement and evaluate the training programs which have to respond to the needs of companies and people.

The social partners, respectively to employers and union organisations have series of tasks and responsibilities, in the continuous training. Their role has the same importance at a national level, as well as at a district level and at economic unit. The increasing involvement of the social partners has boosted the modification and adaptation of the legislative work frame and the changing of the CPT priorities.

2.1.3 The social partnership in CPT

The challenges on the labour market demand a more comprehensive approach on the employment politics and training from the perspective of promoting the development of human resources and participation to the continuous training. This approach was already adopted in the National Plan of Action for Employment.

The development of CPT presumes a more active involvement and also a commitment from companies and social partners.

In Romania were founded several structures of social dialog. Their goal was training, both initial and continuous. Some of them have a consulting role, while others can make decisions. The Development of the National Framework of Qualifications underlines the imperious need to develop social dialog at a district level of activity. For this matter, the National Council for Adult Training (which assumed the role of the National Authority for Qualifications) has founded the district committee in construction, tourism, TIC, textile industry, food industry and in machinery industry.

Promoting the social dialog in adult training has marked an important moment along with the founding of National Council for Adult Training in 1999. The authorization board for suppliers of training at a district level and at the city of Bucharest, founded through the NCAT decision, are tripartite structures. These committees can take decisions only in the presence of a union and employers' organizations. The founding of wide partnerships, including all involved factors, especially social partners, is considered an essential premise for CPT development.

Decisions' delegation towards social partners and assuming responsibilities by those in CPT, are important in order to develop a CPT functional system. The founding of district committees, the development and implementation of work instruments, will lead to the attainment of competences and qualifications nationally recognised, orientated towards demand and quality assurance, securing the strong influence of social partners CPT management.

As National Authority for Qualifications, NCAT supports the founding of district committees and coordinates their activity. The main role of district committees is to define and validate the qualifications at a district level, and also the validation of qualifications proposed by other institutions. The district committees are structures indispensable for the development of a set of mutual activities in training both initial and continuous: identifying the needs of competences, elaborating employment standards, attaining the National Registry of Qualifications, elaborating the framework programs of training, supplying mutual methodologies for qualification and competences certification and elaborating mutual principles and mechanisms of quality assurance in training.

Can be reminded some actions of social partners which make good practical examples:

- Through the project MATRA "Significant Agreements" the unions from machinery construction affiliated to CNSLR-FRATIA and BNS, along with employers from the same branch, are founding centres with expertise in training with bipartite leadership, for starters in naval pilot and aeronautic sectors;
- The Social House of Constructors, a non-profit organization is financed in a bipartite system, unions and employers from the constructions and construction materials branch, offering training to personnel from these sectors, through "The House Job ";
- The Port School foundation from Constanta was founded as a result of the collaboration between the National Federation of the Port Unions from Romania and the Dockers' Union from Denmark. At the beginning, it benefited of support from the Danish Government, and now, it represents a cooperation example between union organizations and branch owners for the training of port workers;
- The ETF project "Support for active involving of social partners with the purpose to reinforce district committees " contributes to professional training of members of the district committees from the field of machinery construction and food industry which stimulates the activity of the two committees round the problems of district qualification.

2.1.4 Information, counselling and professional orientation

Information activities, counselling and professional orientation include services supplied for people of all ages in any moment of their moment, with the purpose to assist them in choosing the best education opportunities, formation or employment, and to support their personal and professional development. In the same time, services are included for people who haven't yet enter the labour market, for those who are looking for a job or for people who are already hired, but want to orientate to another profession/job or want to specialize in a certain field.

Right now, the National Agency for Employment has its own network of information and counselling centres concerning career. Approximately 100 agencies for employment were created in every district, equipped with materials, specific products and equipment.

2) FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE CONTINUOUS

At the end of 2002 a Protocol was signed between MINISTRY OF LABOUR/NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EMPLOYMENT and Ministry of Education for implementation, in the networks of counselling centres, of a new counselling program: "From school to work and career". Through this program, young people that graduated a pre-college form of education can get career information and counselling services based on an individual counselling plan.

In accordance with the law, the National Agency for Employment, through its network of specialized centres, offers career information, counselling and orientation services, for free, to all people who are in search of a job registered to the National Agency for Employment (unemployed with or without compensation, graduates of a form of education, people with disabilities, other persons that have another job, but for different reasons, wish to change it).

In employment agencies, the counselling activity is made in accordance with a standard procedure applied at a national level, which defines: the purpose of the activity, the type of offered services, the principles underlying the exertion of the professional counselling activity, result, location and necessary equipment, personnel involved in activity and workflow.

When the demand of counselling services is too great, and the employment agencies don't have the capacity to satisfy this demand with the existing personnel, contracts with private providers of counselling services can be concluded, providers accredited according to the law (Government Decision nr. 277/2002 regarding the approval of Accreditation Criteria for the providers of services specialized in stimulating employment, with ulterior modifications and addenda).

2.1.5. The current offer of CPT

The economic reorganization process, that Romania is passing through at the moment, generates profound effects not only in the production area, but also in the social life. One of these effects is the socio-professional situation of a significant number of people that have to reorient in order to gain new competences and abilities in a certain field of activity.

Studies so far, regarding the usage of adult training programs and the preferences expressed by those that are directly interested, indicate that most of them tend to appreciate the utility of these training forms like an extra chance to build a career. The tendency is more significant among pre-qualified young people, who prove to be more mobile from the professional reorientation point of view, but the need to link the continuous training system with initial one is felt.

There is small difference between the branches or the countries economical regions concerning the investments made in human resources. It can be observed that in the regions economical more developed, there is a tendency for the economic operators to allocate larger funds for training their personnel. In the regions economical less developed, the training is made especially under the form of "training at work place", the cheapest training method at the unit's level.

Although The Labour Code stipulates the employers' obligation to elaborate annual training plans with union counselling or, by case, the employees' representative, and this thing is not a current practice. There are few economic units willing to form their employees or to re-qualify as a result of the company's reorganisation processes. Now in the current moment, the branches with low added value have the

biggest contribution for economic increasing and, as long as this situation will continue in Romania, the general work frame for training will not be very favourable. For a larger number of employers, especially in the branches with low added value, there where the employment offer is high and salaries are low, the investment in training becomes a necessity.

