

Labour market information in lifelong guidance

AO/RPA/PMDFON/LMI in Guidance/007/14

Case study visit focusing on “Infoabsolvent” - information system for the educational outcomes of school graduates in the labour market, Czech Republic

prepared for CEDEFOP – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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This text is presented in its original form.

It has neither been revised nor edited by Cedefop.

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1. Background information for the case study

This section starts with a short introduction of the case study's focus and the field-visit to Czech Republic as well as the presentation of the host organisation that have been crucial in organising the field-visit.

1.1 Field-visit identity

The following Table 1 summarises the main elements of the field-visit, namely the host organisation that facilitated the activities during our visit, the main contact persons and the timing of the visit:

Table 1: Main elements of the field visit

County in focus	Czech Republic
Host organisation	National Institute for Education (http://www.nuv.cz/)
Focus of the case study	"Infoabsolvent" initiative - Information system for the education outcomes of school graduates in the labour market (http://www.infoabsolvent.cz/)
Location(s)	(a) National Institute for Education (http://www.nuv.cz/) (b) Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (http://www.msmt.cz) (c) National Training Fund (http://en.nvf.cz)
Contact persons	<u>Host organisation</u> (a) Jiří Tillner - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education (jiri.tillner@nuv.cz , +420 274 022 493) (b) Jana Gajdošová - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education (jana.gajdosova@nuv.cz , +420 274 022 336) <u>Contractor</u> (a) Iakovos Delioglani, - project manager, Q-PLAN INTERNATIONAL LTD (delioglani@qplan.gr , +30 2310411191) (b) Kostas Giagtzoglou – project manager Q-PLAN INTETRATIONAL LTD (giagtzoglou@qplan.gr , +30 2310411191)
Dates of field-visit	24 – 26 June 2015

The present section follows with a short description of the objectives and operations of the main organisation that we visited in Czech Republic.

1.2 Background on the host organisation

The organisation that hosted the field-visit to Czech Republic was the **National Institute for Education (NUV)**, which was established in 2011. NUV was created by merging three main educational institutions in the Czech Republic, i.e. the National Institute of Vocational Education

(NÚOV), the Research Institute of Education in Prague (PRI) and the Institute of Educational and Psychological Counselling (IPPPCR), while in 2013 NUV also merged with the National Youth Information Centre. The mission of the Institute is to **a)** foster general, vocational, art and language education and **b)** to support schools in the pedagogical-psychological, educational and career counselling and continuing education of teachers, with an emphasis on lifelong learning. More specifically, the institution is responsible for the creation of the framework of the educational programmes and, therefore, assists schools in creating their own training programmes as well as their introduction into teaching. In addition, they are monitoring and analysing all aspects of the labour market such as school graduates in the labour market, the unemployment rate, the field of work of graduates, the kind of skills required/ demanded by the labour market and what sort of improvements could take place, the sort of qualifications needed for students to succeed in tertiary education and so on.

1.3 Context information

In order to analyse the **Infoabsolvent** initiative, we need to put it into the context of the overall characteristics of the labour market in the Czech Republic as well as of the national career education and vocational guidance system. This section presents the main elements that characterise the way that labour market intelligence is integrated into this context with some additional information on characteristics of the Czech Republic's labour market system.

1.3.1 General context of LMI in Czech Republic

The **National Reform of the Czech Republic** contains reform measures aiming to fulfil the national goals set within the Europe 2020 Strategy. The 2014 National Reform of the Czech Republic includes support for guidance and counselling **within the education and employment sector** as well as need for close cooperation between these two areas. With regards to career guidance, employers should be empowered to become more involved and the relevance of education at the secondary and tertiary levels should increase in relation to **demands of the labour market and employers**. Moreover, the **Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020**, which constitutes a general basis for policy-making, contains measures that will be taken in order to:

(a) reform the system of secondary vocational education in order to allow for more intense and efficient development of soft skills and to include a greater share of vocational training in the last stages of the study programme, in order to provide students with extensive professional experience;

(b) update Framework Educational Programmes for Secondary Vocational Education with respect to the descriptions of professional qualifications as specified in the National Qualifications System;

(c) motivate higher education institutions to increase the proportion of students in profession-oriented study programmes, to expand the offer of profession-oriented 23 courses in life-long education, and to increase the proportion of experience-based learning in profession-oriented study programmes;

(d) create conditions for better systematic use of the educational potential of public research institutions, such as the Czech Academy of Sciences;

(e) encourage methodical use of internships and work placements in companies as an effective tool of employment support;

(f) promote partnership between schools and employers in order to facilitate the transfer of graduates from schools to the labour market.

