



Including non-formal sector qualifications in the NQF in the Czech Republic

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Table of contents

Foreword	5
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	7
Preparation of the report.....	8
Information sources for this report.....	8
Basic terms	11
Concepts specific for the initial education and NSK.....	11
Chapter 1. Historical context.....	14
1.1. The historical context of the institutional framework of education system.....	14
1.2. The historical context of the institutional framework of NSK.....	16
1.3. Important milestones in NSK development	16
Chapter 2. National qualifications framework – basic premises	22
2.1. Referencing process and development of the national qualifications framework.....	22
2.2. Czech referencing process and its results	22
Chapter 3. Institutional setting	25
3.1. Education system in the Czech Republic.....	25
3.2. Qualifications framework for tertiary education in the Czech Republic.....	28
3.3. National and international context of NSK development	29
3.4. NSK as a national register of qualifications.....	30
3.5. Accountability for management of NSK	34
Chapter 4. Types and legal status of qualifications included in the NQF.....	37
4.1. Basic characteristic of vocational qualifications in the NSK.....	37
4.2. Validation and recognition of learning outcomes.....	38
4.3. Qualifications outside of the NSK recognized on a labour market	39
4.4. Regulated professions and activities.....	39
4.5. Legal status of non-formal sector qualifications	42
4.6. Qualifications obtained in hobby and voluntary sector	43
4.7. Qualifications obtained through further education.....	44
Chapter 5. Procedures of the inclusion of qualifications in the NQF.....	46
5.1. Incorporating qualifications into NSK.....	46
5.2. Description of the procedure of submitting proposals for vocational qualifications in the NSK	49
5.3. Coordination of processes and activities in creating NSK	52
5.4. Need for implementation of laws after closing the NSK2 project	56
5.5. Ensuring sustainability of NSK	58

Chapter 6. Quality assurance of qualifications included in the NQF.....	61
6.1. Statutory responsibility of institutions.....	61
6.2. Mechanisms using employers' input.....	65
Chapter 7. Costs of including qualifications in the NQF.....	69
7.1. Costs in the NSK and current methods of cost coverage	69
7.2. Costs related with implementation and quality assurance in NSK	70
Chapter 8. Current debates on further NQF developments	73
8.1. Process of ensuring the implementation of Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results.....	73
8.2. Continuation of formation of external links of NSK	74
Annexes	80
Annex 1. List of legal acts (and relevant brief summary) referred to in the country report	80
Annex 2. Forms used in the procedure of including qualifications in the NSK	81
Annex 3. Documents used in the procedure of including qualifications in the NSK.....	84
Annex 4. Levels and Descriptors in the NSK.....	85
Annex 5. Act No 179/2006 Coll., on the Recognition of Further Education Results.....	90

Foreword

This country report was prepared within the international NQF-in project *Developing organisational and financial models for including non-formal sector qualifications in National Qualifications Frameworks* financed by the European Union within the framework of the Erasmus+ funds.

The NQF-in project aim is to provide evidence-based support to national governments of the participating countries, EU agencies and key stakeholders in the development of policies related to the inclusion of non-formal education sector qualifications in national qualifications frameworks, with a particular focus on qualifications awarded outside the formal education system. The report can also serve the Czech national stakeholders' needs and can be used as a source of useful information. The report was prepared by experts in the field of initial and continuing education from the National Institute for Education (NUV), which is an organization belonging to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT). Partial passages were consulted with experts from the MSMT.

The report is structured according to the following chapters:

Chapter 1. Historical context

Chapter 2. National qualifications framework– basic premises

Chapter 3. Institutional setting

Chapter 4. Types and legal status of qualifications included in the NQF

Chapter 5. Procedures of the inclusion of qualifications in the NQF

Chapter 6. Quality assurance of qualifications included in the NQF

Chapter 7. Costs of including qualifications in the NQF

Chapter 8. Current debates on further NQF developments.

So far, the Czech National Qualifications Framework with a single set of descriptors describing levels of all qualifications does not exist. The Czech Republic did not yet decide whether it will develop a comprehensive NQF, but discussions and surveys conducted so far conclude that establishing an NQF could be an important means for better coordination and communication among sectors of education and other stakeholders.

Many steps were already undertaken in the Czech Republic. In 2006, the National Register of Qualifications (NSK) was established using knowledge, skills and competency descriptors, which are fully compatible with EQF descriptors and has been continually developed since. In 2011, all levels of education have been thoroughly mapped and assigned to EQF levels according to EQF descriptors. In 2016, the National Qualifications Framework for Tertiary Education was approved. But an overarching framework including existing and emerging sector frameworks has not yet been created.

The Czech education system encompasses all secondary qualifications awarded within school system. The National Register of Qualifications includes only vocational qualifications, which are qualification focused primarily on the needs of the labour market. The National Qualifications Framework for Tertiary Education comprises only qualifications awarded in tertiary education. As these paths of acquiring qualifications complement each other, a comprehensive NQF would help increase their interconnectedness and permeability.

Characteristics of the main parts of the qualification system in the Czech Republic are summarized in the table below.

<p>Qualifications obtained in formal education</p>	<p>According to the <i>Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Preschool, Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary Professional and other education (Education Act)</i> qualifications are obtained by completing a field of study that forms a part of the Czech education system.</p> <p>Adequate knowledge, skills and competences are stipulated – as a curricular standard – by the framework educational programme (a national curriculum) and complemented by a concrete school educational programme.</p> <p>On the basis of the <i>National Referencing Report</i>, all qualifications obtained by this way have a level assigned according to the EQF.</p>
<p>Vocational qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications</p>	<p>Vocational qualifications defined by qualification and assessment standards in the National Register of Qualifications (NSK) are proved according to the act of <i>Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results</i>.</p> <p>Adequate knowledge, skills and competences are stipulated by the assessment standard of the vocational qualification.</p> <p>The NSK is a framework of vocational qualifications, and therefore all vocational qualifications in the NSK have a level assigned according to the EQF.</p>
<p>Other qualifications approved on the basis of a legislative anchoring</p>	<p>Qualifications are obtained in compliance with the <i>Act No. 18/2004 Coll., on the recognition of professional qualifications and other competences of nationals of Member States of the European Union</i>, or they are anchored by another legislative regulation with an intrastate, possibly European competence.</p> <p>The legislative regulation usually determines also the way of assessment and a character of the certificate confirming an attainment of the qualification.</p> <p>These qualifications have not a qualification level determined according to the EQF.</p>

Abbreviations and acronyms

CC	Coordination council (Koordinační rada)
CG	Coordination group for NSK (Koordinační skupina pro NSK)
ESF	European Social Fund (Evropský sociální fond)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework (Evropský rámec kvalifikací)
IS NSK	NSK information system (Informační systém NSK)
ISTP	Integrated system of standardized positions (Integrovaný systém typových pozic)
MPSV	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí)
MSMT	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy)
NSK	National Register of Qualifications (Národní soustava kvalifikací)
NSK1	Abbreviation used for a systemic project <i>Development of NSK to support link between initial and further education</i>
NSK2	Abbreviation used for a systemic project <i>Development and implementation of NSK</i>
NSP	National System of Occupations (Národní soustava povolání)
NUV	National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers (Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků)
NUOV	National Institute for Vocational Education (Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání)
RVP	Framework educational programme (Rámcový vzdělávací program)
WG	Working group (Pracovní skupina)

Preparation of the report

Information sources for this report

In preparing this report various available resources related to the development of the Czech education system and the involvement of the Czech Republic in European projects and initiatives were used. They consist of mainly legal documents, summary or final reports of related projects, National Referencing Report (updated version from 2015), the outputs of national and international projects (e.g. NSP – National System of Occupations, NSK - National Register of Qualifications, Q-RAM to qualifications framework within the tertiary education and other), documents resulting from Czech participation in international professional networks (e.g. ReferNet national reports) and other relevant sources.