As long as the Romanian economy will prevail jobs with low salaries which are concentrated in the branches with low added value, where education and training bring few benefits, it is possible that this situation and perception to continue. The development of the braches with high added value will favour the change of mentality and attitude of employers regarding education and training. The low individual income and the relatively high costs of training programs are the main obstacles in the way of access to training, while the training offer has the tendency to focus on the programs with longer term for complete qualifications. Both economic units and people manifest a higher demand for short-term modular courses, orientated towards acquiring some competences.

Employers prefer to hire trained personnel. So, people that invested in their own formation are in a better situation then young school graduates, workers without experience and people which return on the labour market after a period of unemployment. Training is seen as a cost which has to be minimized, and not as an investment. The employers' investments in the development of human resources are low and the expenses generated by professional training are covered especially by people.

2.1.6. The current offer of CPT

The adult training has to offer them, the possibility of a quick adaptation to the demands of the labour market which is in a continuous changing. In this context, the diversification and increase of quality training offer has to be a permanent concern.

As a result of creating the legal and institutional framework for continuous training, in January 2004 began the authorization process of adult training providers.

Until 01.05.2005, 856 training providers were authorized for 2307 training programs, from which 1887 for qualification, 177 for initiation, 177 for improvement and 75 programs for specialization. Reducing the authorization from three average net wages to two gross minimum wages, in October 2004, resulted the increase of the number of authorized training providers.

In Romania, the training is based on employment standards; the legislation providing compulsory training program development submitted to authorization. The insufficient number of employment standards and the fact that the complex task of elaboration returns to formation suppliers or to other interested organization represents an impediment to the authorization of formation suppliers for several employments, thus restraining, in some fields, the training offer.

The training suppliers are, generally, small unspecialized institutions, which adapt faster the formation offer to the immediate market needs. Generally, they offer level 2 qualification programs, initiation programs for computer use or for gaining foreign languages competences. There is a low offer of qualification programs which requires important investments from formation suppliers. The program of authorized partially training reflects the training needs from the job's level. The most efficient correlation form of the training content with labour market's needs is made when

training takes place at the request of the economic agents, and practice is conducted in real work conditions or when formation suppliers closely cooperate with the economic agents from certain activity sectors.

Training at work place is the most frequent formation mode, being, on one hand, inexpensive, and on the other hand, inevitable, requested by the activity's development itself. The training offer tends to focus on complete qualification programs or on programs for general competences development. Also, the training offer is still very fragmented, because it addresses rather to people, not to companies, orientating on punctual requests of the labour market.

The system is focused especially on certificate supplying and less on competences development necessary for employment. The long duration of CPT programs, makes them inadequate for employed persons. Another important factor which acts like a brake in the current CPT system is the fact that the actual legislation doesn't allow the certification of partial qualification, although the formation request on the labour market is often orientated towards narrow qualifications.

2.1.7. CPT finance

Continuous training finance is made from the following sources:

- Employers' own funds;
- Public funds;
- Sponsorships, donations, attracted external sources - the conditions and forms in which provide financial support from external sources is made according to the specific legislation or provisions of international agreements of cooperation to which Romania is at hand;
- Taxes from the persons that participate at the training programs.

2.1.7.1 Finance from public funds

The current legislative framework provides tax measures to support training in companies. By the Law no. 571/2003 on Fiscal Code, with ulterior modifications and addenda:

- The adult training activity regulated by Government Ordinance no. 129/2000, republished, with ulterior modifications and addenda, deployed by any entity, whatever the form of ownership of it is exempt from added value;
- In case of incomes from independent activities, are admitted as deductible expenses and costs with training for their taxpayers and employees and those arising from participation to congresses or meetings professional character, and also professional contributions mandatory owed, according to the law, to professional organisations from which taxpayers are a part of, within the limit of 5% from realized gross income;
- In case of incomes from salaries, are not taxable costs made by the employer for training and employee's perfection connected to the activity deployed to the employer.

- Also, taxpayers - persons may provide upon an amount's destination representing up to 2% from tax on annual income, for sponsoring non-profit entities which found and function according to the law. To the extent that these entities have as objective the stimulation of training, they can use the respective sums for financing this objective.
- From the unemployment insurance budget training is financed both for persons in search for a job, and categories stipulated in the law. Groups of beneficiaries that benefits of free training are: unemployed with or without allowance, persons that couldn't find a job after graduation of an educational institution or by completing the military stage, persons that obtained the refugee status or another form of international protection, according to the law, the persons that could find a job after repatriation or after the release from detention, persons in detention; persons who resumed work after maternal leave; persons that resumed activity after completing the military stage; persons who resumed activity as a result of work capacity recovery after disability retirement; people working in rural areas and don't have a monthly income or have a monthly incomes lower than the unemployment indemnity and are registered to employment agencies.
- Besides these categories of people, from the insurance budget for unemployment 50% of the training costs are also financed for a number of no more than 20% of the employed personnel of the economic agents. These programs of training are organised in order to prevent unemployment, and the economic agents that benefit from this facility are selected according to the law.
- Programs of grant funding (ex: the Government of Romania, through the Agency for the small, medium companies and cooperation grants funding from the state budget for support sub-programmes of IMM, in which are financed shares/ measures for reducing the training gap of the decision and execution personnel from the small and medium Romanian companies comparing with those from European Union, personnel training services - the participation of personnel from small and medium companies with decision and/or execution functions at training courses on priority topics).

2.1.7.2 Finance of continuous training of employers

Continuous training in companies is developed enough, except large companies, especially multinational ones. Although collective contracts at the branch level contain provisions regarding training, the employee training is not considered to be a priority for companies. This can be caused by several factors: difficult general financial situation of companies and the lack of funds to be allocated to professional training; the absence of stimulation mechanisms for employers, the lack of their ability to identify the training needs.

