

**National Training Fund
National VET Observatory**



**NATIONAL REPORT ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS
IN DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING
IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

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Introduction

This report tries to meet two main requirements. The first is to **describe** the development and current state of the role of social partners in development of the initial and continuing vocational training in the Czech Republic, the second is to **recommend measures** to be taken which would enable to improve the involvement of social partners in vocational training.

The structure of the report comes out from the requirement of the European Training Foundation in Turin. After the introduction, in the first part of the report the basic legal framework, and both the general situation of social partnership and the specific situation of social partnership in vocational training are described. Information on the most significant Czech representatives of employers and employees is provided, as well as on their representativeness, membership organizations, activities etc.

The core of the report lies in its second part, providing an overview of the social dialogue in several important fields of vocational training, for example in the development of educational standards and qualifications. The development and state of involvement of social partners in vocational training is not only described, but also evaluated.

In the third part of the report, three concrete cases of cooperation of social partners with institutions of vocational training are presented.

In the fourth part, conclusions from the preceding parts are summarized, and measures are recommended to be taken which would help to improve the current state.

The report is intended for users on the national as well as international level. On the **national** level, it is intended especially for social partners and state (government) bodies in order to help them identify problems and to prepare and to implement joint actions aiming to enhance quality of the Czech vocational training. On the **international** level, the report is intended especially for representatives of international institutions of the European Union, active in the vocational training. The report should help them to understand the situation in the Czech Republic, and find suitable ways of support of social partnership in vocational training in Central and Eastern European countries.

The report was elaborated in the National VET Observatory incorporated in the National Training Fund in Prague, in cooperation with the representatives of the most significant Czech social partners. The report was validated in cooperation with the organizations of these social partners and with the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic.

In order to understand the role of social partners in Czech vocational training easier, some basic general information on the Czech Republic and on its development during the past few years is given below.

The Czech Republic, a Central European country with 10.3 million inhabitants, with an area of 78,866 km² and with the population density of 131 (1), has gone through **substantial political, economic, and social changes** in the course of the 90's, which had followed the political upheaval at the end of 1989.

In the **economy**, in the first half of the 90's the **economic reform** was started, connected with transition from directive centralist management of economy toward

market economy. A huge number of new laws was negotiated, approved, and implemented in connection with the reform.

The privatization as a basis of the economic reform, together with the deregulation of most prices, deregulation of foreign trade and with the tax reform, created in the country the private sector during several years which had not been practically existed before. The recent share of the private sector in the gross domestic product reaches almost 80 % now (1).

In the first years of the economic transformation, efficiency of the economy declined. Since the end of 1993 however, the economic growth has been increasing. In 1996, the rate of the economic growth was 4.4 % and for the year of 1997 it was estimated to be 2.9 % (2), but it will be probably less. The gross domestic product per capita (measured on the basis of purchasing power parity) reaches about \$10,700 (2).

The total number of employed is about 5 million, which is almost a half of the total number of inhabitants. In the 90's, considerable changes occurred in the **employment structure**. The share of employees in agriculture has decreased to one half, the share of employees in industry has slightly decreased, whereas the share of employees in the service sector has now reached 52 % (2). The share of people employed in small enterprises up to 25 employees has increased and now reaches about 34 %. The number of entrepreneurs had been increased. The unemployment rate has not significantly changed recently, in May after a slight increase in the course of 1997, it reached 4.3 % (6).

About 12 % of employees have finished basic education and this share has been decreasing; about 77 % have completed secondary education and this share has not changed and about 11 % are university graduates and this share has been increasing (1). About 96 % of graduates of basic schools continue their education at secondary schools, and about 27 % graduates of secondary schools continue at the tertiary level.

Economic indicators including employment indicators do vary in individual regions of the country, however the differences are usually smaller than in most European countries (11). Regions in which the unemployment rate exceeds the national average, usually belong to the regions in which significant changes in employment structure have occurred and are still occurring, for example in connection with decline of mining and heavy industry.

Together with changes in the economy, the Czech **political system** has changed as well. It is based on plurality with principles of democracy. Social partnership is one of its features. In 1990, bodies of employers were established, nonexistent before then. Roles of trade unions have changed too. Trade unions had existed before, however they had not represented employees towards employers or government. With regard to extensive and demanding changes in the economy, especially in the first half of the 90's, activities of employers' organizations as well as of trade unions had to be aimed at substantial problems connected with the economic transformation (for example wages), while activities concerning training have become a subject of their interest only recently. Besides organizations of employers, several dozens of sectoral associations of enterprises or of professional associations have been established.

In the 90's, **education and training** in the Czech Republic have gone through changes as well. As reflection of the ongoing the transformation processes in the society, liberalization of the conditions has been done in the field of education and training too. This resulted for example in broadening school competencies, which, especially in vocational training, quickly reacted to the development of training needs

by introducing new branches and by up-dating the curricula. Private vocational schools have been established too.

After nine years of compulsory education at basic school, about 10 % of young people continue their education at secondary schools providing general education (this share has been stagnating), about 41 % at secondary technical schools which usually take four years (this share has been increasing), and about 49 % at secondary vocational schools which usually take three years (this share has been decreasing) (3). In connection with development of employment structure by sectors, the structure of students of vocational schools by branches has been changing too: the number of students of technical branches has been decreasing and the number of students of economic branches and service branches has been increasing. Although this trend corresponds roughly with changes in the employment structure, it is faster in vocational training. Therefore, a lack of graduates of technical branches, and on the other hand an surplus of graduates of economic branches, started to occur. This development was influenced by insufficient involvement of employers in vocational training.

Liberalization in education and low level of participation of social partners in education has influenced development of network of vocational schools. Many new schools have been established, especially secondary technical schools. Number of these schools doubled in the course of four years (until 1995) (3). Some hundred of private vocational schools have been established as well. This has led to decrease of the average size of schools and to decrease of efficiency of expenditures on education. The parallel demographic development, i. e. decreasing number of young people entering secondary schools, has led to the current significant surplus of capacities of secondary schools over the demand for education.

The **continuing vocational training** has changed in the 90's too. In order to improve the supply of continuing vocational training especially for employees of enterprises, after 1990 during a short period more than thousand training companies were established (4). At first, adults took part in continuing vocational training from their own initiative, while in the past few years managers of larger enterprises in particular have started to pay more attention to continuing training of employees. As employers have paid their attention especially to crucial issues of restructuring of enterprises so far, continuing training of employees has not belonged to their priorities. Recently however, their interest for training has increased.

1- Social Partnership Generally and in Vocational Training

1.1 The State of Social Partnership Generally

1.1.1 The Basic Legal Framework

The basic legal framework of social partnership in the Czech Republic is specified by several laws. The following laws belong to the most important:

- the Labour Code (law no. 65/1965, amended),
- law no. 83/1990 on association of citizens, amended,
- law no. 2/1991 on collective bargaining, amended,
- law no. 120/1990 regulating some relations between trade unions and employers, amended.

According to the Labour Code, an **employer** is a legal entity or a natural person employing natural persons in working-legal relations. Employers appear in working-legal relations under their name and bear responsibility following from these relations. The same concerns organizational units of employers. However, if an employer participates in a work-legal relation, his/her organizational unit cannot be his counterpart at the same time and vice versa. Employers are obliged to care for developing work-legal relations according to the Labour Code, to the other regulations and to the rules of fairness and of civic coexistence. In the communication of the employer with the employees is realized through the representatives of the employees - trade unions take part.

For tasks and function of **trade unions** as representatives of **employees** (and also for tasks and function of organizations of employers) as basic elements of social partnership, the following provisions of law no. 83/1990 on association of citizens are important: „*Citizens have a right to associate freely. A trade union and an organization of employers becomes a legal entity on the day following after the day the proposal of its registration had been submitted to the pertinent Ministry.*“ Relevant paragraphs of the Labour Code and of the law on collective bargaining then define the term of a pertinent trade union body, and codify rules of mutual relations between employers and trade unions. According to the Labour Code, *the pertinent trade union body is a body entitled to appear in legal relations on behalf of the pertinent trade union.* No legal norm states closer specification nor a name of such a body. Therefore, determining whether a trade union body (that is determining who is entitled to appear on behalf of trade union) is the pertinent one or not is an exclusive matter of trade unions. Individual trade union organizations (by sector) then specify which body has the statute of a pertinent trade union body. It is usually the committee of the local organization of the sectoral trade union.

In case that more than one organization of trade unions or in case more organizational units of the same trade union organization (for example two local organizations of one sectoral trade union) are operating under one employer, steps are taken according to the law no. 120/1990, regulating some relations between trade unions and employers: *In cases more trade union organizations operating simultaneously in the employer's organization, the employer's organization must, in*

cases concerning all or a greater number of employees when generally obligatory legal regulations require negotiations with a trade union or its agreement, fulfill its obligations towards the pertinent bodies of all operating trade union organizations, unless the employers' organization agrees upon something else with them. This means for example that a director of an enterprise cannot negotiate unilaterally with individual organizations on the conclusion of a collective agreement. However, the law makes such an agreement possible among all participants of collective bargaining which can enable a situation to arise when the collective agreement shall be concluded on behalf of all trade union organizations by only one of them, or the director may conclude collective agreement with every trade union organization separately, however the condition is that all participating parties must agree.

1.1.2 Structure of Employer's Organizations

In order to cooperate and enforce their interests, employers associate in various types of organizations. If the purpose of such an association is supposed to be its cooperation in matters of employer's relations, thus for example in matters of conclusion of collective agreements of a higher degree (that is collective agreement concluded by the pertinent higher trade union body and an organization or organizations of employers for a greater number of employers), such an organization must be established according to the law no. 83/1990 on association of citizens, later amended by the law no. 300/1990 (on change and amendment of the law no. 83/1990), and according to the law no. 68/1993 (reacting to division of former Czechoslovakia). This law regulates details of registration and the establishment of employers' organizations as well as trade unions. For the establishment of organizations of this type, the law requires registration only which means less formalities than in other forms of association of inhabitants. The law mentioned charges the Ministry of Interior to keep records of this type of organizations.

Organization of employers in the Czech Republic is **pluralistic**.

The greatest and most significant organization of employers is the **Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic**. This union associates 31 collective members and 171 individual members. Collective members associate according to their sectors, branches, regions or interests. The total number of subjects of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, is 1,780 and almost one million of persons is employed in these subjects. Examples of membership unions of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic by sectors: Czech Union of Employers in the Power Industry, Association of the Chemical Industry of the Czech Republic, Association of the Glass and Ceramics Industry of the Czech Republic, Automotive Industry Association. Examples of unions by region and branch: Association of Industrial Companies of Moravia and Silesia, Association of Foundries of the Czech Republic. Examples of unions according to their interests: Czech Management Association, Personnel Managers Club, Association of Mechanical Engineers, Union of Czech and Moravian Producer Cooperatives. Some member unions of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic also are members of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic.

The Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic is a voluntary organization associating employers and entrepreneurs from industry and transport. The Confederation is a non-state organization independent on government, political parties

and trade unions. It is the greatest employers' union in the Czech Republic, representing the most significant part of the Czech industry. The main tasks of the Confederation are enforcement and protection of interests of employers and entrepreneurs in industry and other branches against the government and Parliament of the Czech Republic. The Confederation also enforces and protects interests of the whole employers' sphere in the social policy within the framework of tripartite bargaining with the government and trade unions, and represents employers in collective bargaining with trade unions.

The second biggest representative of employers in the Czech Republic is the **Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurial Unions**. The Confederation consists of six employers' associations: Union of Entrepreneurs in Construction of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers' Unions of the Czech Republic, Association of Cooperatives of the Czech Republic, Union of Agricultural Cooperatives and Companies, Union of Investment Companies, and Union of Trade of the Czech Republic.

Both employers' unions represent employers on the national level in the **tripartite body**, the Council of Economic and Social Agreement. Statute of this council defines, besides other things, criteria of representativeness of employers, and both unions meet these criteria. Following criteria belong to them:

- to have a national effect,
- to associate employers' organizations in regions and in various branches,
- to be established according to the law no. 83/1990 on association of citizens,
- not to perform any political activity mentioned in the law on political parties and movements, and
- to associate organizations with the total number of employees not lower than 500,000.

Collective members of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic are active at the **sectoral** level. Some of them conclude so called collective agreements of a higher degree, according to the law on collective bargaining. This concerns for example the Association of Glass and Ceramics Industry of the Czech Republic, the Union of Chemical Industry of the Czech Republic, etc. Unlike the national level where the social dialogue is built on the tripartite principle, on the sectoral level it is a dialogue between two sides (i. e. between employers and trade unions). A similar situation is on the regional level as well. For example, the Association of Industrial Companies of Moravia and Silesia conclude collective agreement of a higher degree with the KOVO trade union (see below).

The Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic has gradually extended its foreign relations. Since 1992 it has been a member of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) in Geneva, since 1993 it has been a member of the International Association of Industrial and Employers' Unions of Europe (UNICE), and in 1996 it was accepted as a member in the OECD Advisory Committee for Industry and Trade (BIAC). Foreign relations of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic are mostly aimed at development of international cooperation in industry, at transferring the know-how, at joint ventures, at business relations, but they also include international cooperation in the field of training. Within the framework of international cooperation on the European level, the Confederation has for example

prepared and ensured 13 training courses for managers of industrial enterprises with stays abroad (in Belgium for example). Nowadays, within the framework of the EU programme Partnership, the second project is under implementation, the result of which should be establishment of a service centre in the field of personnel management. Besides that, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic cooperates with a number of foreign employers' unions a bilateral level, and this cooperation includes training projects as well (for example two training projects for managers in Norwegian enterprises). Other international activities in the field of training are developed by the Institute of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic which is a training institution of the Confederation, and which cooperates for example with UNDP, with the British Ashridge Management College, with the Managerial School of the Dutch Confederation of Industry, etc., on educational projects.

The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic is a public-legal organization representing interests of Czech entrepreneurs (except the agricultural sector). It associates more than 15 thousand of entrepreneurs in 86 regional chambers and in 54 craft associations. Members of the Chamber employ more than 2 million employees. Activities of the Chamber, according to the law no. 301/1992 on the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and on the Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic (amended in 1993, 1994 and 1996), are aimed at representation of entrepreneurs' interests against state bodies on the national and regional level, and at provision of entrepreneurial services. The Chamber communicates its remarks to proposals of economic laws, it informs state bodies about its opinions, and it enforces problems solutions in favour of entrepreneurs. The Chamber emphasizes protection of interests of small and middle sized enterprises. Membership in the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic is voluntary and can be obtained through regional economic chambers or craft association only.

In the law on the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic (and the Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic), the field of activities of the Chamber is defined. In relation to training, in the pertinent paragraph it is stated that the chambers *„organize training activity and cooperate with authorities of state administration when ensuring information services, vocational training and retraining, and when solving employment problems“*. At the same time and according to the law, the chambers *establish and administer facilities and institution the purpose of which is to support development of enterprising and training, and the field of activities of which includes taking part in vocational training, and which support training institutions established for this purpose.*

The Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic is a similar institution in the agricultural sector. It is an association the aim of which is to support activities of entrepreneurs in agriculture, food industry and forestry. The field of activities of the Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic is aimed at counseling and consulting services, at communication of expert standpoints, at cooperation with state and local authorities etc. It is also aimed at vocational training and retraining. Membership in the Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic is voluntary. The Chamber has regional chambers and 61 membership associations.

1.1.3 Structure of Employee's Organizations

Trade unions play a crucial role in the social dialogue on the employees' side. Other voluntary employees' associations do exist as well, professional unions for example, however these are usually dealt with other (expert-professional) matters than work relations, and operate on another than national level only exceptionally. Organizations of employees are also **pluralistic** in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions (CMCTU) is the most significant representative of trade unions in the Czech Republic. It has almost 2 million members. It associates 34 trade unions the field of activities of which is always aimed at a specific branch. Examples of trade unions which are members of the CMCTU: The KOVO Trade Union (it associates employees of metal industry mostly) with 514,000 members, the Stavba Trade Union (it associates employees of construction industry mostly) with 105,000 members, the Trade Union of Employees of Mining, Geology, and Oil Industry with 117,000 members, the Trade Union of Railwaymen with 121,000 members, the Trade Union of Employees of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry with 78,000 members, the Trade Union of Health Service and Social Care with 79,000 members, the Trade Union of Employees of Post-Office and Telecommunications with 70,000 members etc.

Besides the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions, there are other, smaller confederate trade union bodies in the Czech Republic and independent trade unions. However, number of their members is markedly lower. Besides CMCTU, the Confederation of Art and Culture takes part in tripartite negotiations on the national level.

In the **Council of Economic and Social Agreement** which is an authority for social dialogue on the national level, only those trade unions may be represented which meet criteria required by the Council's statute. They must:

- have been established and registered according to the law no. 83/1990 on association of citizens,
- develop trade union activities and on the contrary must not develop political activity mentioned in the law on political parties and movements,
- be independent on the government and employers,
- have confederation structure with at least three trade unions representing various branches,
- have whole-state effect, and
- have at least 300,000 members.

On the **regional** level, regional chambers of trade unions participate in the social dialogue. Their task is to coordinate and enforce interests of members of trade unions in the region against bodies of state administration and local administration. There are about twenty regional chambers of this type. The structure of trade unions is extended by the regional chambers (especially for trade unions without their own regional structure) in order to achieve solutions of regional policy which exceeds the framework of individual trade unions. In some socially and economically exposed regions, establishment of these regional chambers was caused by the need to establish a „lower tripartite“ on the regional level called the Economic and Social Council. In

the Czech Republic, such councils exist for example in Northern Bohemia or in the Ostrava region. Besides the regional chambers of trade unions of a given region, the regional association of employers can often become a member of this Economic and Social Council or representatives of the most significant employers and representatives of the state administration and local administration if appropriate.

Since 1995 the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions has been a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which is one of the main social partners on the level of the European Union. The CMCTU participates in ETUC activities within the framework of statutory bodies as well as on the level of various committees and commissions. It also cooperates with ETUC specialized organizations, for example with ETUCE in the field of trade union education, with ETUI in the field of research and analyses, etc. It also develops relations with the EU Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). Besides, the majority of member trade unions of CMCTU cooperate with branch trade union confederations on the European level. From the field of vocational training, it is possible to mention as an example the participation of CMCTU representatives at an international colloquy on vocational training which was organized by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) in April, 1997 in Veldhoven in the Netherlands.

1.1.4 Predominant Forms and Topics of the Social Dialogue

On the national level, the social dialogue is conducted in the **Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic**, established in October, 1990. This Council is a tripartite body which was not established on the basis of a law but on the basis of an agreement between the government and social partners. Results of the Council's negotiations may be therefore respected only on the basis of the agreement, and so they are not legally obligatory, however they may be made a part of legal regulations. For example, the following is stated in the Labour Code: *„Proposals of laws and proposals of other legal regulations concerning important interests of working people, especially of economic, production, working, wage, cultural and social conditions, are negotiated with the pertinent central trade union bodies and with the pertinent organizations of employers.“*

According to the statute of the Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic, the Council is a joint voluntary bargaining and initiative body of trade unions, employers and government for tripartite bargaining with the goal to reach consensus in the principal issues of economic and social development. The Council negotiates problems of joint interest of the concerned parties, especially in the field of economic policy, working-legal relations, collective bargaining and employment, social issues, wages and salaries, of the non-productive sphere and of the safety of work. Besides these questions, the statute imposes an obligation on all bodies of the Council to solve situations endangering the social peace.

The supreme arguing body of the Council is the plenary session. Delegations consisting of 7 government representatives, 7 representatives of trade union confederations, and 7 representatives of employers' unions, participate at plenary sessions of the Council. Usually, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Industry and Trade, and the Minister of Agriculture, participate at the plenary session on behalf of government, and other

Ministers usually alternate according to topics negotiated. Trade union confederations are represented by the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions, and by the Confederation of Art and Culture. Employers' unions are represented by the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, and by the Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Unions of the Czech Republic. At present, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs is the chairman of the Council. The Council has 7 expert working teams, none of them has included issues of training in its title.

The tripartite negotiations provided more significant results in the period 1990 - 1993. For every year during this period, the so called general agreement was concluded. General agreements for 1995 and 1996 were negotiated, however they were not concluded. Negotiations on the general agreement for 1997 were not started at all. The social dialogue was renewed again now, and a new statute of the Council was elaborated and accepted.

The main form of the social dialogue on the **company** level is the **collective bargaining** the result of which is a collective agreement or a part of it concerning wages. Companies namely more and more often conclude collective agreements for periods longer than one year. However, a part of the collective agreement concerning wages is negotiated every year. The legal basis of the collective agreements is the Labour Code and the law no. 2/1991 on collective bargaining.