The main organisations involved with **labour market information** in Czech Republic are:

(a) the **National Institute for Education**, supervised by the **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**, provides, among other, information on education and work employment possibilities of graduates;

(b) the **Labour Office**, under the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**, provides a wide range of guidance and counselling services to job applicants, jobseekers, young people and employers. It operates 14 regional offices and about 225 contact points. Every labour office has established an **Information and Counselling Centre**, providing career counselling to pupils and adults;

(c) the **Czech Statistical Office**, collects information and monitors fundamental aspects of labour market and education.

Labour market information, at **educational level**, is provided in schools in cooperation with the local Information and Counselling Centres. Concerning career planning support for adults, the responsible organisation (Labour Office) specialises in counselling to the unemployed people.

In 2014, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, announced a **new development programme to support vocational education**, aiming to ensure the quality of education and improve harmonisation with the market needs generally and specifically in study fields which are unique or have a long tradition in the given region.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports implements the Individual **National Project Supporting Cooperation between Schools and Companies**, aiming at cooperation between schools and companies in educating the pupils of vocational upper secondary schools in the area of practical education in companies and, thus, on results of the elements of **apprenticeship** system. Different models of cooperation are being applied, in order to define the various possibilities of the cooperation in the following areas:

- (a) apprenticeship/professional experience;
- (b) contribution of practitioners to curriculum planning and implementation; and
- (c) conformation of the school-leaving examination profile.

1.3.2 Career education and vocational guidance

Vocational education and training has a long tradition in the Czech Republic. The **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** are the main responsible authorities for career guidance and counselling in the country, for schools/students and for adults respectively. The Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic, approved by the government in 2007, is the strategic document concerning career education and guidance for 2007-2015. **Lifelong Learning** is divided into **two basic stages**:

(a) initial education, which includes: basic, secondary and tertiary education. Initial vocational education is provided by secondary vocational schools at upper secondary and post-secondary level and by tertiary professional schools and higher education institutions at tertiary level. Career guidance and counselling is provided directly at schools and school guidance facilities, including a set of complementary practices that assist students in making educational, training and occupational decisions. **Career education is integrated into the school curriculum**, either as a separate subject at lower-secondary level, or as a subject integrated in others at upper secondary level. Students can also seek individual career advice from school counsellors, while schools usually organise visits for the students to the local Information and Counselling Centres.

(b) further education, which occurs after attaining the level of compulsory education or following the first entrance into the labour market. In higher education, universities are required to provide information and counselling services relating to their studies, while many of them also provide general guidance.

Career guidance and counselling services for people requiring assistance in employment are provided by the **Labour Office of the Czech Republic**. The Labour Offices organise **courses** of retraining for unemployed people and people at risk of unemployment. The courses are in accordance to **the National Register of Qualifications**. In addition to the Labour Office, other actors provide careers advice for adults, including NGOs, employer associations and private employment agencies.

2. Initiative in focus: “Infoabsolvent” information system for the education outcomes of school graduates in the labour market

2.1 Objectives

The “Infoabsolvent” portal (<http://www.infoabsolvent.cz>) is operated by the National Institute for Education (NUV). It was initially developed in 2008 under the “VIP Career” project and it was further enriched, both in terms of its content as well as regarding the presentation of the content (i.e. new components and tools were developed) to address users’ feedback and legislative changes, under the “VIP Careers II - Career counselling” project. Both “VIP Careers” projects are co-funded by the EU under the European Social Fund and the Czech Republic.

Its current form has been publicly accessible since 2010. The aim is two-fold:

- (a) assist students at all educational levels** (from basic school to tertiary education, ages 6-22 years) **and adults** in addressing various issues during their course of education and training and making critical career choices and decisions; and
- (b) offer career counsellors** as a supporting tool to enhance the quality of their practice **and teachers** as a valuable information resource and a career orientation tool in the classroom.

The portal is designed as a **self-help mechanism** and is backed up by the services of the **Information and Guidance Centre**, which is involved in preparing methodological information and providing telephone, online and face-to-face help, while if a user wishes an individual consultation the system will guide them towards contacting the guidance centre (by email, telephone) or to arrange a personal visit.