In most cases, as the results of the selective status CVST2 demonstrates that employers don't consider training to be an investment for the future and a factor of competition. The training organised in the company is financed mainly by its own funds. The unemployment insurance budget supports training in the company and prevents unemployment, in the circumstances mentioned in paragraph 2.1.7.1.

Another important source for financing training inside the company is the programs with external finance for which the costs for training the work force are eligible.

The survey on the continuous training in the company made in 2000 (CVTS2) has revealed a series of aspects regarding the employers' involvement in the development of the personnel from their own companies. Thus, in 1999, Romanian

companies invested only 0, 5% of personnel expenses for continuous training courses, a low percentage if we are to compare to UE member states (from 1,2% in Portugal to 30% in Denmark) or with states newly integrated into UE (ex: 1,2% in Hungary, 1,9% in the Czech Republic). Few companies foresaw in their development plans a special budget for CPT, in most cases these being the large companies. Funds allocated by companies for CPT represent 0, 9% of the indirect personnel costs and 0, 3% of the total cost of labour force.

These are the most recent statistical data that offer comparative data between states. The explorative study on the request of continuous training, made on May 2004, in 2 regions from Romania: North-West and South-West, in 2 employment fields: construction and tourism, by the National Institute of Research in the Labour Field and Social Protection, in the Phare project of twinning RO 02/IB/SO/03 "Support for MINISTRY OF LABOUR for CPT", has highlighted important aspects regarding finance of continuous training of employers:

- The investment in development as an instrument for improving the company's competition is low at many companies from Romania;
- Employers are not willing to invest in formation and don't make almost any investments in formation, despite the fact that both employers and employees say that "in theory" training is important - but only 1/4 from the companies organized training programs in last three years. Companies consider training, even specialized one, to be an expense and not an investment in human resources;
- Training is seen as an individual responsibility, and not as a company priority.

2.1.7.3 Individual financed training

There is no official data concerning persons who pay to participate at training. People are interested in continuous training because it offers better opportunities on the labour market, contributing to the preservation of the workplace, career development, even finding a workplace abroad.

Still, the participation at CPT is low, because the financial possibilities at an individual level are limited and individual financial incentives or additional deductions to calculate the tax on income don't exist for persons that pay their participation to training. In general, banks don't make loans in favourable conditions for the participation of individual training, except several special situations.

2.1.8 Framework for European support

The European Union is the most important source of funding in field of human resource development, including in continuous training. In recent years several Phare programs were launched and financed: RICOP, the component for Human Resource of the 2000 and 2002 Phare Programs for Economic and Social Cohesion. Romania was a part of the Leonardo da Vinci community program, which aims to improve quality, innovating character and European dimension of practices and systems of continuous professional training.

2.1.9 Quality Assurance in CPT system

In Romania, a system of Quality Assurance was implemented in CPT, the approach method being different for the two CPT components:

A. Formal CPT system;

B. Non-formal and informal CPT system.

An analysis of the two approach methods, comparing with the European Reference Model concerning quality assurance in education and training (VET), shows in how well the system in Romania responds to the European model and what are the aspects that demand improvement.

Although important steps were made in quality assurance, for ex.:

- Elaborating and implementing methodologies regarding authorization, monitoring and controlling of formation providers and of centres for gained competence evaluation in a non-formal and informal way, based on specific criteria;
- Elaborating employment standards at national level for competence description and for training modules;
- Establishing regional tripartite committees of authorization, there are still aspects that need to be improved at national level, for ex:
- Insufficient number of employment standards and the fact that their elaboration is made by formation suppliers;
- The lack of some unique reference documents (miscorrelation between COR, the Nomenclature of Qualifications, employment standards, professional training standards);
- The small share in the authorization criteria of self-evaluation and the results obtained by suppliers.
- A system of quality that would mainly focus on assessing measures in which the CPT supply satisfies the beneficiary's needs: employers, employees and unemployed.

2.2 The evaluation of obstacles and difficulties

There is mentioned in the previous chapters, several obstacles and barriers currently in the path of the continuous training system, which led to a poor participation and to low investments. In order to achieve the objectives of this strategy an increase of CPT demand and a supply of high quality CPT are needed. The lack participation at CPT is determined by a series of obstacles:

- Lack of flexibility existent in the current CPT system. An important constraint is the qualification recognition: either full qualification or nothing. Currently there is no recognition system of partial qualifications, so that the supply of formation would be more flexible and more accessible for adults. The constraint is related to the long duration of formation to obtain a full qualification, fact which is incompatible with having a job.
- Another important aspect, which has to be underlined, is the lack of correlation between the qualification acquired in the formal system and the ones acquired in non-formal and informal system regarding recognition skills.
- The explorative study concerning the demand of CPT, clearly shows that employers and persons face difficulties regarding access to continuous training. The three main reasons are: (1) Formation costs, (2) formation length and (3) lack of offers available at a local level.
- The employers' wrong perception that see the expenditures on training as a cost and not as an investment, the lack of awareness on the benefits of formation, both among employers and the employees, are obstacles to the increase of participation in CPT.

2) FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE CONTINUOUS

- It is necessary to reconsider information services, counselling and professional orientation currently supplied, by extending them to the training providers and companies. Currently, since these services are offered mainly on the network of the Ministry of Education and Research and on the NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EMPLOYMENT network, the need for information, counselling and orientation cannot be fully covered. It is important to underline that the two institutions have a good geographical cover and a well consolidated experience for professional counselling, fact which constitutes a solid base for increasing the quality of guidance and professional counselling services offered by these institutions.

Concerning the insufficient quality in CPT services providers, encountered difficulties refer to:

- The institutional capacity insufficient for substantiation, implementation and monitoring of CPT policies and insufficient delimitation of responsibilities and competences between Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour regarding CPT.
- Insufficient implication of social partners might create in the future an important obstacle in the consolidation of CPT system. It is necessary to establish responsibilities and to allocate the resources necessary for district committees and other national, regional and local organisms that include social partners. District committees will need administrative personnel, and experts on activity sectors, to carry out investigations and periodic analyses, but also the support from external consultants.

But even with funds from the state budget for the existent district committee and with sufficient personnel which will serve them, the complex tasks of district committees will need considerable investments in human resources from the organizations of employers and employees.