The following acts form the fundamental legal framework for initial, tertiary and further education, as well as for the recognition of qualifications and their referencing to the EQF:

- **Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Preschool, Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary Professional and other education, as amended** (the Education Act), which governs all education in all schools and educational institutions except for higher education institutions and education of students in state care. This act formulates the foundations and goals of education and introduces a new approach to curricula, with the possibility of creating content in individual schools in addition to the core curriculum specified by the state.
- **Act No. 111/1998 Coll., on Higher Education Institutions**, as amended, describes the goals and functions of non-vocational tertiary institutions, the role of the state and the institutions, specifies the types of institutions, their financing, the courses of study, the rights and responsibilities of students, and the status of academic staff.
- **Act No. 563/2004 Coll., on Educational Staff**, as amended, specifies the positions of staff of schools and educational institutions, the qualifications required for these positions and their further education and partially their career structure.
- **Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results** as amended (the act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - VNFIL), specifies the method of assessing competences, the rules governing the authorisation of certification bodies and the responsibilities of individual agencies involved. It established the National Register of Qualifications (NSK) containing vocational and complete vocational qualifications and their qualifications and assessment standards. This act defines a **vocational qualification** as professional qualification of a person to duly perform an occupational activity or work activities in a specific occupation, or in two or more occupations to the extent specified in the qualification standard.
- **Act No. 18/2004 Coll., on the recognition of professional qualifications and other competences of nationals of Member States of the European Union and on the amendment of some Acts** (Act on recognition of professional qualifications) implements Directive 2005/36/EC and all the principles of free movement of workers arising from EU primary law. This act defines **vocational qualifications** as the ability to perform a regulated activity that is proved particularly by the evidence of formal qualification, license or a proof of performance of the activity.

- **Laws regulating qualification requirements for certain manual professions:** e.g. The Act on Municipal Officials, on Courts and Judges, on Tax Advisers, laws governing the education of health professionals and others. These regulations often stipulate special institutions that provide training or examinations.
- **Act No. 455/1991 Coll., on business** (Trade Act) specifies the requirements necessary to meet the proficiency for the release of certain trade licenses. This applies on reporting trades (craft and regulated trades) and also licensed trades that require professional qualifications.
- **Act No. 174/1968 Coll., on State Supervision of Safety, as amended**, and regulations on technical standards that specify requirements for the competence, qualification requirements, and periodical further training and examination of workers or to ensure security in the performance of certain professions.
- **Decree No. 3/2015 Coll., on some documents on education**, establishes the obligation to make reference to the EQF level in the documents on primary, secondary and higher vocational education. Indication of the level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) will be mandatory from October 2017 on all graduation school reports, VET certificates and graduation diplomas.
- **Government Regulation No. 211/2010 Coll., on fields of studies in primary, secondary and higher vocational education**, as amended (Decree no. 367/2012 Coll., Decree no. 167/2014 Coll., Decree no. 197/2015 Coll.), establishes a system of fields of education and health conditions for those applying for education.

Other bylaws and strategic documents (approved by the Czech government) are based on the above mentioned laws and decrees; these are further elaborated and clarified as needed.

The following documents were also used as a source for this report:

- National referencing report Czech Republic (updated version 2015),
- Yearbook on development in education 2005/06 - 2015/16,
- Long-term plan for education and development of education system for the period of 2015-2020,
- New measures to promote vocational education (2013),
- Long-term plan for educational and scientific, research, development and innovation, artistic and other activities for tertiary sector for the period of 2016-2020 (updated 2016),
- selected outcomes of Q-RAM project (materials for development of tertiary qualifications framework),
- National report prepared within RNFIL project (OECD),
- National report prepared within QF Embodiment project (Leonardo da Vinci),
- selected outcomes and draft reports of NSK1 and NSK2 projects (ESF),
- selected outcomes and reports of UNIV and Pospolu projects (ESF),

- selected outcomes of „Keys for Life - Development of key competences in non-formal and informal education "and" K2 - Quality and competitiveness in non-formal education“¹ projects (ESF),
- national and thematic reports ReferNet, Eurydice etc.

¹ Both projects were implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in cooperation with the National Institute of Children and Youth Czech Republic.

Basic terms

Concepts specific for the initial education and NSK

Assessment standard for vocational qualification	A set of criteria, organizational and methodological procedures and material and technical conditions laid down for verification of achievement of proficiency to perform an occupational activity or work activities in a specific occupation, or in two or more professions (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).
Association of Adult Education Institutions	The most important association of providers of further education in the Czech Republic.
Authorizing body	Central administrative authority competent to decide on granting, renewal or withdrawal of authorization based on the fact that a mandate set out in the annex to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. belongs a profession or work, the performance of the relevant professional qualifications is concerned, or whose scope is a profession, or work activities, the closest (law definition).
Authorized person	A person or entity that has been granted authorization by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.
Central database of competences	A collection of more than 10,000 encoded professional competences, which are common to NSK and NSP.
Complete vocational qualification	Vocational competence of an individual to duly perform all activities in a certain profession (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).
Confirmer	An expert with practical experience in certain areas of the labour market, who makes comments on occupation units, vocational qualifications and other materials produced by expert teams and working groups of sector councils. Confirmers are mainly representatives of employers, but they can also be educators and representatives of authorized persons.
Coordination council	Body composed of representatives of the overarching organizations of employers and other stakeholders, which manages and coordinates the activities of the network of sector councils.
Coordination group for NSK	Coordination group for involving representatives of employers in NSK processes; it addresses strategic issues and identifies problems, which are subsequently solved by responsible management personnel of both sides.
Expert and field groups	Groups of external experts, who facilitate communication between creators of educational programmes, representatives of schools and businesses and other institutions. They enable the involvement of social partners in the development of these programmes. In terms of

	vocational education, this allows compliance between educational programmes and labour market requirements.
Expert team	A temporarily established team of experts gathered to address challenges in the field in which there is no sector council. The expert team is directly subordinate to the Coordinating council and is responsible for range and quality of activities, outputs and information dissemination.
Formal education	Education carried out within the formal education system (i.e. as a part of the official school system); it leads to a specific level of education acknowledged by some kind of officially recognized document (e.g. certificate, diploma).
Framework educational programme	Document specifying general goals of education, core competences essential for personality development of students, identifying substantive areas of education and their contents, describing expected learning outcomes and determining framework and rules for creating school education programmes and education plans.
Further education	Education carried out after one's completion of initial education and entering the labour market (usually in adulthood); It can be focused on a diverse spectrum of knowledge, skills and competences important for application in professional, civic and personal life.
Initial education	All education that takes place before one's first entry into the labour market and leads to a qualification; it consists of the compulsory education at primary schools, vocational training at secondary schools, colleges and universities.
Integrated System of Standardised Positions	(Predecessor of the National System of Occupations) - A continuously updated set of information about the world of work and tools for the use of this information. A crucial part of the system was a database of standard positions, containing information on structure, content of individual professions, salaries, required skills, education and job vacancies.
National Register of Qualifications	A publicly accessible register of all complete vocational qualifications and qualifications confirmed, differentiated and recognized in the Czech Republic (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).
National System of Occupations	Continuously developed and online available catalogue of descriptions of professions, which is a tool for increasing mobility of the workforce based on the needs of the labour market, identified by employers and experts from the labour market.
Non-formal education	Education carried out outside the formal education system (i.e. beyond the official school system); does not lead to a specific level of education;

