

THE WHITE BOOK ON THE EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC¹

The government of the Czech Republic by its resolution No.113 from the 7th February 2001 approved “The National Programme of Development of Education in the Czech Republic”, which was published under the title „The White Book”. The document is a part of the strategy of further social and economic development of the Czech Republic, which highlights the education and human resource development as one of the priorities, since it has, in accordance with the government policy, decisive impact on human and social capital of society, value orientation of people, their democratic citizenship and quality of every day life. After the political change in 1989, followed by social and economic reforms during 1990s resulting in transformation process in the area of education, this is the first project of systematic reform initiated by the government itself.

The White Book expresses the main ideas, general outlines and development programmes, which are presented as basic guidelines for the development of the whole education system in the mid-term time horizon of the year 2005, with some parts reaching the period up to the year 2010. The adopted strategy should have an impact on legislative, financial and organisational decision making not only on the government and central administration level, but also on the decision making in the self-administered regions, communities and public institutions of higher education. It should also strengthen the effort to upgrade the level of education and human resource development from the part of social partners, parent and teacher associations and other interest groups of civic society. It also gives incentives to the activities on the level of individual schools and to teachers initiatives. The criteria and the points of departure of the strategy lay in the needs of the whole society and its interests in the sense of the democratic education policy. It is expected that the changes in the education system will be gradual, depending on further changes and conditions in the society. That is why the document is open and should be under critical revision, scrutiny and examination in the years to come.

The White Book on education has been prepared on the basis of adopted main goals of the government education policy and outline concept of the development of education system of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport adopted in the year 1999. The ministry has gave the task to a group of specialists from universities, school administration and from among the active teachers to take part in the formulation of this document.

It stems from the analyses and evaluations of the Czech education system performed in the last five years. It is based on the annual reports of the Ministry of Education and Czech School Inspection and follows immediately the findings of the study “Czech Education and Europe: Human Resource Development Strategy in the Czech Republic after the Accession to the European Union” elaborated in the framework of Phare programme. The thought content for the formulation of goals and principles of the Czech education comes from the definition of education policy trends, which have a long-term recognition in the European Union and OECD countries. The major influence on the strategic guidelines came from so called country review prepared by OECD and published in the series OECD „Review of National Policies for Education: Czech Republic” from 1996 and a follow-up assessment of the implementation of proposed recommendations at the special session of the OECD Education Committee in Prague in 1999.

¹ <http://www.msmt.cz/cp1250/web/12/WhiteBook.doc>

The second source for outlining the objectives, intentions and recommendations included in the document was a public discussion promulgated by the Ministry of Education under the name “ The Challenge for 10 millions”, which has been announced in 1999 on the basis of framework concept and other background sources concerning each sector of education system. The follow up phase of the discussion took place in the year 2000 and expressed the public opinion, views of social partners, educational institutions, educationalists, academicians to the entire draft text of the White Book, which has been discussed several times in the Council for the educational policy and refined. Also foreign specialists expressed their opinion in the international seminar devoted to this theme (T.Alexander, J.P.Jallade, S.M.McClelland). At the national conference proposed general strategy has been discussed by the broad spectrum of public community. The issue of education has been covered to up to now unprecedented large extent by newspapers, weekly magazines, radio and television and also by Internet in the form of information and controversial debates. Before submitting the issue to the government the opinions of the ministries and central authorities has been asked for. After having been accepted by the government the draft has been submitted to both chambers of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, before the adoption of the draft of the new Education Law, which has been prepared in co-ordination with the White Book.

The subject matter, which is being discussed, is a integral, coherent education system in its social, cultural, political, economic and environmental interdependance. The document is concerned both with the points of departure and premises of the development of the whole education system and specific internal questions of each education sectors and grades and types of schools from pre-primary age until the education of adults. It deals also with the activities of private industrial and commercial sector, which is more and more concerned with the need of human resource development.