2.2 Implementation

The “Infoabsolvent” portal is structured in four sections each one offering different types of, but complementary, information:

- (a) EDUCATION section** providing detailed information on the various types of schools at all levels and their study programmes (educational orientation) and professions outlining their characteristics and skills/qualifications requirements;
- (b) LABOUR MARKET section** offering valuable insights on the opportunities in the labour market after graduation to support the user in taking informed decisions on his/her educational and professional choices;
- (c) WITHOUT BARRIERS section** targeting students with disabilities (handicapped students, the socially disadvantaged, those at risk or with learning difficulties, etc.), information on educational and professional paths is ‘adjusted’ to their special needs;
- (d) ADVICE section** including suggestions on how to proceed and seek assistance when faced with various barriers and/or key decision points in the course of study and beyond.

Figure 1: “Infoabsolvent” initiative home page



Source: <http://www.infoabsolvent.cz>

Section EDUCATION

This section has been designed based on **two main principles**:

(a) even though the basic educational framework (priorities and objectives) is developed centrally by the National Institute for Education, **schools enjoy a high level of flexibility** and in close collaboration with the regional authorities **design their own curricula** so as to react to regional/local labour needs. As a result, students can choose among a wide variety of school programmes and study plans in order to be prepared for their professional career;

(b) **information about schools and their study plans, professions and the labour market is closely linked and is accessible from any part (webpage) of this section** increasing significantly its ‘user-friendliness’, while the user can quite easily navigate from looking for the suitable school to the characteristics of a job that he/she is interested in and the situation in the respective market sector.

The user has several ‘starting points’ to find information, while at any point **he/she may filter the results according to his/her special needs** (sight, hearing, physical, mental, learning difficulties), **study formats** (full time, evening, distance, online, combined) **and the type of school** (public, private, church, army):

(a) **searching via fields of study**, the user starts by selecting the level of education, namely upper secondary, post-secondary non tertiary, tertiary vocational, tertiary, short courses or apprenticeship after graduation. Then, browsing through the various options in each education level (e.g. programmes that lead to a vocational certificate or that require a maturity diploma for graduation, etc.) a list of available study groups (fields of study) is displayed and the user can find:

- (i) comprehensive analytical information about students, graduates and the labour market outcomes of education for the particular study group;
- (ii) more details on particular study fields (characteristics, labour market outcomes of education, graduate profile and study plan) and which schools provide education in a particular region; and
- (iii) a list of relevant occupations so as to get a detailed description on a specific job, the necessary qualifications and labour market information (including unemployment status) for the particular profession.

(b) searching via schools of interest, the user can select education level he/she is interested in (upper secondary, tertiary vocational, tertiary) and then choose the preferred location of the school by selecting the region(s). By clicking on a particular school, the school card is displayed with basic information about the school (e.g. address, size, accommodation options, open days, etc.), the school program (e.g. the characteristics of study, such as length of study, study format, compulsory foreign languages, number of registered and accepted students, tuition fees, the education outcomes on the labour market, the graduate profile, etc.) and entry requirements;

(c) searching via occupations, allows the user to explore a particular occupation and find schools, which can prepare him/her to acquire the necessary competencies, while an overview of all the labour market options (by listing the industry or areas of activity) offers the user a wider orientation. By clicking on a particular industry a list of positions categorised according the education level is displayed and the user can find out about the particular job characteristics, activities, health restrictions, gross salary average, and suitable study programs;

(d) a quite popular option is using a **video multimedia guide** for searching the education database and making a career choice. Currently there are video clips for 64 occupations highlighting the character of the given profession, including various career options within it, while the user can be re-directed to the particular profession's web page and from there to detailed information about a certain job position;

(e) finally, there is a possibility to **search using pictures** which is particularly used by students with learning difficulties as it provides easier orientation in the (upper secondary) learning offer.

The section also includes a **self-awareness test, called PROFITEST**, which can be used as an inspiration, 'food for thought' about one's own interests, talents and strengths, which should be taken in to account when deciding about further learning and future work. The test includes various types of questions focusing on the typical behaviour of the student in different situations, their favourite activities and their learning styles, as well as testing the student's memory and various numerical exercises. The results of the test are not directive, they outline the person's main strengths and potential, and include a number of recommendations and a list of activities suitable for further exploration.

Section LABOUR MARKET

This section provides practical information on the requirements of employers and how to prepare for employment, namely:

- (a) "*Learning and choosing a field of study*" – forming an attitude to a field of study, number of student and graduates, transition of upper secondary students in to tertiary education, etc;
- (b) "*Labour market outcomes of education*" – analysis on the satisfaction of graduates with their employment and the match between education and employment;

(c) “*Employer requirements*” – which are the important competences for employment, especially when entering the labour market, how to apply for a job and characteristics of job recruitment, etc;

(d) “*Unemployment*” and “*Employment*” – information on unemployment / employment of school graduates and youth unemployment in Czech Republic and the EU.