1.2 The State of Social Partnership in Vocational Training

A binding obligatory legal framework which would provide a basis for involvement of social partners in vocational training has not been established yet in the Czech Republic. The current laws provide only limited possibilities to influence some particular issues concerning vocational training. For example, the law no. 9/1991 on employment and effects of activities of authorities of the Czech Republic regarding employment, contains provisions on cooperation of social partners in the state employment policy. It set out: *„In order to ensure cooperation on the labour market, the Labour Offices shall establish advisory committees consisting especially of representatives of trade unions, employers, cooperative bodies, organizations of handicapped persons, and of Labour Offices. Their aim is coordination of state employment policy in the pertinent region. They shall give their opinion especially ...to the programmes of structural and organizational changes, and to retraining programmes.“*

In 1994, a **working group** for apprentices' training was established under the Council for Economic and Social Agreement, whose members were representatives of several Ministries interested in apprentice training (for example the then Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finance), the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Czech Moravian Chambers of Trade Unions (CMCTU) and other institutions. Trade unions established the so called Inter-Union Association of Vocational Schools under the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions to improve social dialogue in vocational training; it is a consultative body of the CMCTU and its aim is to coordinate interests of member trade unions in the field of apprentice training. Within this working group, especially issues of financing of secondary vocational schools were negotiated, for example the amount of financial resources coming from the state budget to finance

secondary vocational schools, and the rates of state contributions per one student for the per capita financing method. After the end of 1996 when competencies of apprentice training had been transferred from the Ministry of Economy to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, effect of this working group was extended to the whole area of VET. Because the working group is a **consultative** body without executive power and because its activity is not regular, its work has not brought any more significant results yet.

The involvement of social partners in vocational training in the Czech Republic is thus based at present on **voluntariness and initiative** of participating parties. For example, the CMCTU as well as its member Czech Moravian Union of Employees in Education communicate their remarks to proposals of law amendments and other regulations on education to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Voluntariness and initiative do make it possible to negotiate vocational training issues, but at the same time it causes several problems.

According to existing laws, competencies concerning initial vocational training (except insignificant exceptions) belong to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the Czech Republic. The policy of vocational training formed by this Ministry is therefore based especially on requirements and standpoints of the educational sector, while standpoints of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and standpoints of social partners are of consultative nature only. The current laws do not even require these standpoints. Branches of vocational training and curricula are elaborated well from the pedagogical point of view and from the point of view of the educational sector, however there is no guarantee that they are relevant at the same time for the needs of employers and of the labour market.

Between 1992 - 1996, more Ministries held competencies regarding vocational training. The Ministry of Economy was responsible for apprentice training (except for agricultural branches), the Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for vocational training in agriculture and forestry, and the Ministry of Health was responsible for health branches. When the Ministry of Economy had been abolished in November 1996, competencies concerning apprentice training and competencies concerning vocational training in the health sector were transferred to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Apprentice training in agriculture and forestry remained at the **Ministry of Agriculture**.

As far as other Ministries are concerned, the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** is responsible, among others, for the state employment policy. It also manages Labour Offices in districts cooperating in training of unemployed persons, and to a smaller extent also of employed persons. The **Ministry of Industry and Trade** which took over some competencies of the abolished Ministry of Economy after November 1996, nor any other Ministries, not involved in vocational training yet.

After its establishment in July 1996, the present government issued its **programme declaration**. One of the ten parts of this declaration is devoted to education and science. It says: „*The government ... shall struggle to increase quality of our education. ... Apprentice training plays a significant role in the educational system. The government considers as important to create conditions suitable for preparation of work force of high quality, it shall keep the vocational training, and it shall struggle to enhance the role of companies in it.*“

The one-tracked orientation of the vocational training policy is reflected in other crucial fields, for example in the field of management or in the field of financing of vocational training. **Employers neither employees are represented in bodies**

managing vocational training on the national, regional or local levels. Neither bodies of other sector nor social partners take part in decision making on allocation of financial resources for vocational training.

At the present, consequences of this state are for example considerable lack of students of technical and craft branches, curricula elaborated without a significant participation of social partners, final examinations at vocational schools without participation of employers' representatives, etc.

Although no legal framework exists to involve social partners in vocational training, in some cases **spontaneous cooperation with social partners** occurs. Most often such a cooperation can be seen on the **local** level, that is on the school level. Some headmasters of vocational schools have established the **school council** as their consultative body in which representatives of local enterprises are represented, as well as representatives of the Labour Office. Although such a cooperation is undoubtedly purposeful, it cannot substitute comprehensive system of social partnership.

On the **regional** level, cooperation with social partners in vocational training has been weak as well until now. Vocational schools in the Czech Republic are namely managed by School Offices which are bodies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the main activity of which is aimed at kindergartens and basic schools. That is why the points of view of generally educational schools, not requiring regular contact with social partners, are predominant in management of schools on the regional level. Besides, we consider regions with the average population of 120,000 inhabitants too small for management of vocational training there. School Offices do consult some of their matters with the Labour Offices or with representatives of local larger companies, however not even in this case is the cooperation neither obligatory nor regular and aimed at all important issues. Establishment of about 10 regional self-administrative bodies is being prepared which could take over some competencies in the future, also regarding vocational training.

On the **sectoral** level, there are cases of good cooperation of social partners with vocational schools, however these cases are mostly still exceptional. They are usually initiated by professional associations, thus not by employers or trade unions. The initiative of the Czech Association for Technical Appliances which is active in branche of installation of water, air, heat, and gas facilities, can be given as an example. This initiative and its results are described in the third part of this report as case no. 1.

A similar positive example is the effort of the Czech Union of Employers in Energy which has initiated negotiations this year, aimed at improving cooperation of vocational schools and power enterprises.

The initiative of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic can be given as another example, as in 1996 it ensured, in cooperation with the then Ministry of Economy, participation of its members from companies, at final examinations of some vocational schools. In 1997, this cooperation goes on according to an agreement between the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Representatives of employers and trade unions as well as staff of vocational schools pointed out the insufficient legal framework of social partnership in vocational training. In this year especially, **a trend is evident however: the interest**

in comprehensive cooperation is increasing on both sides (as we will try to demonstrate in further chapters of this report).

In **continuing vocational training** of workers of companies, employers and trade unions cooperate on the company level in some enterprises, especially the larger ones. Cooperation is usually realized on the basis of collective agreements, sometimes containing a part concerning training. Most often, the management of the enterprise elaborates a proposal of training of certain categories of workers, and it negotiates this proposal with representatives of trade unions within the enterprise.

In integration of young people in the labour market, cooperation of enterprises and vocational schools is established sometimes, in which representatives of the enterprise offer the students jobs in the enterprise before they finish their studies. This concerns especially students of technical and craft branches the demand for which is increasing on the labour market. As the unemployment rate is relatively low, the majority of graduates of vocational schools find a job without greater difficulties. When unemployment of the graduates occurs at all, it is usually short-term. In 1996, 4.6 % of graduates of secondary vocational schools, 2.9 % of graduates of secondary technical schools, and 1.4 % of university graduates, were not employed 10 months after they had finished their studies (5).

The trend of increasing interest of social partners in the vocational training issues can also be illustrated by the fact that in May 1997, the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions established a working group for education and lifelong learning. Soon after its establishment, the group initiated a meeting with representatives of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic. At this meeting (June 1997) a full agreement was reached regarding the role of social partners in vocational training, and the need to negotiate more intensively with state bodies the establishment of a tripartite body which would take care of vocational training issues.

2. Overview of the Social Dialogue in Selected VET Areas

2.1 Allocation of Financial Resources

Financial resources for vocational training are allocated in a different way in the **initial** VET and in **the continuing** vocational training in the Czech Republic.

Initial VET is financed from the state budget mostly, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The total amount of finances allocated for education (including VET) in the state budget is determined in the preparation of the budget between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Finance. In the past years, expenditures on education from the public resources reached about 70 billion Czech crowns (that is almost 6 % of the gross domestic product), and about one quarter of this amount was expended on financing the secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools (3). Secondary technical schools are schools usually taking four years where the studies are finished by passing the school leaving examination enabling the student to apply to a university, and where for example the future technicians, staff of commercial and finance departments of companies or banks, nurses etc. are educated. Secondary vocational schools are schools usually taking three years where the studies are finished by passing a final examination with the certificate of apprenticeship, and where the future skilled workers and craftsmen are trained.

The total amount of financial resources spent on education at above mentioned schools is distributed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports into amounts assigned to individual **School Offices** in 86 regions. The Ministry calculates amounts assigned to individual districts by using the **per capita** method, that is according to the number of students. The level of rates per 1 student is determined in advance. It is differentiated according to expensiveness of the branches into about six groups. Financial means for operational costs are calculated in this way. Financial means for investment are distributed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to the School Offices, with respect to the differentiated investment needs in individual districts (for example to the need of reconstruction of school buildings).

School Offices in districts then distribute the financial means to individual schools with respect not only to the number of students, but also to other criteria according to their own consideration.

Financial resources for private vocational schools are allocated in a similar way. However, the level of rates per 1 student is lower than in state schools because the contributions from the state budget are not the only source of finances for private schools, another source is the fee cashed from students. Rates of the state contribution are for private schools between 60 - 80 % of amounts for state schools.

Contributions from the state budget represent in secondary technical schools (except very few exceptions) the only source of finances, thus the state covers all expenditures on education in these schools. In the case of secondary vocational schools, the situation is different and more complicated. At the beginning of the economic reform and before, the state and companies shared financing the apprentice training. The state covered costs of the theoretical part of training and the companies for which the apprentices were trained, covered costs of the practical part of training. However, because in the course of the economic reform substantial changes occurred

in enterprises (privatization connected with the change of owners, stopping of state appropriations to enterprises, changes in the production program, liberalization of prices etc.) connected with lowering of staff too, the interest of companies in financially demanding apprentice training became significantly lower. In order to keep continuity in apprentice training, in 1991 the state introduced the category of the so called „state apprentices“, that is of apprentices not trained for a concrete employer determined in advance whose training (that is including the practical part of training) is financed by the state.

Thus in the following years two kinds of apprentices existed and still exist from the point of view of financing, the „state“ ones and the „sponsored“ ones. Training of the „state“ apprentices is fully covered by the state, and the training of the „sponsored“ apprentices is partly covered by the state (the theoretical part) and partly by an enterprise (the practical part). During the past six years, the percentage of „state“ apprentices increased, and at present it is nearly 95 % (7). Enterprises now „sponsor“ training of apprentices usually only if they cannot find graduates of the desired branch on the labour market. They do it even though they risk that the graduate can decide to work in another enterprise after finishing the training. The rise of percentage of „state“ apprentices has significantly increased the burden of the state budget. According to the trade unions' opinion, this development is also a proof of the low interest of employers to ensure the professional level of future employees in their own enterprise (sector).

Financial resources for apprentice training are allocated from three sources:

- the greatest share is contribution from the state budget (distributed in a similar way as in the case of financing of secondary technical schools),
- the second source is contribution of companies for training of the „sponsored“ apprentices (they represent about 10 % of the total financial resources), and
- the third source are earnings of vocational schools for products and services, produced or provided in the course of the practical part of training (they represent about 10 % as well of the total financial resources).