	it may be provided in the workplace or through activities of organizations and civil society associations.
NSK information system	A portal to an information base for the system of nationally recognized vocational qualifications in the Czech Republic. It publishes information on vocational qualifications, which are approved and applicable on the labour market in the country. It informs about news and events in the area of verification and recognition of further education results in the country.
Qualification standard for vocational qualification	Structured description of professional competence of individuals necessary for a proper performance of certain work or working activities in a particular occupation or in two or more professions (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).
Sector council	<p>Sector council is a voluntary professional association, composed of representatives of delegates of prominent employers, professional associations and leading experts on human resources in given sector. Its aim is to represent interests of the sector in the human resource development in relation to government, educators, citizens and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Sector council is established by the Governing Board, the highest body in the network of sector councils. The process of establishing a new sector council is based on a proposal of the Coordinating Council.</p>
Vocational education	Professional competence of an individual to duly perform an occupational activity or work activities in a specific occupation, or in two or more occupations to the extent specified in the qualification standard (Act No. 179/2006 Coll.).
Working group (appointed by the sector council)	<p>A working group is a temporary group of experts – contractors. The purpose of creating working groups is to handle the tasks arising from activities of sector councils.</p> <p>Creating working groups is a fundamental principle of the workflow within sector councils. Working groups are formed continuously throughout the existence of the sector councils.</p>

Chapter 1. Historical context

1.1. The historical context of the institutional framework of education system

Development of national education and qualification system of the Czech Republic after 1989 is strongly associated with social and economic changes in Europe. Political changes and economic transformation of the Czech Republic after 1989 had a strong impact mainly on the Czech system of vocational education and training. After the disintegration of state owned enterprises, which were previously the main providers of training for students and employers of graduates, practical education moved mainly in school premises and laboratories. Because of rapid technological development, a number of schools has faced a quick outdated of material equipment thus failing to keep pace with rapidly evolving employers' demands on the skills of graduates.

A certain imbalance between the requirements of the employer sphere and possibilities of the educational system to satisfy these demands has led to a renewed interest of employers on cooperation with schools. It also hastened the development in the creation of a qualification system outside of the traditional formal system of school education - National Register of Qualifications (NSK). Czech Republic's involvement in international projects and initiatives has been very helpful in the process of development.

Even before joining the EU The Czech Republic was involved in European education programmes (Tempus, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe), and has shown allegiance to the European strategies and was actively involved in their formation. The Czech Republic joined the Bologna Process during its inception (in 2001 hosted a ministerial conference, in 2009 chaired the Steering Group in Bologna), has introduced a three-level structure of university studies and took other measures (Diploma Supplement, ECTS). In 1997, Czech Republic signed the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the European region. Accession of the Czech Republic to the EU in 2004 therefore did not mean a major breakthrough in the educational field, but a deepening and broadening of existing European cooperation.

Collaboration with the OECD was also important for the Czech Republic, even in the time before the admission to this organization in 1995. In the period 2003-2005, the Czech Republic joined the OECD activities "Role of national qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning." Comparison of different approaches to solving similar problems in different participating countries was very inspiring. Participation in the project meant speeding up processes in the Czech Republic leading to the development of the qualification system and resulted in the preparation of systemic project implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) with support from the ESF: Development of the National Register of Qualifications supporting links between initial and continuing education (NSK). In the field of vocational education and lifelong learning, the Czech Republic participated in two OECD activities. In 2006-2007, it focused on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (OECD RNFIL), in 2007-2010 the activity of VET OECD Review: Learning Practice (Learning for Jobs) focused on linking vocational education and labour market needs.

One of the interesting initiatives was the Czech Republic's involvement in the project SECCOMPAT² in 2008-2010. This project was focused on the research of compatibility of vocational (sectoral) qualifications in the construction and hospitality industries between Lithuania, Ireland, France, Austria and the Czech Republic. Analysis of knowledge, skills and competences of specific qualifications proved that these qualifications are comparable within the partner countries and the EQF descriptors with their structuring are useful for such comparison. The Experience in benchmarking and referencing qualifications has been summarized in the "Guidelines for the use of national qualifications frameworks and the EQF in comparison of qualifications between countries."

The Copenhagen Declaration of 2002 played an important role in the field of vocational education. All priorities and tools introduced within the Copenhagen process, which aim to enable better transparency of qualifications, and to facilitate the mobility of citizens and lifelong learning, which include the EQF (European Qualifications Framework), ECVET (European Credit System for VET), EQAVET (European quality assurance) and Europass, are being implemented in the Czech Republic (or at least their implementation is being prepared). The National Europass Centre operates in the Czech Republic since 2005 and has so far released thousands of documents – certificate supplements, Europass mobility etc.

With joining the EU, the Czech Republic signed the Lisbon strategy, and thus the concept of lifelong learning strategy. In 2007, the Czech government approved an initial programme document for this area Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2007-2015. All learning and education options and paths (in traditional educational institutions or elsewhere) are perceived as an interconnected whole, which allows transitions between education and employment and allows the obtaining of the same qualifications and competence in various ways throughout life.

By adopting the Lisbon strategy and the concept of lifelong learning Czech Republic claimed the acceptance of the principles of the common European instrument EQF. The interest in supporting the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning is illustrated by an active involvement of the Czech Republic in all related activities and initiatives, as well as by the membership of Czech experts in the advisory and working groups, set up by the European Commission. Based on the recommendations on the implementation of the EQF decided in the MSMT has decided in 2008 to establish the EQF Coordination Centre (KC EQF) in the Czech Republic as an organizational unit of the National Institute of Vocational Education in Prague (now the National Institute for Education, NUV).

The principles, on which the European Qualifications Framework was created, are to a certain extent and in different forms included in reforms, which the Czech educational and qualification system has been undergoing since 2004. The new curricula documents for elementary and secondary education, so called framework educational programmes (RVP, Rámcové vzdělávací programy) as well as qualification standards kept in the NSK are described and defined by learning outcomes. In the area of tertiary qualifications, the Czech Republic has been actively involved in the Bologna process since the beginning and has introduced (and enacted by law) a three-level degree structure (bachelor, master and doctoral programmes) even before the Bologna Declaration.

2 LLP 2007-2013: „EQF and compatibility of sectoral qualifications between the countries“ (SECCOMPAT) No. 137852-LLP-2007-LT-KA1-EQF

After joining the European Union, it was necessary to make changes in study programmes preparing students for the so-called regulated professions - e.g. Doctors, pharmacists, architects, lawyers, auditors and others, so that their diplomas could be recognized throughout the European Union (for more information on regulated profession see "Educational and qualification system in the Czech Republic").

1.2. The historical context of the institutional framework of NSK

The topic of qualification frameworks was first raised in the Czech Republic in connection with a OECD project *The role of national qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning*, 2000 – October 2005. The importance of the project is illustrated by the participation of 23 OECD member states, as well as international organizations such as Cedefop, ETF or ILO.

Czech Republic took the opportunity to use and interact with all relevant outputs of the joint solution of tasks of activity. Through National Institute for Vocational Education (NUOV – predecessor of NUV) CR has been participating since 2003 on the work of thematic group for development and the use of "qualification frameworks" as means of change and management of qualification systems.