Finally, an on-line library with useful reports and studies carried out by the National Institute of Education as well as other national and international organisations is available covering topics like structure of students and graduates; labour market needs, labour market outcomes of education; transition of school graduates from schools in to the labour market and tertiary education; etc.

Section WITHOUT BARRIERS

Handicapped persons are able to search and filter schools that take into account their special needs. This section includes:

(a) tips and information about fields of study or examples of job positions, which students with disabilities undertake. *Note: information on the type of problems these students encounter or the factors which influence their choice of school, is also used by career counsellors or teachers;*

(b) information about the employers and their opinion on the required competences, the support provided and the expectations about the labour market outcomes of education, including examples of good practice and links to websites aimed at employment of persons with disabilities.

Moreover, examples of good practices regarding early school leaving are also included, covering issues like effective cooperation between lower and upper secondary schools to facilitate the transition to upper secondary schools, improving communication between schools and parents, adaptation to a new school environment, specific methodologies for various measures regarding early school leaving (adaptation courses, class days, etc.), etc.

Finally, various statistics are available, providing information about the structure of students based on the type of disability and the structure of persons with disabilities based on the type of education level and fields of study.

Section ADVICE

This section acts as a ‘personal counsellor’ assisting students at all levels of education to cope with various barriers during key milestones in their educational/professional development. Special focus is given to students with low educational aspirations, learning difficulties or at risk of dropping out of education, while the provided information can be used by adults (including people who have left school without a qualification) in search of opportunities in their educational and their professional life.

2.3 Results and SWOT of “Infoabsolvent” initiative

The discussions with experts from the National Institute of Education (NUV) responsible for the development and operation of the “Infoabsolvent” system revealed that:

- a) **It is used not only by students**, who comprise the main target of the system, **but also by school counsellors and teachers** as a powerful tool for their support to students, **municipal officials** as a unique source of information for the development of strategic documents in the field of education in their region, **government officials** on the preparation of e.g. regional reports on labour force, the occupational structure of the workforce, etc. and **career counsellors in labour offices and other support centres** when discussing with students, and their parents as well as with teachers about career choice issues.
- b) There is **a high degree of satisfaction from the wealth and quality of information provided as well as from the practical and attractive way it is presented.**

Feedback from the users is constantly collected providing evidence on the use of the portal. Below a few indicative examples are presented:

(a) lower secondary school teacher - *“Students at the eighth grade of the lower secondary school are working with their teachers on the Infoabsolvent system so as to learn how to search for and evaluate information on education and the labour market. Moreover, students at the 9th grade are seeking and collecting specific information from the system, which relate to industries and occupations of their choice, according to their specific needs, especially when preparing their applications for the next school period. This is appreciated by parents who are in many cases well acquainted with the system and can actively participate in the selection of upper secondary education.”;*

(b) upper high school counsellor - *“Infoabsolvent is a great information source, especially when working with students with special needs or those with learning difficulties and their parents when they have to deal with the consequences of early school leaving. Moreover, under the “World of Work” cross-curricular subject students are given tasks and imaginary situations to solve by using the portal in the classroom. Finally, the tips and information are valuable for the counsellor when they have to respond to various questions that come up in individual counselling, in particular with students with learning or behavioural problems.”;*

(c) school counsellors and teachers – *“the portal is very clear and comprehensive, while information is accurate, up-to-date and in a single portal reducing significantly the need for lengthy research, especially while working with students with disabilities”;*

(d) municipal officials – *“The publications provided within the Infoabsolvent website map out in detail and analyse the development of the education and program structure in the country and in the regions, the unemployment of graduate students, early school leaving and work with students with special needs, their job prospects and much more. These publications are used as key materials in the preparation of strategic documents in the region in the field of education. They are also used in forming arguments and negotiating with social partners. The mentioned publications are concise, easily understandable and describe the observed phenomena in context, objectively and always on the basis of verifiable data.”;*

(e) career counsellors in labour offices and support centres – *“The Infoabsolvent information system is used for its breadth and quality of information regarding the choice and change of occupation. As such, it is also presented to the general public. Among users are not only elementary school students, but also the general public who are interested in education.”*

The extensive use of the portal is also demonstrated by the statistical data: the **average number of unique visitors** is between 10000 and 15000 per week throughout the school period. However, this number is doubled from January to April when students are called to prepare their applications for the up-coming school year regarding the study programme they wish to follow, which relates to their school of preference. They have to complete a comprehensive overview of the selected and alternative fields of study, the corresponding study plans and schools where the programs are taught.