The analysis of financing of the VET elaborated in 1997 in the Czech Republic (7), pointed out several significant problems. From the total costs of the initial vocational education and training, the amount spent on wages has been increasing (now it reaches about two thirds of the total costs) while the material costs are decreasing although the prices of inputs (for example of materials, of energy) are increasing. The investment costs have been decreasing as well. This raises apprehension whether the equipment of vocational schools is not getting outdated, and whether the quality of education is not decreasing.

The conclusion of the analysis is that the pressure on raising expenses of vocational education paid from the state budget is becoming stronger, and that **the efficiency of these expenses is lowering**. According to this analysis, the main causes of problems of financing include:

- non-efficient network of vocational schools,
- over-dimensioned supply of education branches,
- too high percentage of „state“ apprentices, and
- small diversification of founders of vocational schools.

In 1997, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports started the project of adaptation of the vocational schools network, the purpose of which is to merge

schools which are too small (and less efficient) and to create larger schools. This project is in progress now and belongs to the „hot“ topics of VET. Social partners have shown interest in participating in decision making about the future network of vocational schools.

Experts working within the framework of the Phare programme “VET Reform”, have elaborated proposals to improve financing of VET. Besides others, they propose to lower radically the percentage of „state“ apprentices by **increasing the motivation of employers** to train apprentices, and also by providing a possibility for larger enterprises, associations of companies, chambers, unions of employers, professional organizations and communities to take over some of the state vocational schools, for free or for a low price. To increase motivation of employers to train apprentices, they suggest either to differentiate taxation of enterprises according to whether they take part in financing of apprentice training, or not or to differentiate accordingly deliveries of the enterprises for the state employment policy. Also, the experts suggest a greater involvement of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in allocation of financial resources for vocational training.

The description of the current state of allocation of financial resources for vocational training shows that in the Czech Republic, **social partners are involved in decision making on this allocation to a small extent**. This is influenced especially by the current laws. According to these laws, the financial resources are allocated through bodies from the sector of education only. We consider this to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the whole system of initial vocational training because the current state does not make it possible to allocate financial resources even **with respect to the needs of employers and employees**, it is **non-efficient**, and by not being relevant to the needs of social partners, it affects in a negative way the quality of vocational training as well.

Employers have observed this trend passively, however lately their interest in the initial vocational training, including issues of allocation of financial resources, has increased. They have even taken part in elaborating the proposals mentioned above to improve the current state. Bodies of trade unions on the national level communicate their remarks to proposals of amounts allocated in the state budget for education, and to proposals how to adapt the rules of distribution of the financial resources. Also, the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic has already initiated negotiations with the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, on extension of its role in vocational training.

Continuing vocational training is provided in the Czech Republic by various training institutions (vocational schools, universities, educational establishments of larger enterprises, training companies). Companies’ staff and partly also unemployed usually take part in it.

Continuing vocational training of companies’ staff is usually financed by companies. This as a rule happens in cases when this education is initiated by the enterprises. (In case employees participate in continuing vocational training from their own initiative, they usually cover their expenses themselves.) It is implemented either in educational establishments of the enterprises (this concerns larger companies) or the enterprises purchase training services in training firms. The training programmes are mostly aimed at the management issues, marketing, economics, use of computers and foreign languages. Some training firms or vocational schools offer courses providing compulsory training for the fulfillment of specific working activities, as for

example operation of construction machines, operation of a chain saw, operation of boilers, pressure vessels in which the quality of the examination is guaranteed by the pertinent authority the responsibilities of which include training of workers performing these specific activities (4).

The number of training firms offering training programs for continuing vocational training increased rapidly in the 90's in the Czech Republic. According to Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (4), at present there are about 1,500 institutions providing the courses stated. About half of them provides retraining courses for people registered at the Labour Office. These courses are offered by about one third of vocational schools as well.

Although the continuing vocational training has been largely developed in the Czech Republic, this development has been mostly **spontaneous and it has not been coordinated on the national level. Also, incentives increasing the motivation of companies or of their staff for continuing training have not been introduced yet.**

Retraining courses intended especially for people registered at the Labour Offices, are realized at vocational schools or at training companies which are accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Costs of these retraining courses are covered from the state budget through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Social partners participate in allocation of financial resources for continuing vocational training only partly. As the financial means come from companies, social partners deal with them on the company level. Proposals for the staff, usually elaborated by personnel department of a company, become a part of collective agreements which are drafted by employers, and discussed with the representatives of trade unions in the company.

This state is satisfactory for the majority of enterprises in which the dialogue of social partners takes place. The state in small and middle sized enterprises is inadequate as they usually do not have their own training establishment, and some of them do not even have the personnel or training departments. Programmes supporting continuing training of workers of small and middle sized enterprises (for example within the framework of the Phare project) are still sporadic.

2.2 Development of Training and Qualification Standards

The contents of training and the output level of every training programme in the Czech Republic are specified in a set of documents which include the so called profile of the graduate, numbers of teaching hours in individual subjects and syllabi. This set of documents (curricula) exists for every branch of vocational training.

When the general liberalization had come at the beginning of the 90's, powers of schools were strengthened as well (including vocational schools). The schools were enabled to propose introduction of new branches, and to make more extensive changes to curricula of the existing branches than before. This released the initiative of teachers and headmasters of vocational schools, suppressed until then, and became reflected in the number of curricula. According to an analysis of the Research Institute of Vocational Education (8), before 1989 545 curricula were used at vocational schools. After 1990, almost 200 of new branches were elaborated and introduced. Although introduction of some newly introduced branches was raised by an objective need for preparation to perform new specific activities, there were branches among the newly introduced ones which differed from the existing ones just a little and which as

a matter of fact supported the rather unsuitable, narrow specialization of vocational training. Besides, especially in establishment of new vocational schools, the guarantee of proper quality of their outputs was not always there.

That is why the concept of the so called **two-level curriculum** (9) was elaborated in the Czech Republic, the testing period of which is now being finished in the sample of 19 pilot vocational schools. The concept of the two-level curriculum comes out from the fact that on one hand it is necessary to specify requirements on the national level which must be kept by every vocational school of the given branch in order to guarantee **comparable outputs** of all schools. On the other hand, this concept comes out from the effort to provide every vocational school with a certain space for its own initiative, and from the effort to respect differentiated local conditions.

The first level of the two-level curriculum represents the so called basic curriculum which is the **educational standard** at the same time. Its proposal was elaborated by the Research Institute of Vocational Education (9). The basic curriculum consists of several parts. For example, it contains goals and 6 content complexes of general education (for example, social-science, languages), as well as 5 key skills necessary in all branches (for example, processing of information, communication skills), and goals and content complexes of vocational training which were elaborated for 20 broader branches (for example for construction, chemistry, engineering). All of these three parts are set out, each for several levels of education according to ISCED.

Every vocational school may complement and extend the basic curriculum (the educational standard) according to its specific local conditions and this way the training programmes of the school will be developed. The school may provide several training programmes. The set of training programmes of the school shall then form the school curriculum. Pilot vocational schools verify arrangement of the curricula both in form of traditional syllabi and by using training modules. Introduction of the concept of the two-level curriculum is prepared, however the current legislation is not ready to introduce it.

In the curricula design, the teachers play the main role. They suggest either new curricula or adaptations of the existing ones. The other actors are the experts from the Research Institute of Vocational Education. Authors of the proposals consult sometimes with staff of local enterprises or with other representatives of employers, or with the Labour Offices staff. However, these consultations do not always occur, and authors of the proposals are not even required to consult the proposals with employers. At the same time, no bodies of employers have been specified or agreed upon yet which would be obliged to communicate their remarks to the proposals of the curricula, however in the past year the situation started to improve (see further). Proposals of the curricula are submitted by their authors to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In the case the proposals are submitted by the authors directly to the Ministry, Ministry submits them to the Research Institute of Vocational Education for evaluation. When they are approved by the Ministry after event. corrections to the proposals, based on remarks of this institute or on remarks of other specialists, are made, the school may use them. In the approved curricula, about 10 % of the total teaching time is reserved for subjects which the school may teach according to its own judgment. Approved teaching programmes of individual subjects may be adapted by the teachers according to their decision within the extent of one quarter of the subject

matter. The process of curricula development is strongly centralized because every change must be approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports according to the law even if it is used by one school only. An imperfection of this process is the **low participation of social partners so far** because this decreases relevancy of the curricula, and thus relevancy of outputs of vocational training regarding needs of employers.

The **system of branches of vocational training** is connected with the curricula. As we have said before, at present several hundred curricula of branches are used, sometimes they are very alike. Narrowly specialized branches are also among those. However, rather broader vocational training is considered progressive, as it creates a basis of the future specialization occurring in the course of the professional career, and also of retraining. A broader vocational training also enables better flexibility of graduates. That is why the proposal of a new system of branches of VET (10) has been elaborated at the Research Institute of Vocational Education as well besides the concept of the two-level curriculum.

The proposal suggests to establish a system of branches divided into 20 groups (for example agricultural branches) where every group would contain several so called **core branches**. Core branches are branches of more levels of education (for example branches for training of future craftsmen taking three years or branches for training of technicians taking four years) aimed at preparation for one or (more often) more occupations. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports would only approve curricula of core branches only after introduction of this system while individual vocational schools would adapt the curricula of approved core branches themselves according to their training programmes. The proposal of the system of basic branches is finished and an adaptation of the legislation is being prepared which would enable the system to be introduced.

The curricula as well as the system of branches are connected with **occupational standards** which should be derived from occupation requirements, and which are also connected with **qualifications**. Qualifications have not been developed in the Czech Republic yet. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has elaborated a catalogue of work activities (12). It is an extensive description of about 900 occupations and types of work performed in these occupations. The work activities are classified according to their complexity, responsibility and difficulty into 12 degrees. The catalogue was elaborated especially in order to arrange the wages systems. Besides, the Research Institute of Vocational Education has performed an analysis comparing descriptions of work activities of 209 occupations elaborated within the European Union with description of work activities for which students are prepared in corresponding branches in the Czech Republic. This concerned blue collar occupations mostly.

When working on educational standards, on the system of basic branches and when doing work connected with occupational standards, experts of the Research Institute of Vocational Education have met a **lack of data on requirements for workers of certain occupations** and a lack of data on prognoses of these requirements. It is likely that the current slight involvement of employers in curricula design for vocational schools has caused the fact that **employers do not dispose of these data to the required extent and quality yet**, and thus they are not yet prepared properly for the role they should play in vocational training.