The project enabled a comparison on solving similar problems in different participating countries, which was very inspiring. Participation in the project meant speeding up the process that resulted in the preparation of a systemic project conducted by MSMT and development of the National Register of Qualifications supporting links between initial and further education.

1.3. Important milestones in NSK development

General overview of important steps in previous development of the NSK is presented in the table, followed by detailed information.

Year	Important events and activities
2004	Active involvement in the work of thematic group <i>Development and use of "qualification frameworks" as means of change and management of qualification systems</i> in the OECD project. Preparation of a systemic project NSK1 (<i>Development of the National register of qualifications to support link between initial and further education</i>)
2005	Approval of a systemic project NSK1 and launch of creating NSK. Consultation of EQF and a national report on results of the negotiation Initiation of preparation of the act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results
2006	Approval of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

	Pilot testing of activities of sector councils
2007	Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results comes into force Discussion on the proposal of descriptors of NSK qualification levels
2008	Completion of the project NSK 1 Evaluating the proposal of involving sector councils in NSK
2009	Approval of NSK qualification levels Launch of project NSK2 (<i>Development and implementation of NSK</i>)
2010	Preparation of new concept of sector councils Processing new methodology of using NSK Launching preparation works towards the National referencing report
2011	National referencing conference Submitting to the MSMT and Czech government
2012	Amendment of the act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results Approval of the process of creating English versions of qualification standards (as a part of the project NSK2)
2013	Preparation of the English version of NSK web site Development of activities of the team of feedback consultants
2014	Proposal of the concept of implementing a foreman examination in the Czech Republic Engaging sector councils into discussing potential links of NSK and ECVET
2015	New tasks in an extended NSK2 project Processing a work task on certified sets of competences
2016	Approval and implementation of the „Proposal of implementation of the Act no. 179/2006 Coll. on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and of amendments of the act in 2015 and onwards“ Preparation of a systemic project on implementation of a foreman examination in the Czech Republic

NSK1 Project and preparation of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

The beginning of NSK was linked to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) project *Development of the national register of qualifications to support the link between initial and further education* (NSK1). The project was elaborated and presented by NUV (more precisely, by its predecessor NUOV), being approved in 2005 and implemented between April 2005 and March 2008 under the MSMT management. The general objective of the project was to contribute to improving the quality of education through validation of non-formal and informal learning. One specific goal was linking initial and further education, via development of NSK enabling the description of interaction between the qualifications in a unified, transparent and comprehensible system, accessible to all.

When drafting the NSK project, it was decided by the MSMT and NUV representatives that in the initial phase, the development of NSK would mainly focus on the general structure of NSK and its content for qualifications levels up to EQF3. The reason for this decision was led by the intention to help those candidates who could be most at risk in the labour market with the newly developed tool. Gradually, qualifications are created for higher levels according to the current employers' needs.

Simultaneously with the project, a bill for the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results was prepared. The project team suggested how the act could look like but it was only after its entry into force that validation of the results of the previous education results started. The approval of the Act specified and confirmed the role of the MSMT, NUV, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and other ministries, and the role of employers' representatives and other relevant partners as well.

MSMT and NUV have been involved in NSK development since the very beginning (preparation and implementation of the project, preparation of the bill for the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results). Another important partner was the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV), especially in relation to the development of the National System of Occupations (NSP) and consequently also in connection with the definition of the MPSV role in the Act. Other ministries are involved in the NSK as authorizing bodies as defined by the Act.

In the course of NSK elaboration, many employers' representatives have been involved in the process, namely the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic, the Chamber of Agriculture and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic. Besides them, various professional associations, guilds and sectoral groups of experts have participated in NSK development as needed. Many companies (small, large, medium-sized) are involved mainly through sector councils. The concept has been developed since 2005 (when the first NSK project was launched). While the first sector council in the Czech Republic was established in 2005, there are currently 29 sector councils working to meet the needs of most sectors. More than 1,600 representatives of employers and other professionals are involved in the work of the sector councils and the working teams that set up these councils.

The project NSK1 was complemented with another project conducted by the MSMT – UNIV, aiming at developing of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning at schools providing education for adults.

In parallel with the NSK development, the curricular reform was associated with designing and implementing a qualifications framework and other tools needed to integrate the Czech Republic into the lifelong learning.

Integrated system of standardized positions and National System of Occupations

The development of NSK was preceded by the development of the Integrated system of standardized positions (ISTP, Integrovaný systém typových pozic). ISTP was established in 1998 and has been gradually being developed since. In addition to assuming use in career counselling and guidance, the aim of its creation and development was to create a modern system to replace periodically published catalogues of occupations. ISTP was gradually built in an on-line form, which later became the basis for the creation of the National System of Occupations (NSP). This conversion was both provoked and facilitated by the emphasis on so-called "Competency approach", meaning a focus on the formulation of qualification requirements for certain profession via learning outcomes.

NSP was developed under a project launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV). The aim of the project was to create a basis for NSP and the development and implementation of mechanisms to ensure and support the network of sector councils and ensuring the functioning of this network for NSP and NSK.

As has been said in the text on NSP1 project, NSK is regulated by the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, which falls under the competence of the MSMT. The NSP development is subject to the MPSV. The link between these two systems is very close from the very beginning. Expert teams of the MPSV created a system of occupations and, after creation of job descriptions, MSMT expert teams started to develop qualification and assessment standards based on these descriptions.

The main objective of the joint development of NSP and NSK was to significantly promote the flexibility and efficiency of the labour market in the Czech Republic. The development of the NSP was focused mainly on describing what current jobs in the labour market look like - what is the scope of typical work activities and competences of employees. This concept is linked to the definition of qualifications in NSK- the competences necessary to carry out work activities in specific sectoral areas where it is appropriate for potential employees to have a recognized certificate. An important feature and main advantage of the chosen approach is that both systems NSP and NSK are internally interconnected by a single central database of competences.

The demands for the development and later implementation of the National Register of Qualifications (NSK)

The necessity to create and develop the NSK based on demands and needs identified on both national and European level.

a) Needs, requirements and main trends in the Czech Republic

- The role of qualifications as bridges between the labour market and VET
- Strengthening the partnership (education – labour market) on both the system and school levels
- Accreditation of prior learning
- The stress on quality
- Strengthening the role of further education

The necessity of the NSK development and implementation follows from a number of national documents, for example:

- *The Strategy of Lifelong Learning approved by the Czech Republic' government in 2007, and its implementation plan*
The government document in its introduction stresses, that the crucial pillar of success for the Czech Republic is especially the ability of the citizens to win recognition in the global and quickly changing labour market.
- *Act No. 179/ 2006 Coll., on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results*
The Act should motivate adults in the Czech Republic to further education, broaden their possibilities to achieve a new qualification, and enhance their employability on the labour market, as well as it should improve the response of the education system on labour market demands.
- *Decree No. 176/2009 Coll., that specify necessities of the application for an accreditation of the education programme, an organisation of education in a retraining facility and a way of its completion*
The Decree opens the door into the retraining areas for both qualification and assessment standards. It makes available descriptions of desirable qualifications confirmed by employers for a significant group of potential labour market participants.

b) Needs, requirements and main trends identified in Europe

- Reflexion of labour market needs
- Learning outcomes
- Transparency
- Mobility
- Quality
- Partnership

The necessity of the NSK development and implementation follows from some European documents, for example:

- *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*
Recommendation for Member States to create the National Qualifications Frameworks forms a part of the European document. European states are in this activity supported by possibility to share their experience up to now, to follow development in other European countries and to learn from time-tested ways of overcoming problems.
- *The conclusions of the Council on enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, in particular employers, in the context of lifelong learning – accepted during CZ PRESS 5/2009*
The planned development of the sector councils' concept was fully in compliance with the goals, contents and requirements resulted from the document.