Meanwhile, career guidance is not adequately embedded at schools. Teachers and school counsellors are mainly focusing on pedagogical and psychological counselling aimed at the early identification of students with learning/social problems, while they are not properly trained for career counselling. The National Institute for Education addresses this shortcoming and cooperates with **school and school counsellors** offering them a comprehensive information source, and a wide range of training modules and e-training courses to teachers and school counsellors (**e-Kariera on-line portal**, <http://ekariera.nuov.cz>).

In addition, the country **lacks a coherent system for observation and forecasting of skill needs**. The gap is to a large extent filled by various initiatives especially from academia that aim at creating solid methods and individual tools for early identification of skill needs. Relevant publications include long-term analyses of the past developments and changes and are transferred to digestible information reflecting the annual student and graduate structures, in contrast to youth (un)employment (CZ and EU), satisfaction and current prospects. The information, including questionnaire results and studies of what employers think is and will be important is also used for policy making. Moreover, **29 sector councils** have been established, consisting of the representatives of employers, educators and ministries working on the qualification standards, skill needs analysis of the labour market in sectors, and standards of vocational qualifications in relation to occupations and jobs defined in the National Register of Occupations.

The following table summarises the main conclusions that the field study team has derived about the operation and results of the Infoabsolvent information system in the form of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>(a) The Infoabsolvent portal is a comprehensive information source on the education pathways and the labour market in Czech Republic, closely linking study programmes with professions;</p> <p>(b) The wealth of information included in the portal is used by all relevant stakeholders, ranging from students and career counsellors to public officials at both local (municipal) and national level;</p> <p>(c) Based on the end-users' feedback, there is a high degree of satisfaction from the wealth and quality of information provided as well as from the practical and attractive way it is presented;</p>
<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>(a) Secondary school counsellors focus more on pedagogical/psychological counselling than on career guidance;</p> <p>(b) The Infoabsolvent portal lacks adequate labour market forecasts as there isn't a coherent system for observation and forecasting of skill needs.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>(a) An e-training programme exists and various training modules have been developed for school teachers and counsellors;</p> <p>(b) Skill needs forecasting is materialised through participation of business representatives in sector councils as well as participation in surveys concerning skill needs and occupational requirements.</p>
<p>Threats</p> <p>(a) The Infoabsolvent portal (information and tools) is not exploited in its full potential as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) career guidance is not adequately embedded in the school curriculum; while (ii) the development of the career counselling sector heavily depend on European funding (Social funds) while there are not enough national resources oriented for this purpose.

3. Transferability and developments towards the future

The career guidance and counselling sector is going through a reform over the last years. Even though the development of the sector still heavily depends on European funding and falls under the responsibility of two Ministries (the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), there is a strong interest in addressing the systemic challenges and better support citizens throughout their education and work life. More specifically:

(a) the **National Guidance Forum** (<http://www.narodniporadenskeforum.cz>), set up in 2007 and formalised in 2010, acts as an advisory body for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the area of career guidance in a lifelong perspective, facilitating the joint ministerial coordination of conceptual and system activities at national and international level. Its member base comprises of 17 organisations and entities dealing with lifelong guidance, including public administration, regional and local governmental institutions, state-established organisations, not-for-profit organisations, universities, professional associations, educational establishments, private providers of guidance services, etc. Regular meetings on semester basis are held to exchange information on the latest developments in the career guidance sector (e.g. the results and findings under EU-funded projects, results from the collaboration with other national/international organisations, etc.) and discuss on key questions and make suggestions for the development of the sector. Moreover, the Forum is active in establishing expert working groups, which aim to fulfil the Action plan for 2014-2016:

- (i) one group is working on the implementation of an integrated lifelong guidance system, which will set the conditions for cooperation of stakeholders and assuring access to career guidance services to all citizens in all phases of their lives;
- (ii) the second working group focuses on the career management skills concept of lifelong guidance and its implementation in to the national curriculum. It will work closely with other experts called to innovate the relevant educational area in the near future; and
- (iii) the third group aims to support training of career counsellors under both Ministries.