This can be demonstrated by a case when the Research Institute of Vocational Education developed its own initiative to obtain the data necessary from employers in 1996. The Institute contacted three groups of institutions with a request for information on trends in occupations and on signals of formation of new professions: employers' organizations, trade authorities (which register trades and in which the supply of new working activities or of activities structured in a non-traditional way can be reflected), and Labour Offices. In the case of employers, the Institute asked the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic to arrange for contacts with member associations of enterprises, and to issue a recommendation to meet the request of the Institute. The Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic helped to arrange for contacts with associations of enterprises, and its workers tried to do their best to meet the request of the Institute. However, it turned out that neither the association of employers of certain sector nor the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic have the needed data, and therefore they offered for example data on development of employment in the branch, on economic indicators of production, they presented their opinions on curricula of vocational schools, on ways of recruitment of new apprentices etc. As the Research Institute of Vocational Education states in its report (13), in most cases representatives of the employers' associations felt caught unawares by the request, and it was difficult for them to understand its meaning and purpose.

The National Training Fund - an institution managing, coordinating and working on national as well as international training projects and projects for human resources development - tried to identify this year potential social partners for improvement of vocational training. On the employers' side, it has identified about 40 sectoral associations of enterprises (out of which some are members of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic). On the trade unions' side, the identification was simple thanks to the existence of the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions. The National Training Fund then invited representatives of these social partners and of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic to two meetings at which about two thirds of invited were present. At the second meeting, it presented the draft concept of their involvement into the VET system which has been elaborated within the framework of the Phare programme VET Reform. (This concept will be presented in other parts of this report.) On one hand, at the meetings it was confirmed that the interest of social partners in vocational training has been increasing, on the other hand it was confirmed that they are not prepared for their role to be extended.

The description of the state of involvement of social partners in development of qualification and educational standards in the Czech Republic shows that the **extent of involvement of employers is small**. This makes it difficult to prepare a system of qualifications as well as of curricula, educational standards and the system of branches of vocational training. At the same time it is evident that this state does not result from an unwillingness of social partners to take part in development of standards, but rather from the **insufficient legal framework** which does not force them to work systematically on the VET issues. This resulted in the lack of monitoring, analytical, and prognostic work on the employers' side. Thus for example, we lack specification of requirements for workers of certain occupations, a systematic evaluation of curricula of vocational schools from the part of employers and trade unions, identification of training needs of the initial as well as continuing vocational training, prognoses of these needs, prognoses of the development of the supply and demand of certain occupations, analyses of consequences of new technologies regarding aims and contents of vocational training etc. Research institutions in the field of vocational

training are trying to fill the gap of these data, however in spite of their effort they cannot substitute the social partners in this respect.

2.3 Establishing and Management of the Continuing Training System

The system of continuing vocational training which is a part of the system of adult education, has gone through considerable changes in the 90's in the Czech Republic - as well as other areas of education - which had been raised by development of the political, economic, and social sphere.

The changes occurred in the institutional basis of continuing vocational training which influenced the development of the number of trainees as well. Former training institutions of sectoral Ministries or of associations of enterprises were either abolished or reorganized and privatized. On the contrary, after 1990 many **new private training institutions** were established (of different quality). According to survey of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, about 1,500 institutions for continuing training have existed since then (4). In 1995, these institutions provided about 38,000 training courses with the total number of about 650,000 participants. The number of participants of these training courses represents about one seventh of the total number of employed. This demonstrates the significant development of continuing training in the form of short-term training courses. It is also confirmed by data on the number of participants of short-term courses provided by universities the number of which became roughly doubled in the period from 1990 - 1994 (it changed from 7,300 to about 14,100). On the contrary, the number of part-time students at secondary schools and universities is becoming lower. While in the school year 1990/91, more than 51,000 part-time students studied at secondary schools and almost 19,000 at universities, in the school year 1994/95 the numbers changed to slightly less than 15,000 students at secondary schools and slightly less than 11,000 students at universities (4).

Another part of continuing training is **retraining** which is a part of pro-active employment policy. Its participants are usually job seekers registered at the Labour Offices, however employed people may participate in it as well. Retraining, managed by Labour Offices, may be provided only by training institutions, accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports which grants an accreditation license to training institutions valid for the period of 3 years. The number of training institutions providing retraining increased in the period of 1991 - 1995 from 132 up to 304, and the number of participants of the retraining courses increased from about 23,000 to about 38,000. Participants of retraining courses represent about one tenth of the total number of job seekers, and after passing the retraining courses, about 70 % of them do find a job. The contents of the retraining courses is most often aimed at using of computer and at accounting (4).

Information on continuing training in companies is not systematic nor complete. According to partial surveys technical workers of enterprises in the Czech Republic are trained more than 10 days per year, clerks 3 - 5 days per year and manual workers about 1 - 3 days per year. The age of trainees most often lies in the range of 25 - 39 years. These data are comparable with the majority of European countries (14). On the contrary, expenses of Czech enterprises for continuing training are lower than in the

EU member states because they reach about 1 % of payroll on the average. However, this indicator is increasing and confirms the rising care of enterprises for continuing vocational training.

The current development of continuing vocational training shows that its extent as well as importance **is increasing**, however it has been **spontaneous** mostly just as reactions to changes in the employment structure, and to changes in the supply and demand on the labour market. In the current development of continuing training, **its coordination and a long-term concept is missing** which is connected for example with insufficient legislation or with the non-existence of efficient incentives towards enterprises which would support the development of continuing training.

More institutions, more actors than in initial vocational training work in continuing training, and therefore the need to coordinate their activities and to manage them within the framework of a comprehensive concept is very urgent here.

OECD experts, evaluating the whole educational system of the Czech Republic in 1995, evaluated the development of adult education in the Czech Republic similarly, and they presented results of their evaluation in a report published in 1996 (15). In their report they say: *„In the Czech Republic, prior arrangements for continuing education collapsed, with the demise of former state enterprises and the uncertain future of others in the initial transition period. In this dynamic and uncertain environment, new forms of continuing education emerged to meet individual demands for education and training which would enhance career chances. Although useful and responsive, this development has failed to fully address the needs. On their own, Czech companies have not, to any great extent, developed strategies to improve the qualifications of their work forces. With the possible exception of some foreign-owned companies, few enterprises are seeking or providing support for continuing education for their employees. For many firms, the first priority has often been survival. The involvement of employers in the design, delivery and (or) financing of initial VOTEC, as well as in continuing education, has been lacking and this is a matter of some concern.”* In another part of the report the following is stated: *„The Czech Republic currently lacks a comprehensive system of continuing education and training responsive to the needs of restructuring in the economy. ... In the opinion of examiners, a country engaged in such an ambitious and far-reaching process of economic and social transformation - where about half of the labour force has changed jobs during the first two years of the transition - should devote more attention to the retraining and continuing education of adults.”*

Other views were expressed by OECD experts this year, within the framework of an OECD project „Transition from School to Work“ for the first round of which the Czech Republic was chosen together with other five countries. In the part of the report (29) concerning cooperation between the education and economy, it is stated besides that a greater number of formal structures should be built which would ensure participation of all actors concerned.

Lately an effort of social partners has been evident to influence continuing vocational training to a greater extent. For example, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic has elaborated proposals for new legal regulation of continuing training, also containing requirements of a more efficient involvement of social partners in continuing training.

Among the proposals of improvement of the Czech VET system mentioned before, and officially presented in October, 1997 (16), there is also a proposal reacting to the current weak linkage between initial and continuing VET, to the insufficient involvement of social partners in VET, and to the current extreme concentration of competencies concerning VET with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It has been proposed to create the **National Council for VET** as a body with the representation of several Ministries (for example the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Regional Development), of employers' organizations and of trade unions, which should communicate its remarks to the proposals of the concept of further development of VET, elaborated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and initiate proposals to improve VET, the initial as well as the continuing one. Further, it is recommended to affiliate an executive body to this Council with certain powers, for example in the field of accreditation of newly introduced VET branches, in the field of VET evaluation etc. Realization of these proposals on the basis of the law would help to enforce the concept of inter-sectoral approach to the VET including better linkage between initial and continuing VET.

2.4 Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Vocational Training

For the development of vocational training in the Czech Republic in the 90's, the increasing number of training institutions was typical, both in the initial as well as continuing VET. At the same time, the number of training programmes offered increased. Thus the supply of VET became extended, and in the initial VET it has already exceeded the demand for it. In this situation the evaluation and quality control both of training institutions and of training programmes is particularly urgent, because the effort of training institutions to find a „market“ for their training programmes might even lead to reduction of requirements imposed on applicants for training, to reduction of demands imposed on students, and consequently to reduction of quality of VET.

According to the law, the **Czech School Inspectorate** is accredited to evaluate and control the quality of initial VET which is liable to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Now the Inspectorate is only in the stage of preparation of development of quality control methods because until now it has been aimed at ensuring quality of VET only marginally. At present, the Czech School Inspectorate must take into account the fact that the educational standards have not been introduced so far and used which would determine the standard of VET. The situation is made more difficult also by the fact that the Czech School Inspectorate is a controlling body, thus for evaluation of quality it must use methods different from methods used in the control. This indicates that **quality control of VET has not been developed to a greater extent in the Czech Republic yet.**

The current proposal for improvement of quality assessment (17) suggest that evaluation of quality of a vocational school should consist of two steps. Self-evaluation (autoevaluation) of the school should form the basis for the external evaluation of quality. External evaluation should follow the self-evaluation, and social partners who do not take part in evaluation of quality now, should be represented in it as well.

Since 1996, the Institute of Information on Education started the SET project. The aim of the project is to provide the public with as much information on secondary comprehensive schools and on secondary technical schools, as possible. It is a long-term project, and in 1996 its first results were published (18). From about 90 % of schools of both types monitored, various types of information were collected. Besides information from schools (from headmasters as well as from students), other information was collected from directors of School Offices, from school inspectors, from directors of Labour Offices, from universities, and the databasis of the education sector was used as well. The collected information was processed and **arranged in rankings** from approx. 20 point of view. The viewpoints were chosen in such a way they would relate to 4 main groups of data on: results of the school (for example, how high the interest to study at the school is, its prestige), conditions for tuition (for example, equipment of the school, teachers), character and the course of the lessons (for example, how the application procedure is organized, which branches are taught at the school, how extensive is teaching of foreign languages), and the internal life of the school (for example, the internal atmosphere of the school).

All secondary comprehensive schools and secondary technical schools were presented then in the resulting rankings by relevant viewpoints, e. g. by their status (state or private), by the branches, by the size (measured by number of students), and by the region. All rankings, together with explanations of individual indicators, are summarized in an extensive publication (18). Selected rankings were published by some Czech daily newspapers too.

