

Social partner concept for Continuing Education



Timeline



ID number 41967

Background

In recent years, concerns about low compatibility of Czech continuing education system with current labour market megatrends have been rising. There is no unified coherent policy of lifelong learning. Partial areas are governed by different stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and others, and regulated by different laws. There have been significant investments in individual projects aiming to build or support more systematic approaches or platforms, but their sustainability proved rather limited. The Czech labour market, with the industry in its core, is among those most susceptible to profound transformation due to Industry 4.0. Many jobs are expected to be replaced or transformed by automatisations. At the same time, the participation of adults in education and training in the Czech Republic is very low, especially that of lower qualified people. There is only limited awareness about the necessity and benefits of lifelong learning and constant reskilling and upskilling among not only the employees, but also among many employers.

This is the context where the social partner associations stepped up with their proposal for unified conception of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic.

Objectives

The main goal is to introduce the theme of continuing professional education and training in a strong and transparent way into the social dialogue at the national level.

So far, the social partners in the Czech Republic have had only consultative role in the area of education and training. The proposal aims to gradually proceed to higher level of shared responsibility where social partners would cooperate on defining and governance of the continuing professional education and training system.

Description

The proposal was drafted in the framework of the project Social dialogue and society 4.0 (2019-22), It is implemented by the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, the biggest trade union association in the Czech Republic, in partnership with the

Confederation of Industry, the biggest employer organisation. The general idea of the proposal is to build a continuous learning culture and make it an integral part of not only social dialogue, but also society as a whole. A coherent public system of support for continuing vocational education and training is seen as an inevitable condition for sustainable implementation of LLL culture in the labour market and society. The proposal is based on the latest analytical research and recommendations provided by the OECD and ILO (see Sources). Many discussion forums were organised in the Czech Republic to validate the basic ideas of the proposal. The proposal was approved by the Plenary Council of Economic and Social Agreement, which is the highest official tripartite platform.

The four main pillars of the Proposal, mutual trust, mutual cooperation, mutual determination and mutual reflection, translate into concrete steps as follows:

Mutual trust

- (a) creating common priorities: elaboration of more concrete national policy for continuing education and training will be ensured by the highest tripartite platform (the Plenary Council of Economic and Social Agreement); the policy builds upon common priorities of all key stakeholders; a time schedule will be agreed. The goal is to have the policy adopted by the Government;
- (b) reinforcing governance: an independent audit of current governance of continuing education and training will be conducted. A permanent coordination mechanism at the government level on tripartite basis will be established, as well as a permanent working group by the Council of Economic and Social Agreement;
- (c) common skills prediction: the long-term sustainability of sector skills councils will be ensured, and they should be transformed into a tool of tripartite governance. The sustainability and efficiency of the National register of qualifications and National system of occupations should be ensured by the commitment of the State, and both systems should be coordinated and integrated into the functional system of continuing education and training. The capacities of social partners for skills forecast in the context of disruptive societal changes should be increased.

Mutual cooperation

- (a) overcoming barriers in continuing education and training: collective agreements should more often specify conditions for professional development of employees; employees' education and training should be proposed as a part of their working hours. Social dialogue in companies should bring about more concrete and transparent incentives for employees participating in education and training (e.g. a pay rise or obtaining a certificate). Employees most endangered by automatisisation and digitalisation or those with lower qualification should especially be encouraged to participate in education. The National register of qualifications as well as the National system of occupations should be added to the agenda of employee and employer representatives at the company level;
- (b) adequate public funding: expenditures on active labour market policies should be increased as a unique tool for active intervention in the labour market in the context of incoming challenges. The funding of IVET and CVET should be better balanced as CVET should gain a status of equal pillar of lifelong learning. Stimulating tax incentives should be proposed for employers as well as individuals. A scenario analysis of possible funding in the context of incoming societal megatrends should be elaborated, to be used for strategic discussions, that would support especially direct forms of funding and tripartite-based education and training fund. Also, possible scenarios for implementation of individual learning accounts in the country should be analysed.

Mutual determination: cultivating the culture of continuing professional development. The possibility of introducing education and training ambassadors should be examined, with a role especially in the field of career and lifelong guidance. A public communication campaign should be launched, as well as easily accessible online information related to continuing professional education and training. The expertise of the social partners should be increased in guidance and counselling for the low-qualified, workers endangered by automatisisation and other hard-to-reach groups. Also, the capacities of employee representatives to participate actively in digitalisation and automatisisation trends and company innovations should be boosted.

Mutual reflection: the quality of continuing professional education. A method for quality assurance of education providers should be implemented.

2021 Design

In 2021, the proposal was widely discussed, drafted and published. Based on the draft, employee representatives were nominated as members of the Retraining and Continuing Education Committee by the National recovery and resilience plan.

2022 Approved/Agreed

The proposal was approved by the Plenary Council of Economic and Social Agreement, which is the highest official tripartite platform.

Besides that, the Czech Chamber of Commerce, the Agrarian Chamber, the Confederation of Industry and the Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations signed a memorandum on joint action to promote and build a partnership approach to the governance of lifelong learning system.