The NSK development simultaneously fulfils other significant goals:

- It is centred on learning outcomes, it means on real skills and competences. This is a key principle of qualification standards in the NSK, moreover viewed in a systematic way through the progressively constructed “central database of knowledge, skills and competences”, which supports a good entering position of the Czech Republic into a similar European system development. The European system has been considered especially in connection with a progressive implementation of the ECVET credit system. This new European instrument (presented during the Czech EU Presidency in Prague, 2009) complementary complements the “higher education” ECTS and use “units of learning outcomes” as well. These can have a clear connection with vocational qualifications in the NSK.
- To develop mechanisms for involving employer representatives into defining descriptions of qualifications and influencing goals and contents of vocational education. This requirement had been fulfilled by the NSK development in the framework of another key principle, which was to define and describe qualifications in the network of sector councils and other teams of experts from employers’ sphere. Even the European Commission considered a constitution of “European sector councils”.

Chapter 2. National qualifications framework – basic premises

2.1. Referencing process and development of the national qualifications framework

Right from the beginning it is necessary to say that the Czech Republic does not have one coherent national qualification framework. The above mentioned NSK (National Register of Qualifications) is intended as a tool for validation of non-formal and informal learning. There are no qualifications acquired during initial school VET (both secondary and tertiary) in the NSK. Consequently, NSK is only a part of the whole VET system. Formal VET qualifications are not included in the NSK.

Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (hereinafter EQF), invites Member States to bring into the relationship their national qualification systems to the EQF levels. This process is subject to ten criteria and procedures approved by the EQF Advisory Group. One of the first steps that were taken in the Czech Republic in order to meet the defined criteria was the preparation of the national referencing report and its submission to the European Commission (see the results of the referencing process in the Czech Republic below).

So far, a national qualifications framework with a single set of descriptors describing levels of qualifications in the Czech Republic does not exist. However, the results of the referencing process were perceived in Europe as well as in the Czech Republic as a basis for further discussions on the desirability of such a framework. The performed assignment to eight levels of qualifications can be seen as a spanning (bridging) type of national qualifications framework.

2.2. Czech referencing process and its results

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) is responsible for the referencing process. The ministry established the National Coordination Point (NCP CZ), which has the responsibility for the coordination of the referencing process. The NCP is part of the NUV.

In August 2010 the MSMT approved a timetable for the referencing process, in which the procedure is detailed, including tasks for the relevant bodies. The NCP advisory group includes representatives of a number of stakeholders: social partners, other ministries, regional governments and educational institutions. Other experts and stakeholders were involved in the process of preparing and critiquing the studies conducted during the referencing process and in the editing of the national referencing report.

The Czech referencing process was based on following principles:

- emphasis on learning outcomes,
- validation of non-formal and informal learning,
- enhancing lifelong learning,
- genuine cooperation with social partners and their involvement in the referencing process,
- focus on employability, competitiveness and mobility.

The referencing report was prepared by the Czech NCP together with experts in various educational sectors, and discussed with other stakeholders. It describes the results of the Czech referencing process, respecting all the conditions set out in the Recommendation and by the EQF Advisory Group.

The report was approved by the Czech government in July 2011³.

In the 2015 another minor adjustments and clarifications were made. Indication of the level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) will from October 2017 be mandatory on all graduate school certificates, vocational certificates and graduation diplomas. This obligation is given by Decree No. 3/2015 Coll., on certain documents in education.

The national referencing report of the Czech Republic gives a general overview of the Czech education and qualification systems, describes the structure of qualifications awarded and presents the necessary evidence for their referencing to the EQF.

Qualifications acquired through formal school education and NSK (validation of non-formal and informal learning acquired outside the formal education system based on the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results) had been assigned to EQF. Analysis of the curricula for primary and secondary education and relevant documents for tertiary education (especially legal documents and documents for the accreditation of educational programmes) and NSK descriptors has shown a link between levels (types) of qualifications in the Czech Republic and the EQF levels.

The report classifies Czech qualifications into 8 levels, which are fully compatible with the EQF levels (see chart below). The chart contains both levels of qualifications acquired through formal education in the school education system (demonstrated with a final certificate, a certificate of final or graduation exam, diploma, or certificate of a professional qualification) and the qualification levels of the NSK (person is allowed to attend an exam (after fulfilling specific requirements) and obtain a professional qualification). The proposed scheme also fully respects the framework for higher education at levels 5 to 8.

³ All versions of the report (2011, 2013 a 2015) are available online. English versions from 2011 and 2013 are available at <http://www.nuv.cz/p/evropsky-ramec-kvalifikaci-eqf/publikace-a-publicita>

EQF and EHEA qualification level				Czech qualification level			
EQF level		EHEA level		KKOV level*			NSK level**
EQF descriptors	8	Dublin descriptors	3rd cycle	Diplomas and certificates awarded by tertiary institutions (excluding vocational)	V		8
	7		2nd cycle		T		7
	6		1st cycle		R	Qualifications certificates awarded under the Education Act	N, P
	5		short cycle within 1st cycle		***		5
	4				K, L, M	4	
	3				E, H	3	
	2				C, E, J	2	
	1				B	1	
						Certificates awarded under the law on the recognition of outcomes of further education, NSK descriptors	

Qualifications in secondary education were assigned to the EQF levels by comparing the results of education described in core curricula - Framework educational programmes (curricula for general secondary schools *gymnazium* (EQF4) and curricula for VET (EQF3 and EQF4)), which are anchored in legislation since 2004 and implemented gradually.

Qualifications in tertiary education can be compared with the descriptors of the EQF and the framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA QF) mainly because the definition of various educational levels/degrees is quite broad and general. The EQF levels 6 to 8 were recognized as compatible with first to third cycle qualifications framework for the EHEA.

The results of the reference process are perceived by all parties as a basis for further discussions about the need for a national qualifications framework, which would be endowed with one set of common descriptors, describing levels of all qualifications awarded in the Czech Republic. The referencing process outlined possible future developments in the area of convergence of both established and emerging qualification frameworks for individual educational areas and forms a foundation for a bridging type of national qualifications framework. Its explicit establishment and development will be the subject of further discussions and decisions.

Chapter 3. Institutional setting

3.1. Education system in the Czech Republic

The basic principles governing the education in the Czech Republic, are contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the constitutional order of the Czech Republic. General regulation of education is provided by laws that are listed in the section “Preparation of the reports”. More detailed regulations relating to specific issues relating to education include decrees and some matters are regulated by Government regulations. All laws (acts) are published in the Collection of Laws.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) is responsible for concepts, current condition and development of the educational system, it issues internal regulations published in the *Bulletin of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports*. In areas relating to the labour market and counselling MSMT cooperates with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and in some matters with other central government authorities (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Health).

The education system in the Czech Republic is (based on the principle of lifelong learning) divided into two stages, denoted as initial and further education. The initial education in the Czech Republic consists of kindergarten, primary school, secondary school (gymnasium, secondary vocational schools), conservatoires, higher vocational schools and universities. Further education occurs after completion of initial education and entering the learner into the labour market. Further education can emphasize a diverse spectrum of knowledge, skills and competences important for application in professional, civic and personal life.