Results of the SET project have provided the public with a lot of useful information. However, it is evident that the information is useful especially for potential applicants for education at these schools, that is for the youngsters and their parents, and so this was not (and could not actually be) a more comprehensive evaluation of qualities of the schools. It is characteristic that although secondary technical schools took almost two thirds of all watched schools, none of the viewpoints concerned usefulness of the graduates on the labour market, and there were no employers among the institutions from which the information was collected.

The EVOS programme which has been used for about a year in the field of higher professional schools (see section 2.5), is a positive example of evaluation of quality of VET. Within the framework of this programme, the Council was established the members of which also represent some social partners (for example the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Association of Banks, the Czech Management Association), and the so called evaluating committees. Representatives of employers from the branch and from universities are members of the evaluation committees. The committees visit higher professional schools, evaluate several aspects of the school (for example the goals and contents of the studies, school management), summarize their assessment by a score, and draft a report. This report, justifying evaluation of the school, may also contain recommendations where and how the school evaluated could improve its quality. The report is accessible to the public. In case the school evaluated and its training programme reach the required score in all aspects, it can obtain the **certificate of quality** which has two levels: the certificate of quality, and (for top schools) the certificate of high quality. Both certificates have a logo which the schools may use in their presentation. We consider the EVOS programme to be positive from the point of view of orientation towards the quality of schools and their training programmes, as well as from the point of view of involvement of social partners.

In connection with the evaluation of quality of vocational schools, the requirement of comparability of their **final examinations** is often formulated. The final examination (the school leaving examination) at secondary schools taking four years is now being discussed in the Czech Republic, passing of the examination entitles the graduates to apply to a university. The discussion is aimed at assurance of better comparability of results of the examinations by strengthening the external influence on setting of tasks for the examinations on the national level. The current discussion show a trend to come to the requirement according to which one part of the examination should be unified for all secondary schools, this part would be set externally, and the contents of the second part of the examination should be decided by the school itself.

Representatives of social partners may (but do not have to) participate at the final examinations at vocational schools. Representatives of social partners participate at the final examinations at secondary vocational schools more often since 1996, being charged by the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. The increasing interest of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic in quality of vocational training is evident from the fact that it grants the Certificate of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic to the best graduates of secondary vocational schools. In 1996, 210 of the certificates were granted, and 285 were granted this year.

In the Czech Republic, the evaluation of quality in the field of **continuing vocational training** is elaborated to even a smaller extent than in the field of initial VET. This is connected with a greater diversification of continuing vocational training on one hand, and with the smaller extent of its coordination and management on the other.

Evaluation of quality of training institutions and of their training programmes in the field of **management training** has been a subject of a project which has been implemented by the National Training Fund since 1995. Within the framework of this project, the National Training Fund has evaluated the quality of several hundreds of training institutions offering training programmes for managers, and especially the quality of these training programmes. The result was a selection of several dozens of training institutions and their training programmes which had met the demanding requirements. At the same time, this selection had significant practical consequences for increasing the quality of managers' training because National Training Fund makes access to these best programmes easier by covering a significant amount of the cost of these courses, using resources of a Phare programme. The number of participants and graduates of these training programmes has already reached almost 10 thousand. This project was selected by the research team of the Center for Education Development in the USA in 1996 from databases of the World Bank, United Nations, the International Labour Organization, OECD and other organizations as one of the 20 best projects in the world in the field of development of work force (20).

Although employed people participate in continuing vocational training mostly, not even in this area is it possible in the Czech Republic to consider participation of social partners to be significant.

Accreditation of vocational training is used when the new vocational schools are established or when the school extend its training programmes. It is performed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Proposal must include, besides other

things, the standpoint of the pertinent Labour Office, however the standpoint of social partners is not required even in the case vocational schools.

In the field of **continuing vocational training**, the accreditation concerns training institutions and retraining courses. This accreditation is also performed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. There are cases of training programmes accredited by international institutions (for example the CIMA for training programmes for marketing or some courses for teaching foreign languages).

Participation of social partners is thus not significant yet, not even in activities related to the accreditation.

2.5 Linking Training Institutions with Enterprises

Cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises is aimed at cooperation **in practical training of students of vocational schools** on one hand, and at cooperation **outside of practical training**.

Cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises in practical training is influenced especially by the proportion between theoretical lessons and practical training which is determined by curricula for the pertinent types of vocational schools and their branches. This proportion differs in secondary vocational schools and secondary technical schools.

In **secondary vocational schools** in which in particular the future skilled workers are trained, the share of practical training is the largest compared to other types of schools. Even though this share differs in individual branches, as well as in individual classes, it reaches almost a half of the total teaching load on the average. Practical training is performed partly in special classrooms and partly in the real work environment of an enterprise. This high share of practical training itself leads to the fact that **secondary vocational schools cooperate with local companies regularly**. In this cooperation, contents and organization of practical training are discussed, as well as other issues, for example the concept of training, the ratio theory/practical training, final examination, the need for graduates etc. We consider the cooperation of secondary vocational schools with enterprises to be the best of the whole VET system. This cooperation is regular and systematic.

In **secondary technical schools**, meaning schools educating future technicians (and in other than technical branches, also educating future staff of trade and financial departments of enterprises, nurses etc.), the share of practical training in enterprises is considerably lower. In most branches of secondary technical schools, in the 2nd and 3rd class the students pass a practical training taking 2 weeks. Lessons in which the students of secondary technical schools are supposed to acquire professional skills, are taught in special classrooms of the school, thus outside of the real work environment. Therefore the cooperation of secondary technical schools with local enterprises is less extensive and affects the whole concept of teaching less than in the case of secondary vocational schools in spite of the fact that the majority of secondary technical schools do cooperate with enterprises. Workers of the enterprises also criticize practical skills of graduates of secondary technical schools, and their little experience from the work environment.

Since 1996, a new type of vocational schools has been established in the Czech Republic, **higher professional schools**. Graduates of secondary schools (of secondary technical schools mostly) apply to these schools. They provide vocational education on the post-secondary level. Education in these schools takes from two and a half to three years. So far, about 160 schools have been established (21). A part of the education at higher professional schools is practice of the students in enterprises which lasts from a few months to half a year. We consider passing of this professional practice to be very useful. However, with regard to the fact that the higher professional schools have been operative for one year only till now, there is no experience with the professional practice of their students.

Cooperation of vocational schools with enterprises **outside of practical training** concerns different topics. Besides curricula design (see section 2.2), it concerns for example arrangements of excursions of students of vocational schools in enterprises, employment of graduates in enterprises, arrangement of training courses for workers of enterprises in vocational schools etc. To a smaller extent, employees of the enterprises also teach at vocational schools as external teachers.

On the **regional level**, there are cases of cooperation of vocational schools both with enterprises and with other relevant institutions and partners, for example with Labour Offices, with the regional Economic Chamber or with institutions of communities and regions. Within a few districts, this cooperation has been formalized by establishment of a body (including elaboration of the statute of the body) working more or less regularly and having various titles. As an example of such a body, we can give the Council of Professional Preparation which was established in 1996 in the Tábor district. It associates representatives of several enterprises, of the Economic Chamber, the Labour Office, the School Office and several vocational schools. According to its statute, the main aim of the Council is to support vocational training and involvement of social partners in vocational training. A part of the cooperation of vocational schools with other membership institutions of the Council is devoted to the regular mutual exchange of information on training needs in the district and on the development of these needs (also see section 2.6), on the development of the supply and demand at the regional labour market, on coordination of training programmes of vocational schools on the regional level etc. We consider this form of cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises to be very purposeful as well, however even this type of cooperation **is rather exceptional, and it has been initiated mostly by vocational schools so far**.

On the **sectoral level**, there are cases of cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises. As an example we can mention cooperation of the Czech Association for Technical Appliances with vocational schools with the plumbing branches (see section 3.1). This project is supported by the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. The case of cooperation of the Czech Union of Employers in the Power Industry is similar. The Union of Trade of the Czech Republic has also shown a serious interest this year in comprehensive cooperation with vocational schools with commercial branches, aimed for example at up-dating of the curricula according to the employers' needs.

The situation in cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises or other social partners on the sectoral level as the case may be, is grasped by one of the results of the effort of the National Training Fund from 1997 to identify sectoral social partners and to contribute to their more systematic involvement in vocational training. At two meetings of representatives of branch associations of enterprises (also see section 2.2) which have taken place so far, besides others the situation of the current cooperation of associations of enterprises with vocational schools was investigated. It was found out that only about 40 % of associations have expressed their opinion about the proposals of adaptation of provisions on VET, about one half has expressed itself to proposals of adaptation of curricula or to proposals of introduction of new branches of vocational training, only one quarter of associations sends its representatives to the final examination in vocational schools, slightly less than 30 % of associations have communicated that they cooperated in organization of practical training of students of vocational schools. Only one third of associations answered that they were engaged in elaborating prognoses of the needs of workers of „their“ professions. Even on the sectoral level, the cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises is thus mostly spontaneous.

On the **national level**, the cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises has been negotiated occasionally and only at consultation forums so far. As an example we can give the annual congress on VET the tradition of which was founded 5 years ago by the then Ministry of Economy. About 200 representatives of vocational schools, Labour Offices and several Ministries and their institutes always take part in it. In the first years, the issues of apprentices' training was discussed at the congresses. In 1997, the topic of the congress was „*Cooperation of Schools and Enterprises in Vocational Training*“. This year it was for the first time when the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic had become one of the co-organizers of the congress. In the presence of the representatives of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions and the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, several dozens of papers were presented at the congress, and in the end the participants of the congress approved a memorandum with several important proposals concerning social partnership in VET. Below we state an extract of the text of the memorandum:

Congress participants have concluded that:

- *the fundamental importance of quality of vocational training is evident for economic growth of the country, regions and enterprises, as well as from the point of view of accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union,*
- *cooperation of vocational schools with enterprises is necessary because it increases quality of the VET and relevancy of its structure to the needs of employers and the labour market,*
- *cooperation of vocational schools with enterprises is becoming better on the school level, however it is not systematic yet at all levels of management and it is not aimed yet at solution of all issues needed,*
- *representatives of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and of other professional unions and of the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions, have expressed their interest to make their cooperation in the field of VET more intensive.*

Participants of the congress are appealing to the bodies responsible, to prepare and enforce the following in the next period:

- *introduce the system of social partnership to the VET policy, including the motivation to finance VET,*
- *create conditions to introduce the regional level of management of VET with the participation of social partners, in areas larger than district,*
- *exchange and use more consistently information on the situation and trends on the labour market, and on the supply and demand for VET,*
- *establish consultation bodies of VET on the national, regional and local level.*

The text of the memorandum (23) was passed officially to the Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports in June 1997. It is evident from the text of the memorandum that **the interest as well as the effort to introduce the system of social partnership in the VET system is increasing in the Czech Republic.**

2.6 Identification of Skill Needs and Planning of Training

Identification of the skill needs of VET in the Czech Republic is performed in several ways.