- The existence of a weak institutional framework of public providers of continuous training. The institutions of training can be developed in order to handle future demands. The only high risk related to the institutional context is the lack financial resources. The network of private providers of training is not developed sufficient at a national level and doesn't cover in adequate way all sectors/fields of activity. Unfortunately, both private and public providers of CPT are situated especially in large cities and this makes the rural population access training more difficult.
- There are approximately 1200 providers of initial training (VET). They are not sufficiently involved in adult training. The network of the National Agency for Employment has 13 training centres under the control of its district agencies and 6 regional centres for adult training. It was decided to establish 7 more training centres, which at this time are in the process of rehabilitation and to endow with equipment.
- An authorization system of the training providers with access on controlling inputs, to the detriment of control on the results.
- The lack financial and human resources in development and update of employment standards.
- Insufficient coherence of the current system of initial and continuous training, from the perspective of learning during life time. It is imposed the elaboration of a transparent system of qualifications in training.

- The low share of self-evaluation and the obtained results by formation providers in the criteria of authorization, the lacks of quality assurance instruments, to measure the degree of satisfaction of CPT beneficiaries.

2.3 Conclusions

As has been previously shown, two problems have to solved:

1. Insufficient participation in CPT
2. Poor quality of CPT provision

To change this thing in radical manner, we must focus our attention and efforts upon the following categories of problems:

A. Legal framework:

- Insufficient legal provisions for recognition of previous learning in elaborating a system of transferable credits;
- Constraints and an inflexible approach to the Labour Code;
- Lack of coherence between the laws which regulates the initial and continuous formation;
- Lack of a CPT system flexible and modular, based on competences.

B. Responsibilities, organizational and institutional structures

- Insufficient links and coordination between ML and ME;
- The lack of organizational structures, of decision power and financial means to NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT VOCATIONAL TRAINING as National Authority Qualifications in connection with: district committees, the quality assurance of formation providers, and also the support for quality improvement;
- Insufficient involvement of social partners in CPT development;
- Lack of organisation framework in establishing district committees with decision power, responsibility for elaborating qualification standards, formation needs analysis etc.
- Insufficient administrative capacity for services of information, counselling and professional orientation.
- Insufficient quantity and quality regarding CPT provision.

C. CPT Finance

Allocated funds and insufficient structures for CPT financing.

D. CPT quality assurance

Lack of quality in the provision of CPT, including quality assurance at all levels in order to promote management and monitoring of CPT orientated towards result.

Czech Republic

1) Recognition of prior learning

At the level of policy innovation in the CR a number of strategic and programme documents have been adopted the implementation of which should create necessary preconditions for setting up identification and validation systems. The need of recognition of prior learning (RPL)¹ has not been primarily caused by situation on the labour market, which is considerably deregulated, but by too rigid circumstances in the formal education² in the CR.

As there is basically well operating initial vocational education and training (IVET) in the CR for all levels and fields of initial qualifications within its framework, further education is always a supplement here, either for providing a 'second chance' or for maintenance, development and updating or modification of initial qualification achieved before, provided generally within initial education.

Parallel conception of initial general and vocational education at the ISCED 3 level³ in the CR brings the following:

- there are no remarkable problems with illiteracy or functional illiteracy of the adults in the CR,

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1. We use this term and abbreviation in sense of both APL and APEL, i.e. in sense of formal recognition of so far formally unrecognised persons' learning results (corresponding to the formally valid national-level qualifications awarded by the respective certificates) irrespectively of ways or settings of their acquirement (no matter whether acquired by informal learning or by learning within a non-formal or formal education and training programme).
 2. Formal, non-formal and informal learning are here understood as defined according to the CEDEFOP glossary, see http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/img/dynamic/c313/cv-1_en_US_glossary_4030_6k.pdf. The essential of formal education as per this definition (and not the one of ISCED 97) is only its leading to certificates with national formal validity. Non-formal education is lacking this feature (certificates, if issued, have not nationwide formal validity), informal learning is moreover lacking an education programme (learning acquirements result from the mere experiential learning or self-study). The scope of formal education is, of course, wider with these definitions being applied. For its scope in the CR, see Refernet, 08 Validation of learning - recognition and mobility, http://www.refernet.cz/dokumenty/to_2006_english.pdf.
 3. Besides providing initial non-tertiary VET programmes already at ISCED 3 level (see the diagram in Annex), the Czech E&T system is characterised through continuing general education as a part of curricula in all initial VET programmes offered at this level. This enables for all pupils to be offered basis for LLL and/or subsequent tertiary studies (access is direct for graduates of ISCED 3A programmes, after completing an ISCED 4A follow-up study for graduates of ISCED 3C programmes) and a vocational or technical qualification (at EQF levels 2, 3 or 4) for an immediate entry into the labour market (graduates of grammar schools obtain no specific job qualification, nevertheless when entering directly the labour market, they are comparatively well accepted by employers).

1) Recognition of prior learning

- both 'second chance' education and RPL in the CR (i.e. for citizens of the CR and foreigners-residents) have particularly a compensational function (everybody enters the life with initial qualification and the basis for LLL, which enables both re-entries into formal E&T and other forms of learning),
- except for regulated occupations and other regulated activities the choice of employees' initial formal qualification as well as ways of its possible in-career extension or modification are left on employers (including self-employers), and individuals' further education and learning thus runs to remarkable extent - according to the needs of the learners and/or the requirements of their present or potential employers - in all suitable forms (as practical informal learning and/or non-formal education, in-company or in other companies or in various educational institutions; or as formally recognised CVET).

This overall situation as for the conception and implementation of initial and further education is in principle convenient, and if there is something to change, it is particularly in relation to the efforts for shortening and diversifying the learning pathways to qualifications and for increasing mobility of both workforce and persons preparing for an occupation in European extent (through creating the European area of LLL by developing and implementing its tools and the corresponding tools at national level, i.e. EQF and NQF, ECVET and ECTS with national equivalents as well as Europass, Ploteus, etc.). Both of these aims require recognition of learning outcomes regardless the ways of their acquirement, i.e. RPL.