For the sake of necessary changes of education system it is necessary to safeguard financial and political support of government and self-administered organs, enterprises, civic society, media and individuals. In a more precise form it is requested **to bring gradual increase of public expenses in education in order to keep up with the rest of highly developed countries and to reach the level of 6% of GDP.**

The creation of political and economic conditions for the perpetual change in attitudes towards investment in education is the basic precondition for realisation of these basic strategic aims:

- 1. The implementation of the system of lifelong learning for all**
- 2. The adaptation of educational and study programmes to the everyday needs of the knowledge society**
- 3. Monitoring and assessment of quality and effectiveness of education**
- 4. Support of the entire change and openness of educational institutions**
- 5. The change of role and professional prospects of pedagogical and academic workers**
- 6. Transition from centralised management to accountable shared decision making**

Each strategic line is characterised by the following aims and provisions:

1. The implementation of the system of lifelong learning

To saturate and initiate educational needs in children, youth and adults through adequate increase of capacities at schools and other educational institutions in order to safeguard the accessibility of all levels of education and provision of opportunities for maximum development of diverse abilities to all individuals in the course of their lives in accordance with the principle of equity and maximum use of talent.

The following measures are in preparation:

- to upgrade the kindergarten to equal component of the education system and safeguard the right to all children to attend it at least one year before entering the basic school
- to compensate health and socio-cultural disadvantage of some individuals through the targeted support of developmental programmes for them at all levels of schools, by means of introduction of preparatory classes, inclusion of special schools in the system of standard schools and optimum integration of those who have special needs among other pupils
- to improve conditions for education of national and ethnical minorities and aliens
- by means of legislative measures gradually integrate lower years of multi-year gymnasias with the second phase of the basic school alongside with the implementation of differentiation and individualised teaching of heterogeneous groups of pupils and development of care for talented and gifted children at schools and extra-curricular activities
- to increase the ratio of young population with completed secondary school final examination (maturita) eligible for study at tertiary level of education up to the 75% of population group, simultaneously to increase the ratio of young people, who follow the general secondary education programmes in gymnasias and secondary vocational schools up to 30%,
- to enable access to tertiary education to 50% of population group, to increase the proportion of bachelor's study and safeguard the permeability of all kinds of tertiary education with special support to distance education, non-university higher education institutions and higher professional schools,
- to create the legislative framework for the development of adult education, to increase the system of financial and non-financial incentives for its development and in addition to further professional and re-qualification education to provide education of so called "second chance" at secondary, higher professional schools and higher education system and to build a system of civic and non-formal education for adults.

2. The adaptation of educational and study programmes to the needs of the life in the knowledge society

To increase the quality and function of education by means of preparation of new educational and study programmes, which will meet the demands of information and knowledge society, sustainable development, employability and needs of active participation in the life of democratic society in integrated Europe and at the same time respect individual differences and life conditions of those who are involved in education.

The following measures are planned:

- to work out a basic curricular document and submit it for discussion in the Council for Education and with the social partners as a State Programme of Education (National Curriculum) for children and youth from 3 to 19 years, which will be based on the principle of lifelong education and gaining competences for the life in the knowledge society, with a special accent on the areas, which are substantial for the life in the global world and integrating Europe: education for democratic citizenship, European dimension, employability, multicultural education, sustainable development, human rights and responsibility, moral and spiritual values, preservation of national cultural heritage,
- on the basis of National Curriculum to develop general educational programmes for all phases and fields of education in order to become a starting point for creation of autonomous educational programmes for schools,
- to support the implementation of new concept of educational programmes by initiation of development programmes in the following areas:
 - teaching of two foreign languages, one of which must be English, with the introduction in the 3rd and 6th form of the basic school and obligatory secondary leaving education controlled by the state
 - implementation of information and communication technology in education within the announced state programme of information policy,
 - education for sustainable development within the programme of state programme of environmental education
 - development of cross - curricular key competences and new teaching strategies
- to integrate study programmes of tertiary education with scientific, research and developmental activities in the education institutions and outside
- to promote the international mobility of students, youth and teachers and international co-operation in educational policy

3. Monitoring and evaluation and effectiveness of education

To build a system of evaluation of activity of educational institutions at all levels of management and administration, monitoring of output of education and examination, evaluation of personality development level and professional orientation of children and youth.