(b) the **National Qualifications Framework - NQF** (<http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz>) was developed in 2007 and contains descriptions of qualifications in the form of **Qualification Cards for Occupations** on more than 730 qualifications and places where they can be gained. It is built on real requirements for the performance of activities within occupations and jobs, allowing not only identification, sorting and classifying skills, but also their recognition and certification. It should be noted that the NQF does not replace existing qualifications and education systems, but aims at setting a common framework for initial and continuing education;

(c) the **National Registry of Occupations - NSP** (<http://www.nsp.cz>) through sector councils monitors and records the performance requirements of various occupations in the labour market. This creates an open, universally accessible database of professions which realistically reflects the situation on the labour market. Together with the National Qualifications Framework provides important information on qualification requirements, which are subsequently reflected in all levels of education. NSP is an important source of information for human resources and vocational education in all stages, significantly strengthens the role of employers in these areas and becomes a base for future mobility and flexibility on the labour market in the context of the entire European Union;

(d) there are **29 Sector councils bringing together representatives of employers, educators and ministries**. The aim is to better match the educational supply with the

demands of the economy by actively involving key actors and especially employers. They work on qualification standards, skills needs analysis of the labour market in sectors, and standards of vocational qualifications in relation to occupations and jobs defined in the National Register of Occupations. Furthermore, their responsibility is the development of the **Sectoral Profiles**;

(e) since 2012 the **profession of “career counsellor” has been included in the National Register of Occupations** covering several types of counsellors. Moreover, an expert group was formed at national level to define the qualifications of a career guidance specialist and set the necessary standards. These qualifications will be incorporated in the National Qualifications Framework, along with the requirements for the necessary training programmes. However, a number of e-training modules have already been developed by the National Institute of Education since 2008. Up to now approx. 9000 school counsellors, teachers and headmasters have enrolled in the 22 training modules that currently exist;

(f) the basic educational framework outlining the main priorities and objectives of the education at national level (National Curriculum – <http://www.rvp.cz>) is developed centrally by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, **schools enjoy a high level of flexibility and design their own curricula**. In close collaboration with NUV, regional authorities and key actors they develop their own study programmes shaping the profiles of their graduates in line with regional needs, the development of the relevant field and the interests and capacities of the students. More specifically, at lower secondary education, the area “*Man and the World of Work*” in the national curriculum is set for innovation in light of the career management skills approach to lifelong guidance;

(g) there **is strong collaboration between school and school counsellors with the regional/local labour offices** (e.g. they organise lectures, training sessions, field visits, etc.) **and the National Institute of Education** (e.g. the Infoabsolvent information system is widely used during school counselling courses).

Overall, and despite the economic situation of the country which does not allow the increase of state funding for the development of the career guidance sector, there are positive signs that the situation is improving. There is a strong will to enhance and better coordinate the collaboration between the two Ministries responsible for the provision of career counselling services in the educational and employment sectors. However, **the lack of adequate knowledge on current labour market needs and job profiles by the school counsellors and the shortage of staff in the labour offices are major structural problems that need to be addressed in the future.**

Annex I – Education framework

I.1 Overview of the educational system

The **Education Act** of the Czech Republic regulates pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary vocational and other education at schools and school facilities and defines that a) education is based, among other principles, to **equal access of all citizens to education** without any discrimination and b) **basic and secondary education is free**. Schools are established by the state, the region, the municipality or the union of municipalities. General goals of education are, among others, the personal development of a human being who shall possess knowledge and social competencies, ethical and spiritual values for their personal and civil life, for the execution of a profession or working activities and for acquiring information and learning in the course of life. The educational system should help pupils to form, shape and gradually develop their key competencies and provide them with the dependable fundamentals of general education. Furthermore, in July 2014 THE Government adopted the **Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020**, which constitutes a general basis for policy-making and stipulates three strategic priorities: **reducing inequality in education, supporting quality teaching and governing the education system in an accountable and effective manner**.

The organisation of the education system in the Czech Republic consists of:

(a) pre-school education for children at the age from three to six years and is institutionally provided by **nursery schools**, including nursery schools with an adapted educational programme. The attendance is not compulsory and children have legal entitlement to education in the last year before compulsory education. **Preparatory classes** may also be established during the year prior to the starting compulsory education for socially disadvantaged children;

(b) basic education covering **primary and lower secondary education** and corresponds to nine years compulsory attendance, which begins at the age of six and takes nine years. It is divided into a five year first stage (primary) and a four-year second stage (lower secondary). Pupils who show interest and succeed in the admission procedure may transfer to an eight-year secondary school (gymnasium) after the fifth year of basic education or a six-year gymnasium after the seventh year of basic education;