1.1 How vocational skills are acquired

In general (without limitation to levels of both non-university and university tertiary education) the recognition of prior learning outcomes operates in three ways in the Czech Republic:

- Recognition of vocational qualifications of all levels pursuant to Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Other Competencies of Nationals of European Union Member States and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications), as amended;
- Recognition of education achieved in a non-EU country (whether by foreigners or citizens of the Czech Republic) upon assessment of documents certifying this education (mostly formal, if appropriate also non-formal), pursuant to the School Act (Act No. 561/2004 Coll., § 108) and the Directive of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports No. 12/2005 Coll. for levels of basic, secondary and tertiary professional education are concerned, and to a lot of special regulations for various fields of university tertiary education;
- Recognition of prior learning at the level of partial qualifications - however only up to the Maturita certificate level, thus excluding tertiary education - pursuant to Act No. 179/2006 Coll., which came into effect on 1 August 2007.

In the first and the second of the three mentioned ways of recognition, equivalence of formally recognised certificates issued in foreign countries is assessed from the point of view relevant for recognition of particular vocational qualification and/or for access to subsequent education and training but not automatically from both the points of view. A particular certificate may thus be only recognised for the purpose of access to subsequent education (with or without exemptions from its parts, subjects or study years, etc., recognised as acquired within prior learning) but not for the purpose of vocational qualification recognition (where length of service or experience in general and other requirements relevant for practice of the respective occupations are assessed).

1) Recognition of prior learning

There is in principle no reason to limit the field of interest to tertiary education, especially when moreover no recognition of prior learning in system extent exists in the Czech Republic, and will be introduced as a system for all levels, including tertiary education, in relation to the development and implementation of the NQF and the LLL concept. If we draw attention separately to tertiary education, there has ECTS already been introduced, indeed, and our universities are involved in the European Area of Higher Education, however no recognition of non-formal and informal learning is operated there, and not a bit in admission procedures, whether in relation to demographic change or not. Except for art schools, Maturita exam and success in admission proceeding remain the main prerequisites for admission to universities and tertiary technical schools. Regardless of ongoing debates on admission requirements (i.e. whether Maturita exam should enable access to tertiary education without admission procedure, or whether an aggregate of Maturita exam and admission procedure is still to be decisive), nothing should be changed - at least according to the existing legislation - on the requirement of passing Maturita exam (theoretically in any type and field of ISCED 3A/4A programmes) as prerequisite for access to both non-university and university tertiary education (theoretically regardless the field of study again).

Under the described conditions, recognition of non-formal and informal learning only has space as an alternative path to achievement of Maturita exam in the shortest or for an applicant most convenient way (that should be a combination of granting exemptions from what may be recognised to an applicant as provable result of prior learning, whether formal or non-formal or informal, and complementary preparation, again regardless its form, necessary for an applicant to be admitted to Maturita exam in the respective field of study or follow-up course leading to Maturita certificate).

This general situation is related to the fact that Maturita certificate has not only the function to provide access to tertiary education, but also qualification function for direct entry into the labour market, explicit in VET fields of ISCED 3A type, implicit in grammar school outputs. Just this double function of Maturita certificate is responsible for necessity of treating each of its two functions separately within the recognition of prior learning (see above to the difference of assessment criteria used in recognition of documents certifying prior learning acquirements for purposes of access to subsequent education on one hand and direct entry into the labour market and carrying out the respective occupations or other qualified work activities on the other hand).

The same is true for recognition of prior learning in relation to qualifications with this double function in all fields of study at all qualification levels (i.e., in the Czech Republic, in any field of study at levels ISCED 3 to 5 in study programmes of the types ISCED 3A or ISCED 4A as well as ISCED 5A). This is why recognition of prior learning aimed at obtaining a full qualification in the respective field of study or vocational branch with the corresponding level of education is subject to the requirement of passing moreover the same final examinations as within the initial formal education and training (which is not required for obtaining a partial qualification without the corresponding level of education pursuant the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).

This general situation as to obtaining or recognition of full qualifications in the Czech Republic has a closer link to demographic changes (if any) only in relation to international mobility and recognition of vocational qualifications obtained abroad, whether to foreigners or Czech citizens. Access to the tertiary education could be

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more opened, of course, by enabling admission of applicants without Maturita certificate, on the basis of admission procedure only (as it is possible as exception in art schools). However, such a measure is not feasible under the existing legal conditions and a respective change is not intended or even discussed by now.

1.2 Are lifelong learning outcomes taken into account as well? On what scale? What are the ways of recognition of informal learning like?

Legislation gradually creates a framework for RPL in the CR since 2005. The new School Act which came into force on 1st January 2005 enables individuals (above 15 years of age) to acquire a certificate on having completed a part of an initial formal educational programme by passing a single examination as a part of the respective final examination, regardless of how they acquired the relevant knowledge and skills. The measures taken in the context of the European concept of LLL (and especially LWL) include passing the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. of 30 March 2006 on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results, effective from 1st August 2007), developing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and elaborating its tools with pilots of their use in trial implementation of procedures for RPL. The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. foresees a possibility for adults to acquire partial vocational qualifications registered within the NQF, through an examination (practical or, if appropriate, oral or written as well) to compare an individual's prior learning results (his or her knowledge, skills and competences regardless the ways and settings of their acquirement) with qualification and assessment standards (QS, AS) of respective partial vocational qualifications. It is not possible, however, to gain complete qualifications through these procedures of validation; in addition, the same complex final examinations as in initial formal VET are required for their obtaining.

As per the provisions of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., NÚOV is in charge of establishing and maintaining the NQF, the respective authorising bodies (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and/or other ministries) of establishing and maintaining the institutional framework for RPL (esp. authorisation of so-called authorised persons as providers of RPL procedures). Otherwise, no essential changes are foreseen in IVET and in the structure of responsibilities and coordination of work at the national and provider levels. It is too soon, however, to anticipate possible further changes in this direction in connection with the process of making the European concept of LLL a reality.