The following measures are planned:

- -to create legislative and organisational conditions for constructing the system of evaluation at the level of national education system, new regional structure and individual schools,
- to create a centre for evaluation and monitoring educational outputs as a special institution for the development and realisation of national and international survey, especially in collaboration with OECD (INES,PISA) and European commission,
- to establish the system of pupils assessment at the end of each phase and expand the existing system of psycho-pedagogical consultancy and professional orientation,

- to carry out a new concept of secondary education final examination consisting of the general (state) part and individual school part at two (ordinary and advanced) levels and thus facilitate the comparability of results between pupils and schools at the enrolment process to the tertiary education institutions,
- to continue the process of improvement of accreditation and evaluation system in the tertiary sector of education,
- to carry out and introduce mechanism of quality assessment in adult education especially in further professional education.

4. Promotion of internal reform and openness of educational institutions

To develop the autonomy, innovative potential and equipment of schools, their open approach towards the society and relations to social background by means of development programmes and networking the co-operating schools. In tertiary sector to promote extension of co-operation of educational institutions with other research and development organisations and participation in the development of the region.

The following measures are planned:

- to create an coherent instrumental system for the development of the school autonomy,
- to introduce the Programme of schools development and support further activities of the Fund for the development of Higher Education institutions as innovation instruments for education,
- to build up the infrastructure for promotion of teacher and school activities,
- to broaden the functions of basic and secondary schools in terms of providing opportunities for extra-curricular activities and leisure and provide facilities for further education of adults from local community,
- to upgrade the role of cultural and educational institutions and civic associations in education,
- to strengthen the role of institutions of tertiary education in regional development

5. The change of roles and professional perspective of teachers and academics

To support a change in the approach and performance of teacher profession in all institutions of education, to strengthen social and professional status of teachers and academics, to improve the quality of their preparatory and further education, to create conditions for their career development, growth and stronger motivation towards personal development and team work.

The following measures are planned:

- to define the qualification level of all categories of pedagogical workers, so that the required minimum level of attained higher education should be Magister's degree in case of teachers at primary level of basic schools, teachers of special education, teachers of general subjects at basic and secondary schools, teachers of vocational subjects at secondary schools and higher professional schools, the Bachelor's level at teachers of kindergartens, instructors of vocational training and social pedagogues (pedagogues of leisure time activities, educators),

- to upgrade the quality of pre-service training of teachers stressing the psycho-pedagogical component, acquiring necessary pedagogical competences and safeguard the necessary proportion and quality of pedagogical practice during the whole period of teacher training,
- to complete the system of further education of pedagogical workers in the network of centrally managed pedagogical centres, in universities and at schools,
- to implement the system of career and salary growth for pedagogical workers, which will be based on differentiation and categorisation of pedagogical activities and on definition of qualification requirements for their performance,
- to upgrade scientific and pedagogical level of teachers in the tertiary sector of education system,
- to rehabilitate remuneration level of teachers to attain gradually the average salary level of teachers in public schools at the level of 130% of average salary in the whole national economy and the salary level of academics should equal analogous professions in the private sector.

6. Transition from centralised management to accountable shared decision making

To implement into social system decentralised management of education by way of state and self-governing bodies with the active participation of social partners and other representatives actors of civic society as the process of planning, organising and evaluation based on strategic goals and realised especially indirect instruments. In higher education to reach balance between autonomy and self-governance of educational institutions and their accountability for the activity pursued.

The following measures are planned:

- to finalise the process of decentralisation of education in compliance with the adopted reform of public administration
- to restructure the Ministry of Education in accordance with the new concept of management and role of the centre, to concentrate the labour of the Ministry of Education on limited number of key strategic functions in relation to the whole education system and co-operation with other sectorial ministries, especially with the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs and Ministry of Interior,
- to build a new structure of communication with social partners at all levels of management and administration, to establish the Council for Education as the government advisory body and school councils by all schools,
- to make use of all instruments of indirect management, especially innovative and development programmes,
- to expand information and data basis for the governing sphere and practice of education by way of support of pedagogical research and development and purposeful conduct of innovations
- to foster human resources in the system of management of education primarily by way of introduction of further in-service training of school headmasters and other structures of leadership