(c) upper secondary education which is provided through the following sub-types of upper-secondary schools, which are not defined by the law but schools can offer various levels, fields, or possibly forms of secondary education, if it fulfils teaching requirements;

(d) secondary general schools - with duration of four years, provide general, academic education. Its main aim is to prepare students for tertiary (higher or professional) education;

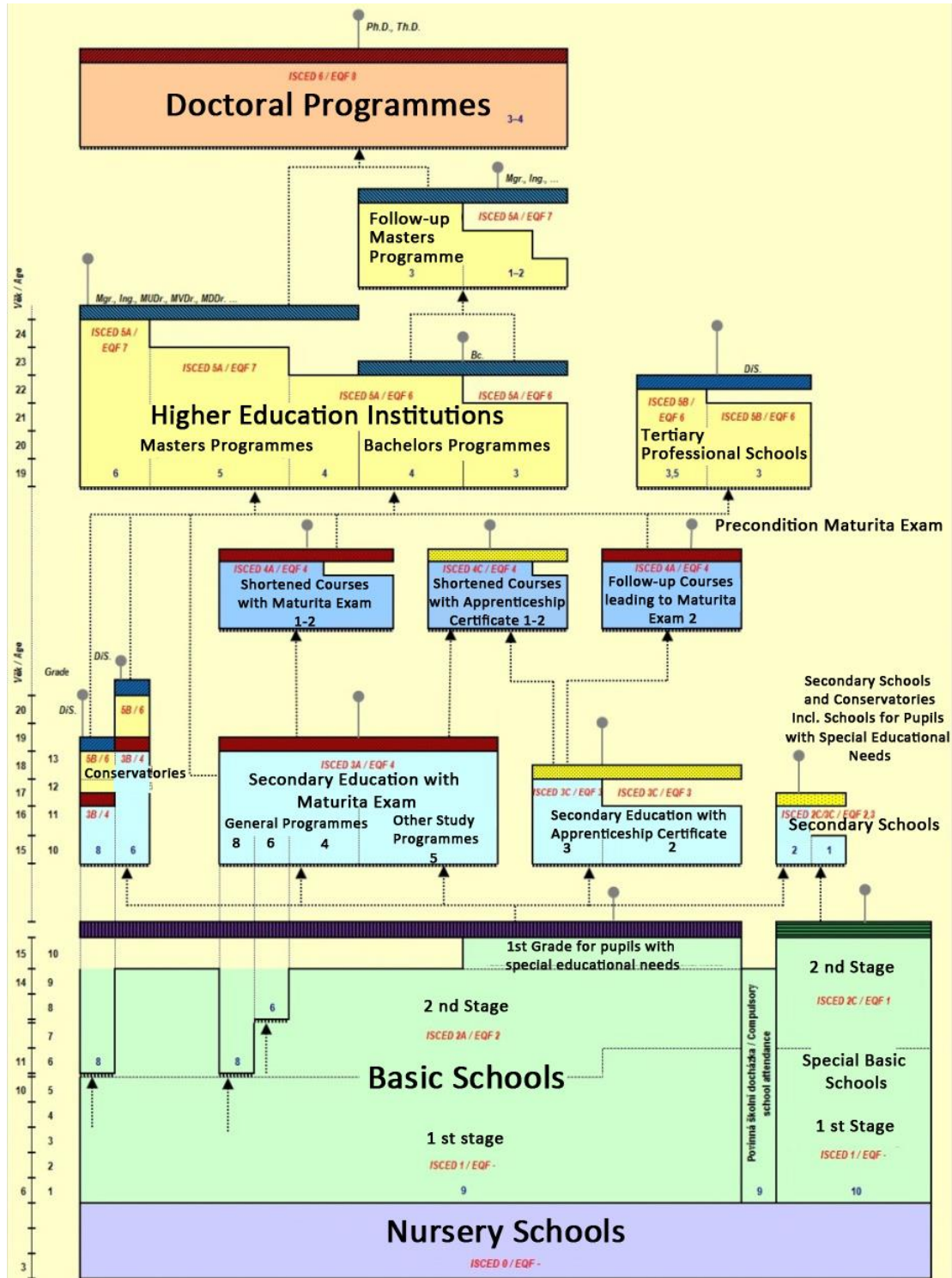
(e) secondary vocational schools - provide to the pupils qualifications to enter certain technical, economic and other occupations or to take up highly-skilled technical and operative functions. Only secondary education with a school leaving examination entitles graduates to enter a tertiary level of education. Upper secondary education is also provided by **conservatoires**, concerning art education (music, singing, drama, dance):

(i) tertiary education consisting of **higher education** provided by higher education institutions, which offer all level of higher education degree programmes (Bachelor, Master's, Doctoral degrees) and **tertiary professional education** provided by tertiary professional schools that offer professionally-oriented courses and graduates are awarded a diploma after a successful completion of the (usually) three-years studies;

(ii) adult education is embedded in various types of education institutions: schools, which organise coherent adult education programmes, higher education institutions which provide courses or distance learning education, non-profit organisations and state administration bodies.