After completing compulsory schooling, 96% of the population continue in upper secondary education. Students attend secondary schools generally at the age between 15 to 18 years. Czech Republic is among the countries with a high number of graduates of upper secondary education (EQF level 3 or higher). Compared with other OECD countries, Czech Republic belongs to the best ones. OECD statistics show that 95% of the population aged 25-34 (data from 2014) in the Czech Republic acquire this level of education. In 2014 there were 72% of people with upper secondary education in the 25-64 age group in the Czech Republic.

Secondary education is richly differentiated system guaranteeing education and vocational training for almost the entire population of young people who have completed their compulsory education and pre-employment or before entering college. A smaller share goes to schools providing general education, which offer also four-year study programmes (on top of the above mentioned eight- and six year programmes), 22.5% of primary school graduates entered a higher level of *gymnazium* in the academic year 2015/16). A larger proportion of students visit vocational (professional) schools (36% in four-year programmes completed by graduation exam, 30% in two- to three year programmes completed by an apprentice exam), or at lyceums and conservatoires.⁴

⁴ The development of educational and sectoral structure of pupils and students in secondary and higher vocational education in the Czech Republic and Czech regions and the status of young people in the labour market compared with the European Union - 2015/16. NUV 2016.

Pupils with special educational needs can, after completing compulsory schooling, continue at two-year schools (Practical School), which provide secondary education (EQF2), or at schools offering secondary education (without a VET certificate or school-leaving examination, also at EQF2). For pupils with disabilities two- and three-year courses are established, providing secondary education with a VET certificate (EQF3). They are designed with lower demands in both general and vocational education. Graduates are prepared to perform simple work tasks mostly as manual workers.

Regarding the attractiveness of vocational education, the Czech Republic recorded a long-term decline in interest in vocational education in general, and in particular the decline of interest in the study in programmes with a VET certificate (EQF3) in favour of those study programmes where it is possible to obtain a graduation *maturita* certificate (EQF4). Despite this unfavourable development, the vocational education represents essential part of the Czech educational system (visited by more than 72% of the population after the end of compulsory schooling - see table). The total number of pupils in study programmes with *maturita* (EQF4) is increasing and in the academic year 2015/16 their share was 68.96%.

Type of study programme	2005/06	2010/11	2015/16	decline 2005/06-2010/11		decline 2010/11-2015/16		decline 2005/06-2015/16	
Number of students (without gymnasium)	447 184	416 964	314 086	-30 220		-102 878		-133 098	
Secondary education	2 381	2 107	2 201	-274	-11,5	94	4,5	-180	-7,6
Secondary education with VET certificate	136 603	108 529	91 841	-28 074	-20,6	-16 688	-15,4	-44 762	-32,8
Secondary education with <i>maturita</i>	248 761	240 009	184 583	-8 752	-3,5	-55 426	-23,1	-64 178	-25,8
Follow-up study programmes	45 255	43 207	20 437	-2 048	-4,5	-22 770	-52,7	-24 818	-54,8
Lyceum	14 184	23 112	15 024	8 928	62,9	-8 088	-35,0	840	5,9
Number of students of gymnasiums⁵	101 491	97 914	87 550	-3 577		-10 364		-13 941	
Ratio of students of secondary schools and gymnasium	22,7	23,5	27,9	0,8		4,4		5,2	

Adapted from Statistical Yearbook Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports - Developmental Yearbook of Education 2005/06 - 2015/16.

⁵ Includes only students of 4-year programmes and students of higher levels of 6- and 8-year programmes

The most frequent forms of obtaining secondary vocational qualifications in the Czech Republic are:

a) secondary education with a VET certificate preparing graduates primarily to enter the labour market; usually a three year programme (EQF3)

b) secondary vocational education with *maturita* certificate preparing graduates to enter the labour market as well as to continue on higher levels of education, usually a four year programme (EQF4).

Graduating a three-year vocational programmes (EQF3) with a VET certificate allows the graduates to enter directly the labour market and perform manual labour, crafts and related occupations (e.g. bricklayer, carpenter, plumber, electrician, mechanic, salesman, chemist, baker, tailor, bookbinder, hairdresser). These programmes are mostly offered at secondary vocational schools (SOU, *střední odborná učiliště*). Graduates of upper secondary education with a VET certificate may continue in a two-year follow-up courses (EQF4), which ends with a final exam, opening the way to higher education, or extend their qualifications in shorter study programmes. Secondary vocational schools also offer a small number of four-year programmes (EQF4).

Four-year vocational study programmes finished with *maturita* certificate (EQF4) are usually offered in secondary vocational schools (SOŠ, *střední odborné školy*) and enable the graduates to enrol colleges/universities or work in technical, administrative or similar mid-level occupations (e.g. Mechanic for machinery and equipment, Chemist operator, Garment technician, Trader, Photographer). Some study programmes have a broader concept and their name does not match a particular profession, but to the whole set of professionals in the sector (e.g. Metallurgy, Electronics, Construction, Printing, Clothing, Hospitality, Social work, Information Technology). Secondary vocational education is also offered in educational programmes of lyceums (EQF4) with a high proportion of general education (up to 70% of the curriculum), these prepare graduates especially for university studies. Graduation examination, *maturita*, obtained at any type of school, entitles the student to apply for admission to tertiary education.

Currently, a possibility of obtaining a VET certificate (EQF3) and *maturita* certificate (EQF4) within the vocational education programme of 4 years is being pilot tested. Students can take the final exam (EQF3) at the end of the third year of the educational programme and successful graduates will receive a VET certificate, which confirms obtaining appropriate vocational qualifications. Then they continue to study the programme and at the end of the fourth year attempt to pass the *maturita* exam (EQF4). The aim of introducing these programmes is to improve the position of graduates in the labour market, while preventing situations, when students who fail at *maturita* examination after four years of studies, went to the labour market without any qualification.

It is also possible to obtain another vocational qualification of the same or lower level, which one already has. This is the case of so called shortened educational programme, either for acquiring secondary education with a VET certificate (EQF3) or the *maturita* certificate (EQF4). Studies last for 1-2 years. This option is particularly suitable for adults who wish to extend their skills and qualifications.

3.2. Qualifications framework for tertiary education in the Czech Republic

The characteristics of various educational levels / degrees in tertiary education in the Czech Republic are determined primarily by the relevant legislation. All tertiary education programmes must be approved in accordance to a type of school, either by the Accreditation Commission (for universities) or the Accreditation Commission for Higher Education. According to the rules of the accreditation process, universities define the education process through the content of individual courses as well as through the general characteristics of the study and a graduate profile.

Accreditation Commission in its "Standards for accreditation applications, extensions accreditation and prolongation of accreditation of study programmes and their branches" encourages expression of "graduate profile" and "learning objectives" in the categories of 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'competence'. This triad has not yet been applied across the board to all universities. Consistent implementation of this approach by the Accreditation Committee helps ensure that universities and higher vocational schools are increasingly using description of the qualifications submitted for accreditation on learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes in tertiary education are formulated differently than in the RVP and NSK. The difference of terminology used, is mainly based on different conceptualizations of tertiary education. Documents relating to tertiary education distinguish professional knowledge, professional skills and general competence. Knowledge and skills are tied to a narrower focus on the industry, while the competences of a more general nature. Knowledge and skills are explicitly linked. Using factual and theoretical knowledge in the field is referred to as skill. Subsequent use of the expertise and skills in a particular context, which is defined by the degree of autonomy and accountability, as well as the degree of complexity of the environment, is described as a general competence. The general competence includes the formation of judgment, communication skills, including communication in a foreign language, the ability to further education, etc.