On the **local** or on the **regional** level, headmasters and teachers of vocational schools consult from their own initiative the need to up-date some parts of the curricula with staff of local enterprises. Curricula approved before and used, can be changed to a certain extent (see section 2.2) according to the decision of the headmaster. The school may react to the needs of local enterprises identified, also by introducing some optional or voluntary subjects.

When it turns out in consultations with staff of local enterprises that it is not possible to meet requirements of the enterprises only by making a partial change to the curricula, the school can elaborate a proposal of the curriculum innovation. In some (less frequent) cases the school can come to the conclusion that the investigated training needs cannot be covered by training in any of the existing branches, then the school can elaborate a proposal of the curriculum for a new branch. As some types of vocational schools have formed their associations (for example the secondary technical schools of technical branches), they also can discuss their proposals of the curricula adaptation with their colleagues from other schools at these forums. The draft proposals must be always submitted to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In other words, it is possible to say that **the proposals do not need to be submitted to any other Ministry nor to any social partner.**

Consultations of teachers or headmasters of vocational schools with staff of enterprises are the most frequent stimulation to innovate the curricula. They are usually based on **empirical experience** and no rather demanding methods for identification of training needs are used in them. Therefore it is usually difficult to give a qualified answer to questions as to which extent the stimulation to adapt the curricula is specific only for the given case, and to which extent they are more general and also more objective.

On the local and regional levels consultations occur the aim of which is to identify the training needs also together with staff of **Labour Offices**. No doubt, these consultations are necessary and useful. However, they help to gain information rather on the past and current state of supply and demand of certain occupations, and on the other hand they can not provide proper information on the development of this supply and demand **in future.**

The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic has initiated the establishment of economic councils in districts. Headmasters of some vocational schools are also members of them.

Nowadays a very topical projekt of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is under discussion. The aim of this project is to optimize the network of all types of secondary schools. With regard to the demographic development and to the establishment of many new schools in the past, the project is aimed at a reduction of the number of schools especially by merging several current smaller schools into larger units, and thus also using more efficiently the limited financial resources. Besides the Ministry and the schools, especially the School Offices in the regions participate in the project. The project provides a chance not only to evaluate purposefulness and efficiency of individual schools, but also to evaluate the fact whether the school capacities correspond with training needs within a district (even if it is a small one). The project **has stimulated the social partners to express a greater interest in participation in decision making on the future network of vocational schools**. At the same time, it has confirmed the urgency and usefulness of identification of the training needs.

A direct impulse to increase the interest of social partners to gain a greater influence in decision making on the future network of vocational schools is their apprehension that when adapting the school network, teaching of branches with small number of students could be stopped or that teaching of branches the graduates of which are not very popular at the labour market at present could be stopped, although it is expected that this will change in the future. Social partners have already expressed their interest not only on the local or regional level, but also on the sectoral and national level. As an example we can give the request of the Union of Entrepreneurs in Construction to be allowed to communicate remarks together with its members to the proposals of adaptation of the network of schools teaching construction branches which are under preparation within the education sector. On the national level the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic as well as the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions have expressed similar requests.

Work aimed at identification of training needs is done even in the field of research. But as it is typical of the current situation in the Czech Republic, it is almost exclusively **research within the educational sector** and not in other sectors or in institutions of social partners. The Research Institute of Vocational Education has a leading position in this direction. The work of this Institute on identification of training needs has not only a long tradition, but it is also recognized internationally. A high methodological standard is typical of the Institute's work, however on the other hand **it lacks of relevant data from the field of job performance** (also see section 2.4), which is caused especially by a insufficient legal framework for social partnership in the VET. At present, the Institute and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports concentrate on better use of the so called branch committees. It is a group of committees in which representatives of VET and of employers from a specific sector are represented. The committees are aimed especially at the curricula design for vocational schools in the given sector.

Planning of vocational training is connected with the identification of training needs too. As in every other type of planning activities, after the political upheaval also in the field of VET a general aversion to planning arose in the Czech Republic,

because planning used to be connected with the former centralistic and command economy (and also education). That is why in the beginning of the 90's, the use of planning methods was stopped. This has led to the current **lack of prognostic work** also in the educational sector which is also reflected in the lack of concepts of education development in the future.

Some intentions to form a concept in the educational sector, elaborated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports during the 90's, usually concern the development of the whole educational system or of some partial questions (for example teacher training). These documents are usually too general and they usually lack quantified trends. For the VET, no comprehensive concept of its future development has been elaborated, and this concerns both the initial and continuing VET. Proposals of such a concept are a part of a set of proposals to improve VET system in the Czech Republic have resulted from a Phare VET Reform programme which has been run for several years. They represent the most significant set of proposals of the whole period of the 90's. The proposals concern various VET aspects, for example its management, financing, contents (standards and curricula), quality control etc., and also the social partnership. One part of the proposals was verified at 19 pilot schools. In the middle of 1997, results of the project were evaluated in the presence of about 50 Czech and 10 foreign experts and with respect to the trends in VET in the EU member states. They resulted in a policy paper the title of which is Education For Prosperity (16). Besides other things, this document specifies several main aims of the VET for the next period, and it recommends actions how to reach them. The aims also include proposals concerning social partnership. In October 1997, the document was presented and negotiated at a conference with international participation which also opens about a half-year period of public discussion on ways of improvement of the Czech VET system. In 1998, it is expected that this discussion will result in the „green paper“.

3. Concrete examples of Cooperation with Social Partners in Vocational Training

Case 1 - Development of Training and Occupational Standards in the Plumbing Sector

1 - Outline of the Case

The professional association of plumbers, the Czech Society for Technical Appliances (a membership organization of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic) has initiated a systematic work on adaptation of curricula for plumbing branches, on specification of educational standards and of occupational standards, and it supports this process. This initiative being in progress has occurred in the time when similar actions in other sectors have not been made yet. It helps to start a similar procedure in other sectors.

2 - Case Description

Main actors: The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, the Czech Society for Technical Appliances and five secondary vocational schools preparing the future plumbers of water, air, heat and gas, are the main actors. Activities of these actors are aimed at increasing the relevancy of initial vocational training of apprentices, and at introduction of systematic continuing vocational training of plumbers and teachers of secondary vocational schools with plumbing branches.

Organization and introduction: In 1996, the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and the Czech Society for Technical Appliances organized a joint action of all actors concerned - working on innovation of curricula for plumbing branches of vocational schools, and on elaboration and publishing of textbooks for some subjects corresponding with the innovated curricula. The major part of costs of this action was also financed by the Czech Society for Technical Appliances. Proposals of adaptation of the curricula have been approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and they have already been used at secondary vocational schools and have played the role of an educational standard.

In 1997, the work was aimed at the improvement of continuing vocational training of plumbers and of teachers by elaboration of a proposal to introduce the master examination, to specify requirements which need to be met in order to pass this examination, and to establish the Academy of Crafts as a training institution of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic for continuing training of categories of workers mentioned above.

Results and expectations: Innovated curricula are the result of the work done until now, as well as textbooks, requirements for the master examination for plumbers, and the proposal to establish the Academy of Crafts. At the same time, with the support of firms from the plumbing sector, the equipment of special classrooms was improved at vocational schools plumbing branches. The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and the Czech Society for Technical Appliances expect the improvement of the quality of the initial vocational training of apprentices, and of the continuing training of plumbers and teachers. It is also expected that the Academy of Crafts will gradually provide continuing vocational training also for craftsmen from other sectors.

3 - Context

The case with regard to industrial relation: Improvement of qualification of workers in the plumbing sector. A model for institutions in other sectors.

The case with regard to the vocational training: The work done has helped to define more precisely requirements for outputs of initial as well as continuing vocational training, to link initial and continuing vocational training in the given sector, and to assure supervision and a guarantee of quality from the part of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic.

Case 2 - Support of Quality of Apprentices' Skills in the Car Repair Services Sector

1 - Outline of the Case

Since 1996, the Union of Car Repair Services, associating about one thousand of car repair firms, has been organizing and supporting national competitions of apprentices of car repair branches. It has organized them in cooperation with secondary vocational schools with the aim to support the increase of quality of initial vocational training in car repair branches.

2 - Case Description

Main actors: The Union of Car Repair Services of the Czech Republic and its section for vocational training, about 35 secondary vocational schools with car repair branches and car repair firms.

Organization and introduction: Since 1996, the national competition of apprentices aimed at theoretical as well as practical knowledge has been organized every year. In 1997, apprentices from 33 vocational schools took part in the 2nd round of the competition. Due to the high participation, the competition is organized in the elimination way when the best participants advance in the semifinal and final rounds. In the semifinal round, participants compete in all three disciplines (theory, application of the theory in solution of practical cases and practical skills), and in the final one they compete in two disciplines (a test in theory and practical skills). The final round of the competition is held on the occasion of a significant national event in the field of car repair services (for example in 1997, it was on the occasion of AUTOTEC, an international fair of car repair services in Brno). The competition is supported by Czech as well as international companies (for example Bosch), and it is sponsored by providing valuable prizes. The well placed apprentices are awarded by an expensive device from the field of car repair services, and by training lasting several days in the training centre of a top company. The competition is organized in such a way that it would come as close as possible to international competitions in skills of young people, organized and supported by the International Vocational Training Organization, for example Skills Europe.

Results and Expectations: The Union of Car Repair Services in the Czech Republic and its member companies obtain information in the course of the competition, on quality of vocational training, and on quality of individual apprentices. Teachers obtain information on results of work of partner schools. The competition motivates the apprentices for a better performance and helps to broaden their knowledge and to define more precisely their ideas on their future professional career.

3 - Context

The case with regard to industrial relations: The competition helps to improve cooperation between secondary vocational schools and employers in the given sector, also on the regional and national levels. Meeting of companies' staff with teachers initiates joint negotiations, also on other matters of vocational training, for example on the curricula.

The case with regard to the vocational training: The competition, as a form of support of quality, is spreading in other sectors of VET, too.

Case 3 - Adaptation of the VET Structure to the Regional Needs

1 - Outline of the Case

Since 1997, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has been realizing a project of optimizing the network of secondary schools (including vocational schools). The aim of the project is to increase the current small average size of the schools, to improve the structure of vocational training, and to increase efficiency of financial resources spent on education from the state budget. Within the framework of the project, proposals of adaptation of the network of schools in individual districts are elaborated. The case illustrates the progress of work being done in the Kladno districts neighbouring on Prague. The city of Kladno has about 60 thousand inhabitants.

2 - Case Description

Main actors: The School Office in Kladno, secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools in Kladno, enterprises in Kladno and in its surroundings, the Labour Office in Kladno, the regional branch of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic in Kladno.