The structure of the country's educational system is outlined in the figure below, describing how the different stages of education are followed in time (age of pupil) and which are the main options for education after the basic up to tertiary education.

Figure 2: Structure of the Czech Republic's education system



Source: CEDEFOP Publication: Czech Republic VET in Europe – Country Report 2012

I.2 Governance and funding

The **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** preserves the integrated state educational policy by formulating the National Curricula outlining the long-term policy objectives of education, while assisted by advisory bodies decides every four years on the development of education and different levels of the educational system, recognition of educational institutions, economic issues etc. The **advisory bodies** are:

- (a) the **Council of Economic and Social Agreement**, which consists the highest advisory body at national level;
- (b) the **Czech School Inspectorate**, which is responsible for the monitoring of schools and schools facilities as well as their educational programmes and outcomes ensuring compliance between education and effectiveness of funds;
- (c) the **National Institute for Education**, which focuses on development in the area of pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, providing at the same time guidance and counselling;
- (d) the **Centre of Evaluation of Educational Achievement**, which prepares evaluation tools for the school-leaving examinations and supports pupils' assessments at basic schools; and
- (e) the **National Institute for Further Education**, which arranges courses, seminars, lectures and other activities for the further education of the pedagogical staff.

Regions enjoy a high degree of autonomy and are responsible for education on their territory. Regional authorities formulate long-term policy objectives for their territory every four years in compliance with national objectives. Regions are also organising bodies in particular for upper secondary and tertiary professional schools.

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring conditions for the compulsory school attendance. They establish and administer basic schools and they usually organise bodies of nursery schools which are not compulsory.

Schools design their own curricula (school educational programmes) in collaboration with the regional authorities allowing them enough flexibility to shape the profiles of their graduates in line with regional needs, the development of the relevant field and the interests and capacities of the students.

Education is mainly **financed from the central stage budget** and from the **budget of the territorial administrative units** (regions and municipalities). Educational costs (salaries and learning materials) are allocated from the state budget, while capital and running costs are covered by regional and municipal budget. Schools can receive extra national funding for students with special needs. Funds are also raised from school's economic activities and from school's participation in international programmes. The implemented funding mechanism is the 'per capita' (per pupil) formula.

Annex II - Agenda of the field-visit

Day 1 – Wednesday 24 June 2015	
National Institute for Education – Interviews with experts	
10.00– 10.15	Welcome – introduction of the day ✓ Helena Úlovcová - Interim director in charge, National Institute for Education
10.00– 12.00	Presentation of the Information system of school graduates for the education outcomes in the labour market “Infoabsolvent” (http://www.infoabsolvent.cz/) ✓ Jiří Tillner - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education ✓ Jana Gajdošová - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education
12.00– 12.30	Open discussion with policy makers and career guidance practitioners ✓ Jiří Tillner - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education ✓ Jana Gajdošová - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education (jana.gajdosova@nuv.cz , +420 274 022 336) ✓ Elišková Ivana - Deputy Head of the department for labour market analysis and career guidance and the Information and Guidance Centre
Day 2 – Thursday 25 June 2015	
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Focus group	
13.00– 15.00	Observation of the meeting of the National Guidance Forum
15.00– 16.00	Open discussion with policy/decision makers representatives of members of the Forum: ✓ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports ✓ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ✓ Association of Higher Ed. Counsellors ✓ Euroguidance ✓ National Institute for Education
Day 3 – Friday 26 June 2015	
National Training Fund – Training session “Career guidance for integration of foreign citizens”	
11.00– 11.45	Observation of the training session ✓ Zuzana Freibergová , National Education Fund ✓ Eva Kavková , European Contact Group
11.45– 12.15	Open discussion with career guidance practitioners
12.45– 13.30	Reflections from the field visit ✓ Jiří Tillner - Department for labour market analyses and lifelong guidance, National Institute for Education

Annex III - References – sources of information

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