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. was conceived to a large extent with the aim of supporting employability of inhabitants. The conditions for implementation of the Act (esp. development of NQF, which includes specifying of qualification requirements for the respective partial qualifications) are being created in close co-operation with employers, so as the qualification requirements are relevant and subsequently demanded by employers. Contents of partial qualifications are directly linked to the respective occupations or type positions; who achieves a certificate of partial qualification should thus be capable of performing the respective occupation. We are convinced that the Act will enable larger flexibility of workforce and quicker achievement of qualifications for the occupations that currently offer getting a job. Since the Act presumes recognition of knowledge and skills regardless the way of their achievement (courses, self-study, experience, etc.), participation in a preparing course is not prerequisite, which enables learners to spare both time and money (course fees).

1.3 Current developments and trends

The above approach has been elaborated and piloted through ESF-funded projects with the objective to develop a relevant scheme and to gradually launch this on a

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national basis. Important ESF projects in this respect are the NSP project ('The National Occupations Framework', 2007 - 2008, www.nsp.cz) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and two system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, namely the NSK project ('The development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) supporting links between initial and further education', 2005-2008, www.nsk.nuov.cz) and the UNIV project ('Recognition of the results of non-formal education and informal learning in networks of schools providing education services for adults', 2005-2008, www.univ.nuov.cz) which are carried out by NÚOV.

National Occupations Framework (NOF) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Based on the NOF the NQF is developed in the CR, as response both to the national needs and the respective European recommendations. NQF is regulated by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and represents a homogenous, nationally recognised (agreed) register of all qualifications distinguished and recognised in the CR. NQF will also become an important link between initial and continuing education. It shall specify both complete and partial qualifications and describe their relations. Its main tools shall be qualification and assessment standards (i.e. structured descriptions of qualifications and methods through which acquisition of the respective knowledge, skills and competences of individuals shall be verified). Once elaborated, NQF will enable social partners to specify their requirements regarding aims and content of VET. It will support comprehensibility, transparency and comparability of qualifications and the respective competences and skills. This is the way in which the macro-environment suitable for the development and operating of a system for RPL will be created.

NQF and the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. enable the RPL. The need of RPL has not been primarily caused by situation on the labour market, which is considerably deregulated, but by too rigid circumstances in the field of education. RPL should benefit especially the target groups of unemployed and persons at risk of unemployment. These groups comprise many people with no formal VET qualification or with one which is not demanded on the labour market, but sometimes with skills and knowledge corresponding to other qualification(s), acquired through non-formal or informal learning. Another reason for involvement of candidates into the system of RPL can be their effort to acquire formal qualification for the branch or field in which they already have own business or perform services.

Concerning the assessment standards prepared in connection with NQF and RPL for assessment and certification of partial qualifications (units), another accounting is likely to be used than a scale of marks, namely a qualitative meeting/failing scale for each of the set of assessment criteria pertaining to the assessed unit, with a required total (number or rate) of fulfilled criteria for acquiring the unit in question.

UNIV

Besides preparing the NQF with its qualification and assessment standards, it is necessary to carry out pilots for the implementation of a system for RPL. No experience with RPL exists as yet, only a first pilot in this direction was made within the Leonardo EPANIL project, and a following pilot in greater extent is being made within the system project UNIV (in connection with development of the NQF). The UNIV project is a complementary empirical system project to the creation of both

2) Attitudes of various stakeholders to recognition of informal learners

qualifications framework and particular qualifications within the NQF system project. It works as a feasibility study for creation of the Czech NQF and its use for purposes of both further education and RPL, at qualification level ISCED 3C (i.e. EQF 2 and 3), levels ISCED 3A and ISCED 5B (i.e. EQF 4 and 5) will follow later.

In these projects, standards and other system tools for RPL are developed, regional LLL centres and school networks are created, training of pedagogical staff including assessors and counsellors for RPL is organised. The focus is on the last issue because legally requested tools (assessment standards for particular qualifications, describing criteria for assessment of the respective competences and methods and procedures of the assessment itself) are being developed but persons expected to use these tools (assessors and counsellors) are not prepared to carry out their activities. The pilot verification of both the educational courses for assessors and counsellors and the assessment standards take place in networks of schools providing the training services to adults in 8 regions (NUTS 3) of the CR.

The general aim of the project is to support further education provided by secondary VET schools and tertiary technical schools. To fulfil this aim there are two partial targets, two outlines of the project:

- development and improvement of further education offered in secondary VET schools and tertiary technical schools;
- enrichment of educational service for adults through recognition of non-formal education and informal learning results, i.e. the RPL.

These two lines were in the first two years implemented more or less independently on each other. Now, in the third year of the project they have been integrated to support the development of further education offered by secondary VET schools and tertiary technical schools radically.

The RPL has been performed so far on 16 assessment standards in total, which should bring enough experience for a fast extension of the RPL procedures to all of the assessment standards corresponding to the VET branches on the ISCED 3C level. Assessment standards for all complete and partial qualifications at the corresponding NQF levels (EQF 2 and 3) have been produced within the NSK or UNIV or QUALITY system projects, the last of which is focused on reforming the final examination of the corresponding branches of IVET. These system projects have been concluded in July of this year but the development of the Czech NQF as well as RPL procedures and centres will be continued, of course.

2) Attitudes of various stakeholders to recognition of informal learners

No crucial problems seem to stand in the way of the reform changes to be made in connection with the implementation of the LLL in general and the NQF and RPL in particular, especially since these reform changes are being introduced "top-down" in the Czech national context (as a step following the ongoing curricular reform).

Favourable synergies might be expected in:

- the extended possibilities of (both geographical and horizontal) mobility for learners and/or job applicants,

2) Attitudes of various stakeholders to recognition of informal learners

- an increased involvement and importance of providers (schools) extending their supply to the full scope of VET in its both life-wide and lifelong dimensions, and
- an increased closeness and flexibility of interrelations between / overlapping of carrying out work and preparing for it within LLL (in its both life-wide and lifelong dimensions), along with maintaining a sufficient system rigidity of these interrelations, especially within IVET (through maintaining and actualising a set of full IVET qualifications, and a set of partial qualifications with defined relations to the full ones).