Organization and introduction: The actors have elaborated a proposal of fundamental reorganization of vocational training in Kladno. In the proposal it is recommended to create one larger vocational school from the existing five smaller vocational schools teaching technical branches, which would provide vocational training in several technical branches (engineering, electrical industry, construction and others) on three educational levels: training of skilled workers taking three years, education of technicians taking four years (ISCED 3 both of them), and education taking more years on the ISCED 5 level which has been provided at the individual schools separately till now. The newly created school would also provide short-term technical courses for workers of local enterprises. Merge of several existing small vocational schools would also improve the permeability of the VET for young people, it would make it possible to use qualification of the teachers in a better way, to equip the special classrooms in a better way, to increase the use of these classrooms and also to decrease the total cost of education. The contact with all social partners in the region would also become easier and more efficient, and the training needs of enterprises would be covered better. With the newly created larger technical vocational school, it has been proposed to establish the School Council in which employers would be represented too, as well as the regional branch of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, and the Labour Office. The proposal is supported by the pertinent regional authorities, it has been submitted to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and its approval is being expected.

Results and expectations: The School Office expects a more simple control of vocational training in the region, easier coordination of training needs in the region, and saving of financial resources. Employers and the Labour Office expect easier cooperation in organizing technical courses for employed people or retraining courses for unemployed.

3 - Context

The case with regard to industrial relations: The proposal makes it possible to improve contacts of vocational schools with employers, and thus to form better preconditions to meet training needs in the region.

The case with regard to the vocational training: The proposal makes it possible to increase relevancy of vocational training in the region, and also to link the initial vocational training with the continuing training.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Description of the current state of involvement of social partners in vocational training in the Czech Republic indicates several characteristic features.

The whole Czech system of initial VET belongs, according to the existing laws, to the competencies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. On one hand, this makes it possible to evaluate it **in connection with the whole educational system**, however on the other hand, it increases the danger that **objective specific features of vocational training will not be taken into account properly**.

The current legal regulation of management of initial vocational training on the national level **does not make the proper participation of social partners in the VET policy possible, nor its linkage with the employment policy and economic policy**. This causes the development of some crucial VET aspects (for example the standards, the system of branches) does not satisfy to the proper extent the needs of employers and employees, and it does not provide them with any effective tools (for example by means of participation in management and financing of the VET) so that they could affect the VET development.

The system of continuing vocational training has not been properly linked yet with the system of initial vocational training, and its development is not coordinated sufficiently. **Effective incentives, supporting the development of various forms of continuing vocational training have not been introduced yet**.

Involvement of social partners in VET is **weak** if compared to the EU member states, regarding both the legal and institutional framework, and the effectiveness of this involvement (24) (25) (26) (27) (28). On the level of the European Union, the cooperation of vocational schools and enterprises is supported purposefully, for example by Leonardo da Vinci programme (30).

Social partners do not take part in the development of vocational training to the necessary extent, which is the most suitable level for coordination of development of training needs, and of development of capacities of vocational training.

In the last year, the interest of employers and employees in vocational training **increased** in the Czech Republic. The trend of development of points of view and activities of social partners is evident also from appendixes of this report which were developed in the course of validation of the report by the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, by the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions, and by the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. However, for the involvement of social partners in vocational training and education, which means **the increase of their powers but also of their responsibilities, the social partners must create better preconditions in their bodies** (organizational, personnel, professional etc.).

The **best** involvement of social partners in vocational training has been reached on the **local** level where cooperation between individual schools and enterprises can be found.

Although involvement of social partners in vocational training has been only **spontaneous and differentiated** so far, **remarkable** results have been reached - especially on the local and sometimes also on the sectoral levels - however they had been reached especially thanks to the initiative of enthusiastic individuals rather than with the assistance of the system of .

Involvement of social partners in vocational training education can no longer be seen as a **national** issue only but, in relation with the possible accession of the Czech Republic to European Union, also as an **international** issue.

Introduction of a comprehensive system of social partnership in vocational training will help to **increase quality of vocational training**, and therefore it should be considered to be one of the priorities of the VET policy for the next period.

On the basis of these conclusions we shall express several principal **recommendations** concerning involvement of social partners in vocational training.

On the national level, it is proposed to establish the inter-sectoral **National Council for Vocational Training** in which representatives of state institutions, employers and employees would be represented. The National Council for Vocational Training should function as a consultative body of the Minister of Education for the VET issues. The main task of the Council would be to negotiate important proposals of the VET policy (for example the concept of development of vocational training, financing of VET), and also to initiate necessary actions to be taken. Representatives of employers and of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic recommend that the Council should be not only a consultative body but that it also should have powers to make decisions.

Besides performing their activities, representatives of employers in the National Council for Vocational Training should establish about twenty (according to the main sectors) **sectoral** bodies on the national level the main task of which would be to assure relevancy of aims, contents and quality of vocational training in the pertinent sector. These sectoral bodies should be selected by the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, together with the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, from sectoral associations of enterprises or from profession associations. The Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions should delegate representatives of the pertinent sectoral branch trade union to negotiate with these sector representation bodies.

On the **regional level**, it is proposed to create **regional offices for vocational training** by transformation of some School Offices with decision making competencies, for example in the field of the network of vocational schools, in the field of coordination of the structure of branches and students, in the field of quality control and allocation of financial resources. These offices should be operative in areas larger than regions. It is proposed to establish a regional council for vocational training with the regional offices for vocational training, with representation of social partners.

On the **local level**, it is proposed to establish obligatory representation of employers in the council of the vocational school.

In order to introduce the system of social partnership in vocational training, it is proposed to prepare promptly the necessary **legislative amendments**.

Overview of Activities and Intentions of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic in Vocational Training

The Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic was markedly activated in the field of vocational training with regard to the requirements of its members and to the existing situation approximately in the beginning of 1996. In 1997, it has restructured its committee for apprentice training and for the VET. The Confederation has started its formal as well as informal cooperation with other social partners (the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions) as well as with other institutions. In the course of negotiating with them, on the one hand the basic points of view and the concept of these negotiations were discussed and clarified, and on the other hand the Confederation assigned them significant importance within the framework of its entire activity. The approach of employers to the state authorities has been improved.

The increase of influence of social partners is evident, as well as the increase of their effort to take part in decision making on vocational training which is a strategically important field for the country. The Confederation intensifies its effort to incorporate itself in the process of amendment of the existing laws and other legal norms regulating vocational training, with the aim to improve the existing structure of initial vocational training, and to change economic rules which should stimulate vocational training of higher quality in a better way, and with better relevancy to the labour market. In the field of continuing vocational training, the Confederation increased its effort to introduce the possibility to deduct the cost of continuing training from the taxes of enterprises' income.

The Confederation intends to put several of its intentions in the field of vocational training though in the future. It wants to reach differentiation of the amount of rates of financial means for initial vocational training of one student of the vocational school according to the quality of education and according to the relation of the branch of training to the demand on the labour market. It wants to influence significantly the development of educational standards. It wants to define the rules for apprentice training in a more precise way. The Confederation wants to contribute to the enforcement of establishment of the National Council for Vocational Training as a body presenting proposals of the VET policy, linking with the employment policy and enabling social partners to protect their interests in the VET. The Confederation also wants to take part in amendment of the existing legislation of vocational training, and in preparation of new laws.

Overview of Activities and Intentions of the Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions in Vocational Training

The Czech Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions has struggled for a long time to have the possibility to affect vocational training, especially the field of apprentice training. It has striven for this especially by presenting its points of view at tripartite negotiations, and also by showing an effort to establish a tripartite section which would take care of apprentice training. As unsuccessful can be considered the lack of interest of government authorities in the necessity to negotiate the concept and realization of vocational training with trade unions can be considered, as well as the underestimation of vocational training issues from the side of some trade unions, underestimation of the importance of initial vocational training for young people before they enter the labour market, and underestimation of the teacher profession from the side of the state. In the end of 1996, the CMCTU paid its attention to education at a seminar on motivation, on forms and methods of education. At the seminar, education was evaluated as one of the priorities. The seminar also pointed out the insufficient financing of education by employers, and it was recommended to commence discussions with employers' unions and to point it out at negotiations about collective agreements on the local (company) level.

At present, the CMCTU's attention is aimed especially at the enforcement of comprehensive training of apprentices which consists of theoretical preparation, practical training, out-of-school education, and in which teachers of practical training play an important role. It also develops an effort to improve the system of the VET financing.

In the following period, the CMCTU wants to pay its attention to the VET issues. It wants to be engaged more intensively not only in training of its members and workers, but also in vocational training of young people at all types of secondary schools. It wants to be engaged in the pro-active employment policy either. It intends to initiate a new law on adult education and to negotiate it with representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. It wants to initiate negotiations with the representatives of training departments of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, of the Union of Employers' Organizations in the Czech Republic. The CMCTU also wants to prepare proposals to improve financing of vocational training, to be negotiated by the Council for Economic and Social Agreement.

Overview of Activities and Intentions of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic in Vocational Training

The transition of the economy towards market economy, gradual formation of the labour market and structural changes in all economic branches require principal changes of the attitude towards apprentices training. The centralist control and the monopolistic position of state administration authorities in this field are still surviving, the disproportion between the number of graduates and needs of enterprises, as well as problems of financing of apprentice training, as a consequence of its prevalent dependence on the state budget keep becoming deeper. One of the main causes is the unsuitable education legislation which does not reflect changes in the economy in spite of the fact that partial amendments have been made. Therefore fundamental system changes in vocational training, especially in apprentice training, must become the basis for it. It is necessary to renew the linkage of profession preparation with real needs, requirements and with the operation of enterprises - future employers.

The state is supposed to be responsible for the determination and specification of the contents of general education which also guarantees theoretical education. The economic sphere is supposed to be responsible for the determination of requirements and specification of aims of vocational theoretical as well as practical training. It is also supposed to ensure practical training of apprentices.

The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic puts through the principle of plurality of founders of schools for apprentice training. It also enforces the introduction of contracts on apprenticeship which would be a basis of a relationship between the apprentice and the enterprise for which the apprentice is being trained - the future employer. It is believed that the responsibility for final examinations of the apprentices should be transferred to trade (profession) associations and chambers. These bodies should also be responsible for the contents of vocational training.

The costs of theoretical lessons should be fully covered by the state. The costs of practical training of apprentices should be covered either fully from the resources of enterprises (and the amounts spent should be deductible from the basis of the income tax) or from the resources of the enterprise in the form of a tax assignation or partly from the resources of the enterprise and partly from the state budget under the condition that the enterprise will be the recipient of the state contribution.

Proposals of changes in vocational training including the transfer of competencies to the sphere of economy, were submitted by the president of the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic to the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports.

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