Recently approved National Qualifications Framework for tertiary education in the Czech Republic (July 2016) works consistently with learning outcomes in the categories of vocational knowledge, vocational skills and general competence. Methodological bases for the development of the qualifications framework for tertiary education in the Czech Republic were created in the project Q-RAM (2009-2012), with representatives of Czech universities and foreign opponents as members of the project team. Q-RAM project created a qualifications framework with four levels - besides the Bachelor (EQF6), Master (EQF7) and doctoral levels (EQF8), it also described the potential of short-cycle programmes (EQF5). Description of general learning outcomes obtained by graduates of different levels was approved by the MSMT in 2012. In the same year, the project went through international evaluations, which confirmed the quality of work and compliance of the framework with EQF and QF-EHEA.

In the years 2015 - 2016, the Q-RAM project outputs were used as a basis for the review and preparation of the updated framework of tertiary education of the Czech Republic. National Qualifications Framework for higher education consistently follows the European initiative in terms of categorization and definition of tertiary education qualifications using description of learning outcomes. The generality of the Framework does not limit the freedom of creating study programmes, but at the same time it provides a minimum standard. The use of learning outcomes as a tool to describe the level of tertiary studies also creates the conditions for wider usage at universities, which

may have a direct impact on quality of teaching. It can thus become an essential regulatory tool for tertiary education.⁶

Creating a qualifications framework in tertiary education is of great importance both for the universities (it expresses a common understanding among members of the academic community) and social partners and other stakeholders at national and international level (employers in the Czech Republic and abroad, potential applicants, foreign universities etc.). The framework contributes to the transparency of the education system and the mutual trust between the actors at all levels.

Approval of the national qualifications framework in tertiary education and its link with the system of quality assurance is a necessary condition for the fulfilment of international obligations of the Czech Republic to the Bologna process and the European Union. By signing the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the Czech Republic pledged to introduce a national qualifications framework and connect it with the overarching QF EHEA. The Department of tertiary education at the MSMT plans to complete this process in the future by the so called self-certification of the national qualifications framework, i.e. by demonstrating the compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework in tertiary education towards the overarching QF-EHEA. This task arises from the Long term strategic plan for tertiary education for the period 2016-2020⁷ (updated 2016).

National qualifications framework for tertiary education should also become part of a comprehensive national qualifications framework (covering all levels of education), which will be interconnected at the European level by associating them to the EQF levels.

Higher vocational education has a special position, which is still based on the level EQF6, but it not part of the qualifications framework for tertiary education in the Czech Republic. When assessing the development strategy of higher vocational education, it is necessary to take into account a large extent of uncertainties concerning the objectives, the status of the system and the potential for further development at the national and regional levels, to the unclear relationship and ties to the tertiary education. The higher vocational schools have been dealing with all of the above mentioned issues and to an extent have limited the adoption of any specific strategic plans.

3.3. National and international context of NSK development

Because initial formal education in the Czech Republic basically works well (including an initial vocational education for all levels and fields of initial qualifications), any other or further education is always rather "complement". It's either by providing a "second chance", or by maintaining and further developing and updating on modifications and changes of the already acquired initial qualification.

The concept of initial secondary general and vocational education in the Czech Republic carries out that:

- the Czech Republic does not have significant problems with illiteracy or functional adult illiteracy;

⁶ Involvement of the Qualifications Framework of tertiary education in the processes of accreditation and external evaluation can be used as a specific expression of requirements for quality of the tertiary education.

⁷ Long-term plan for the educational, research, development and innovation, artistic and other creative activities of tertiary education for the period 2016-2020.

- education as a "second chance" and the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning are in the Czech Republic (for Czech citizens and foreigners resident) mostly as compensation (each individual acquires raw skills and foundation for lifelong learning).

Employers have the right to make decisions on required entry qualification, incl. its possible expansion or modification, except for regulated professions and other regulated activities. Further education and learning largely takes place through all of appropriate forms - according to the needs of individuals and / or requests by their current or potential future employers. Namely, as an informal learning in practice and / or informal education, internal corporate or external in various educational institutions, or as formally recognized further training.

Activities of field groups and sector councils

From the perspective of vocational education and considering the attention VET is receiving from the European Union, the Czech Republic has an exceptionally important partnership built since 1998 within the project of field groups. Field groups are currently coordinated at NUV on behalf of and with the continued support from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT). Their primary task is to promote, maintain and develop effective communication among creators of educational programmes of vocational education in with all relevant partners the Czech Republic.

Sector councils represent a completely new type of instrument, which began to operate on a national level during the project NSK1 and which has the potential to affect the overall development and definition of professions and qualifications in the Czech Republic. The concept of sector councils is inspired by the successful British project "Sector Skills Councils".

Detailed information on field groups and sector councils are given further on.

3.4. NSK as a national register of qualifications

The National Register of Qualifications, NSK, is a public register of vocational and complete vocational qualifications and their qualifications and assessment standards. Part of the NSK is a system of qualification levels, whose eight levels correspond to the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The development of the framework and the register for vocational qualifications can be seen as a key instrument in the national strategy for lifelong learning⁸ aiming at accessibility of lifelong learning and a more permeable education and training system. The main elements of this strategy, reflecting identified and agreed needs, are as follows:

- making the whole system more transparent and understandable for all stakeholders, e.g. learners and employers, employees, training providers;
- linking initial and continuing education;
- developing a system for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes, irrespective of the way they were achieved;

⁸ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2007). *The strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic* is available at http://www.msmt.cz/uploads/Zalezitosti_EU/strategie_2007_EN_web_jednostrany.pdf (08.07.2011)

- systematically involving of all stakeholders in vocational education and training and in the development of national qualifications;
- responding to European initiatives such as making qualifications more transparent and supporting the mobility of learners and workers;
- supporting disadvantaged groups and people with low qualification levels.

In 2009 a new project The NSK Development and Implementation (NSK2) was started, it was implemented by the National Institute for Education and is also partially funded by the ESF.

This system is underpinned by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. Vocational qualifications are drafted by employers and are based on description of occupations as created and accessible in the National System of Occupations. Employers are grouped in sector councils, which are coordinated by a consortium of the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic and Trexima, a consultation company.

Institutional framework for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic

Function/process	(Type of) Institution responsible
Qualification and assessment standards	Approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Developed by the sector councils. Sector councils bring together: employers' and employees' representatives as well as the National Institute for Education (NUV), the National Council for qualifications, relevant ministries. The sector councils are expected to be proactive in suggesting what new standards are needed and where standards should be updated.
Conception of the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning processes	Ministry of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute for Education. The process and responsibilities of different institutions are defined in the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.
Assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (based on the standard) – for vocational qualifications	Authorised institutions – these can be schools, private institutions, companies as well as persons (for example a craftsman can become an authorised person). Some assessment standards require the presence of a jury (two or three people). In line with the assessment standard and the specified mode of assessment, the authorised persons are responsible to choose the most

	appropriate assessment methods, context, tools as well as the exact definition of the assessment (i.e. the formulation of the question or the assignment, etc.).
Assessment of non-formal and informal learning (based on the standard) – for complete vocational qualifications	Schools only. In line with the regulation and specifications for the specific full qualification. Note: final examinations for VET qualifications at upper-secondary level are all defined nationally and the same examination applies to regular students as well as to people who have achieved vocational qualifications within the NSK system but have not participated in the full formal educational programme.
Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for vocational qualifications	The certificate is delivered by the authorised person or the jury. The No. Act 179/2006 Coll. specifies what information has to figure on the certificate.
Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for complete vocational qualifications	Only schools can award complete vocational qualifications – these are the same certificates as those awarded by schools to people who have achieved the qualification through formal education and training.
Quality assurance of the process	The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. stipulates the requirements regarding documentation and archiving of proceedings Appeals procedure: the applicants can request the authorised bodies to review the process.
Giving licence to authorised persons/institutions	This is done by authorised bodies who are the ministries under which the given vocational qualification falls (there are currently six ministries concerned – the Ministries of Regional Development, Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Home Affairs, Education, and Transport). Authorisation is linked to a specific vocational qualification and is valid for the period of five years. Those interested to become authorised persons/institutions need to request authorization. The process is set in the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.
Monitoring and expertise for the overall approach	National Institute for Education.