Main possible obstacles might be expected in:

- insufficient motivation of both learners and VET providers for engaging in these reform changes without being sufficiently 'driven' to do it (through sufficiently clear and truly effective - both threatening and promising - incentives from the world of work),
- possible lack of necessary balance of flexibility/rigidity of the overall VET system, esp. in direction of its over-structuring through creating a new set of partial qualifications (where no regulations have been yet and no lack of regulations has been felt as well).
- There is also a possibility of synergy of these unfavourable conditions. However, it is too soon to considerate the probability of real risks for such events at the very start of the process.

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Recognition of Further Education Results, was conceived to a large extent with the aim of supporting employability of inhabitants. The conditions for the implementation of the Act (development of the NQF including, among others, the identification of qualification requirements for the respective partial qualifications) are created in close co-operation with employers, particularly so as the qualification requirements are relevant and subsequently demanded by employers. Contents of partial qualifications are directly linked to the respective occupations or type positions; this means that who achieves a certificate of partial qualification should be capable of performing the respective occupation. We are convinced by the above reasons that the Act will enable larger flexibility of workforce and enable quicker achievement of qualifications for the occupations that currently offer getting a job. With regard to the fact that the Act presumes recognition of achieved knowledge and skills regardless the way of their achievement (courses, home preparation, experience etc.), a particular method of preparation (participation in a course) is not a necessary precondition - and it is thus not necessary to spend money (course fees) and to spend specific time in courses. The Act is thus economical from both time and financial points of view.

Involvement of both public and private schools is comparatively strong, being supported and promoted through the above system projects (see esp. the UNIV project) and driven by their comparatively strong competition under the present demographic conditions (falling or stagnating rates of the young in the ageing population). However, a wide variety can be seen in their co-operation with employers as well as in their attitudes towards the LLL and RPL issues, what makes the support activities at school level like the ones of UNIV very important.

The position of the social partners is not very clear. Employers seem unanimously to support the closer interconnexion of the world of work and the VET (both IVET and CVET). However, it can be still felt the effect of disconnection of both spheres in the 1990s (enterprises ceased almost entirely to participate in designing and providing VET) their positions differ in more specified issues.

2) Attitudes of various stakeholders to recognition of informal learners

Decentralisation of government administration has recently taken place and regions have taken a lot of activities over to their competencies.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports issues the Long-term Programme of Education and Education System Development in the Czech Republic every four years. It is a middle-term perspective of educational policy from the Ministry of Education's point of view. Regions use this document as the base for their own long-term programmes, in which they formulate the key educational spheres in their regions (regarding local specifics and priorities) in compliance with the basic priorities mentioned in the Ministerial document.

Regions have now great opportunities for (both initial and further) education support in relation to ESF drawings. Regions have also often money for education support, e.g. in the form of grants.

Greece

1) Introduction

Across the European Union region, lifelong learning (LLL) was placed at the centre of the strategic vision to make Europe one of the most dynamic "knowledge based economies" in the world. In Greece, as in all Member States, the integration of non-formal and informal learning into the overall framework of LLL should be processed in line with the relevant EU directives. In addition, validation of non-formal and informal learning is very much related to make visible the entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual, irrespective of the context where the learning originally took place, facilitating the transfer of skills and competences within the changing working environment reflecting evolutions in technologies, markets and organisations.

Greece, traditionally has given emphasis to academic basic education (at secondary & tertiary level) and not in vocational education and training, with the formal VET schemes remain very weak, although during the recent years, measures have been taken to improve the situation. From the other part in Greece, like in the other Mediterranean countries, the general attitude to the introduction of non - formal and informal learning (especially through work experience), as prevalent forms in the development of professional qualifications, has been positive and the usefulness of such practices is clearly expressed.

In Greece, the policy context in the area of LLL has been formulated in accordance with the Lisbon summit (2000), following the priorities proposed in the Memorandum (2000) and the Communiqué (2002) and the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). In addition to this political agenda, the Greek 2005-2008 National Reform Programme (NRP) identified key challenges in the field of education and lifelong learning, as well as in a broad range of other public policy areas, where the decisive role of "valuing learning" played by the recognition of competencies and the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning in LLL strategy is stressed.

Under these circumstances, the profile of validation has been raising on the national policy agenda in Greece. The issue has been in discussion for a number of years, especially within the public sector organisations responsible for adult education. The establishment in 1997 of a new institution for the accreditation of training structures and curricula and a recent framework law (passed at the end of 2003) for the rationalization between the systems of initial and continuous training are two positive recent developments that are expected to promote the establishment of validation methods in the near future. However, there are still few systems in use for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, focusing on the social rather than the formal recognition of competencies.

2) The Institutional/legal framework

Throughout the previous programming periods, there has been no overall LLL strategy; only individual actions, which have been based mainly on financing

2) The Institutional/legal framework

opportunities through the Structural Funds and the Greek Special Fund for Employment and Vocational Training Fund (NSRF 2007 - 2013).

The weaknesses in this field mainly stemmed from the absence of systematic recording of labour demand characteristics and consequently from the failure in recognising training demands. Some positive actions have, however, been recorded, such as:

- The creation through the Law 2469/1997 and the development of the National Accreditation Centre of Vocational Training Structures and Accompanying Support Services (EKEPIS), operating independently, under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment, the authority and policy maker for the development and implementation of an accreditation system for continuing vocational training. Social partners participate in the EKEPIS administrative body in a consultative role, contributing to the framing and implementation of policies in the field of accreditation of continuing training.

The effort of EKEPIS, established in 1997, to ensure quality in the provision of continuing vocational training and improve effectiveness of training services in Greece has been evolving step by step through the development of accreditation systems, which were designed upon social dialogue with the active participation of the social partners and key stakeholders and set transparent legislated criteria and procedures.

First, EKEPIS developed the system for the accreditation of Vocational Training Centres (KEK), i.e. ensuring that the accredited training structures have the appropriate infrastructure. The process moved on to the development of the system for the accreditation of Trainers for Adults and EKEPIS has compiled a Registry of accredited trainers, who have eligibility for employment in EU co-funded programs offered by KEK. Further, the organisation developed the system for the accreditation of Support Services Professionals, who provide support services tailored to the needs of the social vulnerable groups, and has respectively compiled a Registry of accredited support services professionals, who have eligibility for employment in EU co-funded programs.