In 2022, the Partnership Model for the Governance of Lifelong Learning System was drafted by the main employers' organisations (Confederation of Industry, Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations, The Union of Employers' Associations of the Czech Republic, the Czech Chamber of Commerce, the Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic, the Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) with the support of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions. The document declares its support for a common approach and shared responsibility for the area among employers, trade unions and the state.

In the model, the key decisions are made jointly by all partners while specified executive roles are assigned to them individually. The model builds on various previous projects and aspires to interlink and use their results in practice, in the framework of the following activities:

- (a) Analyses/anticipation of skill needs
- (b) New skills identification
- (c) Impacts of changes on the occupations and qualifications
- (d) Revision of occupational standards
- (e) Revision of qualification standards
- (f) Revision of standards for initial education
- (g) Creation of standards for adult education
- (h) Counselling and financial support for training of employees

The proposal includes a concrete allocation of these activities among stakeholders including the identification of previous projects outcomes on which to build.

The model proposes to establish a State fund to support the development of LLL and labour market. The purpose of the Fund would be to support more effective employment of qualified workers, skills development in match with current labour market needs, in line with the trends of jobs supply and demand, creation of qualification standards and their revision, establishing a specialised network of counsellors for employees and employers to develop lifelong learning, raise public awareness of lifelong learning and promote related tools. The Fund is to be managed by the Alliance of Sector Councils governed by the main employers' confederations and representatives of employees. The sector councils have been established and functioning already for 15 years. They are composed of leading experts – mainly major employers in the sector, HR specialists, representatives of professional associations, guilds, employees (trade unions), authorising bodies, training provider, consultancy companies and representatives of the National Pedagogical Institute. Specifically, it is proposed that the union experts and their educational ambassadors in companies should be involved in the Alliance and its transversal or joint activities implemented by thematically focused teams (as proposed by the Trade Union Concept).

The Fund should be initially financed mainly from the operational programmes (ESF)

and the National recovery and resilience plan as well as from employers contributions to public employment policies. In the longer term part of the corporate income tax might be assigned to the Fund.

The document also contains a proposal for necessary legislative amendments to implement the abovementioned policies. In January 2023, the material was acknowledged by the highest tripartite platform (the Plenary Council of Economic and Social Agreement). It was agreed to discuss it in the working groups of the Council, to further elaborate it and resubmit to the tripartite plenary by the end of June 2023.

2023 Implementation

The provisions of the Fund, initially proposed to support lifelong learning and skills development through a tripartite governance model, conflicted with the government's perspective on financial costs to the state budget. This key contradiction led to the proposal to withdraw from the establishment of the Fund and instead to implement a national project with the working title Model of partnership cooperation and coordination of the continuing professional education system - Sectoral skills strategies. Funding would come from the ESF, specifically from the Operational Programme Employment Plus. The goal of the project is to verify the effectiveness of partnership cooperation between the government and social partners at the national level, with an extension to the sectoral level.

Later in 2023, key discussions took place between representatives of the government and social partners regarding the design and competences of the proposed 'Government Council for Qualifications, Professional and Vocational Education' and its financing.

2024 Implementation

Social partner representatives (employers and trade unions) proposed the establishment of a unified Government Council for Qualifications, Vocational and Professional Education, which would preferably be administered by the Government Office of the Czech Republic. This new body would replace and consolidate the functions of the National Council for Qualifications, the Council for Vocational Education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) and the Committee for Requalification and Further Education (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is assessing the feasibility of this proposed model, along with the planned partnership cooperation project prepared by the social partners. Additionally, the Ministry is working on a proposal to create the most effective organisational set-up for the Council's functioning to meet both the social partners and the government's requirements.

2025 Implementation

Social partners, with the support of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (ČMKOS), continued to negotiate the establishment of a Council for Qualifications, Vocational and Further Education. In spring 2025, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs circulated a draft government council proposal with this focus for comment. However, it was not established, because at tripartite meetings in April and May, the social partners agreed to a proposal by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to amend the powers of the existing National Council for Qualifications (under Act No. 179/2006 on the recognition of further education results). As the current parliamentary term is coming to an end, it will no longer be possible to approve such an amendment before elections in October 2025. The decision will therefore have to wait until the new government is formed.

The draft implementation project, which aims to strengthen partnership-based cooperation between the government and social partners at the national level while extending this cooperation to the sectoral level - underwent intensive review by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and

the Czech Labour Office during spring and summer. It is expected to be submitted for approval by the OP Employment+ authorities by the end of 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic
- Czech Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions
- Czech Chamber of Commerce
- Confederation of Employers' and Business Associations of the Czech Republic

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Other

General public

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

Related policy developments

2025 Completed

VET-related measures in the Czech National recovery and resilience plan

Section 3 of the plan, Education and labour market, proposes the following reforms and measures in education and training:

Transforming HE institutions to adapt to new forms of learning and changing the labour market needs by 2026:

 CZECHIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Social partner concept for Continuing Education: Czechia. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/41967>