EKEPIS is also responsible for the accreditation of Occupational Profiles on which continuing vocational training programmes are built. The accreditation of occupational profiles is given in agreement between a representative each from EKEPIS, OEEK, PAEP SA (Employment Observatory Research - Informatics SA), as well as employers' and employees' representatives and a process of accrediting 66 occupational profiles by the end of 2008 is currently being rolled out.

The following step is for EKEPIS to implement the accreditation system for Vocational Training Programs offered by accredited vocational training centres (KEK). Continuing vocational training programmes are accredited on the basis of accredited occupational profiles. EKEPIS aims to accredit 80 training programmes during the first stage of implementation. The accreditation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the trainees, who have successfully completed an accredited training program is a next step for EKEPIS.

- The new framework law (Law 3191/2003) for the institutionalisation of the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training to Employment (ESSEEKA) which is expected to rationalise the provision of services such as vocational education and training, accreditation of competencies and learning

3) Existing initiatives for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

outcomes, counselling and vocational guidance and lastly employment related assistance.

A first step towards implementation was taken in 2006 by setting up the High Level Committee for ESSEKA, which will function as the core group that will implement all the other provisions of the Law. The High Level Committee held its meetings during the second half of 2006 and 2007 focusing on operational issues that have necessitated an amendment to the Law, as well as analysis of the six systems, as envisaged in the Law (i.e. recording labour market needs and vocational guidance and counselling).

- The recent establishment of an institutional framework for Systematisation of Lifelong Learning (Law 3369/2005). This Law constitutes the first integrated strategy on lifelong learning at national level. The Law sets out the roles and responsibilities of each type of organisation involved in VET and lifelong learning. It also sets the framework for the establishment and function of the "National Committee for Life Long Learning", whose role is intended to be the better identification of needs in lifelong education and training, the improved cooperation between actors in lifelong education and training and its link with ESSEKA.

In addition, a national consultation process has been launched for the development of a National Qualifications Framework and its links with the European Qualifications' Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). Policy makers, social partners, national experts and VET stakeholders are all participating in this discussion.

3) Existing initiatives for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The initiatives developed in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece can be summarised as following:

- Upon successful completion of a continuing vocational training program, participants are provided with a certificate of attendance by the accredited Vocational Training Centres (KEK). Such programs are not integrated in the formal VET system and such certificates do not have official state recognition but may have a kind of recognition in the labour market.
- The Education Departments of various Ministries and major public corporations also plan vocational in-service training programmes for their own staff. These courses lead to certificates which are taken into account for career development within each Ministry or company.
- The Ministry of Education in 2003 set up a system of summative assessment, based on examinations to confirm and certify the knowledge of modern languages obtained through non-formal training. The process leads to obtaining the "State Certificate of Language Proficiency". This Certificate has adopted the scale of six levels of language competence proposed by the European Council. It can be obtained by Greek native speakers for foreign languages including English, French, German and Italian.
- A more recent development is the "System for the Accreditation of Greek Language Competence for Immigrants" that was established in 2006. The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE) has developed this system

3) Existing initiatives for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

which provides for the accreditation and recognition of Greek language competence for immigrants at four levels of competence. Those who successfully complete the final (4th level) of the GSAE's educational programme on Greek language and culture can participate in twice-yearly examinations to obtain a Certificate of Greek Language Competence. This Certificate is a prerequisite for obtaining a long-stay permit in Greece.

- There are some public-private-third sector partnership initiatives implemented through the framework of Community Initiatives (EQUAL, LEONARDO) focusing on the development and pilot implementation of non-formal and informal learning validation models.
- The National Thematic Group on Accreditation of Vocational Qualifications and Skills of the EQUAL Community Initiative has produced the "Best Practice Guide: Cooperation for the development and promotion of accreditation tools and systems of vocational qualifications and skills", which has been mainstreamed for the finalisation of the legal framework regarding the institutionalisation of the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training to Employment (ESSEEKA).
- Informal learning is provided by: the Second Chance Schools for adults who have not completed compulsory education; the Adult Education Centres (KEE); the Parents' Schools (Scholes Goneon); the Centre for Distance Lifelong Education and Training of Adults (KEEENAP). Lifelong learning programmes lead to the acquisition of either a 'Certificate of Training' (this is awarded for programmes that last for up to 75 hours) or a 'Certificate of Lifelong Learning' (awarded for programmes that last for up to 250 hours).
- In the private sector, certification is offered by Private Educational Institutes for courses offered by them but these are not officially recognised by the State. However, certificates of attendance at such courses are an element that is sometimes taken into account by employers to the advantage of candidates who possess such certificates.
- Certain major private companies, including in particular the banking and IT sector, provide certification for the in-house training courses their own employees participate in.
- European (e.g. European Computer Driving License) and International (e.g. Microsoft, Cambridge) systems for validating computer competences are being used very successfully in Greece and are recognised both by public and private sector employers. Similar certificates are also provided by private sector companies for various information technology applications in collaboration with IT multinationals (Microsoft, Oracle etc.) Acquisition of IT basic knowledge and skills is recognized by the Supreme Council for Personnel Selection (ASEP) of the Greek State on the condition that the respective certificates (except those acquired through the formal educational system) are awarded by the certification bodies accredited by OEEK. The main learning modules are a) word processing, b) spreadsheets and c) internet services. The certificates awarded are valid for three (3) years from the day of issue.
- The Industrial and Commercial Chamber of Athens (ICCA) has established a professional competency certification system for the knowledge and experience of each person involved in his sector. The areas of specialisation for which examinations certifying professional competence are held (regardless of formal qualifications) are for the time being a) accounting office employee, and b) information technology employee. Gradually the system will be enriched with other areas of specialisation with the aim of covering the entire range of business activities in the short period of time.

4. References

- There is also some opportunity for acknowledgement of skills via the acquisition of certificates or a licence to exercise certain professions which are issued by a number of agencies.

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