National context of NSK development

National Register of Qualifications (NSK) is based on the National System of Occupations (NSP) and has a significant impact on the educational programmes of initial and continues vocational education.

The link between NSK and study programmes of initial education is rather loose, the bond between and study programmes of further education is tighter. Training modules and programmes aiming at acquiring necessary qualifications are developed based on qualification standards of vocational qualifications.

A well-qualified work force is vital to economic competitiveness. It is important people enter the labour market with qualifications which correspond to the needs of employers.

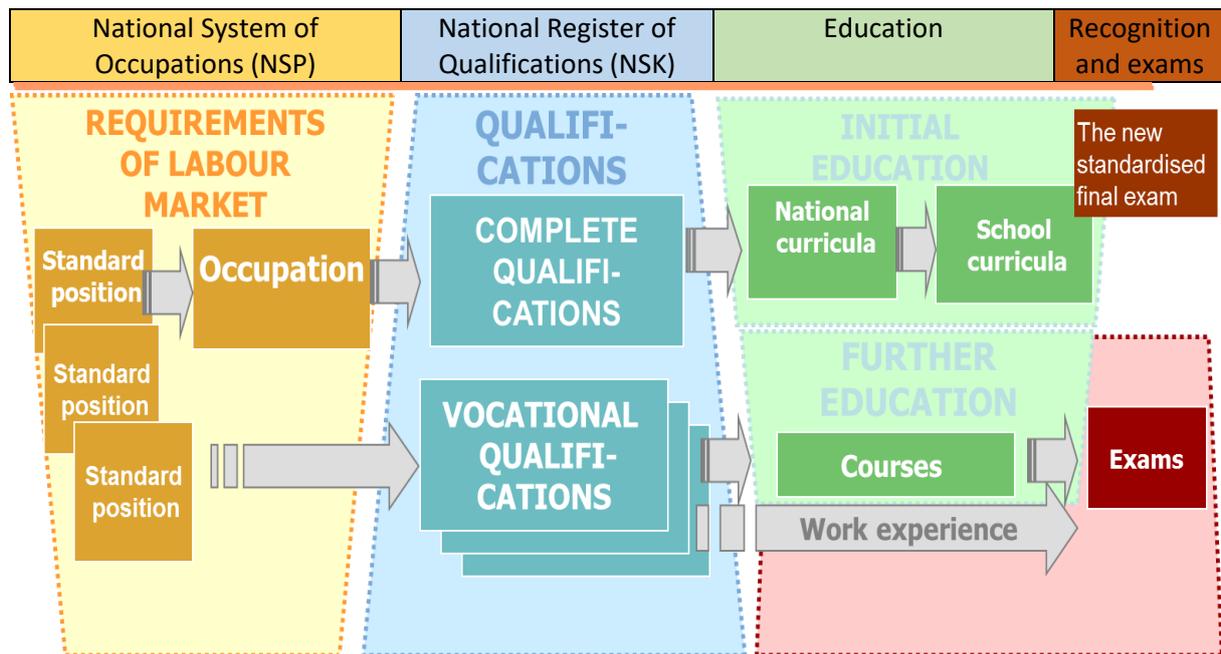
The rapid pace of technological change, changes in the division of labour, the development of new goods and services, globalisation and the accompanying shifts in production all require workers to continually update and further develop the knowledge, skills and competences they acquired in initial education.

This has two important corollaries:

- The starting point for the NSK must be the needs of the labour market. These are reflected in the National System of Occupations.
- The NSK qualifications standards are used in the development of national secondary education curricula and for retraining programmes.

As has been said in Chapter 1, the link between NSK and NSP is very tight. Both occupations and smaller work units in the NSP, and vocational and complete vocational qualifications in the NSK are described by competences, which are part of one common competences database. MPSV expert teams create a system of occupations by means of job descriptions and, after job descriptions are created, expert teams appointed by the sector councils start to develop qualification and assessment standards for required sector qualifications based on these job descriptions.

The following diagram illustrates the relations among the National System of Occupations (NSP), the National Register of Qualifications (NSK) and education:



Vocational qualifications have a key role in continuing education. If standards for a qualification exist, accreditation to an educational programme in further education is granted only to those that lead to exams as stipulated by the standards for the relevant qualification.

3.5. Accountability for management of NSK

The Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results (the act on VNFIL) specifies the responsibilities and competencies of all relevant stakeholders:

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports shall coordinate the activities of central administration bodies, approve, amend, repeal and publish the list of complete vocational and vocational qualifications broken down according to the competencies of authorising bodies, approve, amend and repeal qualification standards and assessment standards and support the activities of the Board materially and financially;
- Authorizing bodies (other relevant ministries) decide on granting authorisation to an applicant who is legally entitled to be granted authorisation provided that he/she satisfies all conditions for granting authorisation, monitor exams, maintain records stipulated by the law and provide them to the National Institute for Education and participate in preparing qualification standards and assessment standards.
- Authorized bodies (schools, associations, firms, public or private providers of continuing education etc.) assess learning outcomes of learners (exam applicants) regardless of the method they were obtained.
- Stakeholders (chambers of employers, associations, representatives of schools and universities) participate in preparing qualification and assessment standards.

- National Board for Qualifications is an advisory body of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the area of qualifications.
- National Institute for Education administers the information system NSK and in cooperation with the National Board for Qualifications, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and other stakeholders prepares qualification and assessment standards, submits them to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for approval and publishes them on the NSK information system.

Process managing and decision making in generating vocational qualification standards in the NSK framework

Process of generating and approving standards for qualifications consists of the following steps:

a)

Employers' representatives decide by consensus on the required qualifications. The sector councils then form working groups of experts who are asked to formulate proposed standards for these qualifications.

b)

The experts formulate uniformly structured qualifications on the basis of the Guidelines for Inclusion of Qualifications Standards in the NSK. These Guidelines contain rules for assigning individual qualifications to qualification levels and also descriptors for these levels. On the basis of these rules and descriptors, the experts then assign to each qualification which they generate, levels for the individual competences and for the qualification as a whole.

c)

The proposed standard is then evaluated by the sector council, including an evaluation of its proposed level. The qualification level is also evaluated by the council member from the NUV, who checks conformity with the Guidelines.

d)

The proposed qualification level is also evaluated in the course of the approval process:

Consensus that a qualification is required.
Setting up of a committee of experts.

Employers' representatives

Proposal of a qualification standard, with levels for the competences and an overall level.	Working group of experts formed by sector council
Approval of the proposed standard and its level by employers.	Sector council, National Institute for Education
State approval of the standard and its level.	Authorising body (relevant responsible ministry) Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Chapter 4. Types and legal status of qualifications included in the NQF

Three types of standards were enshrined in legislation in the Czech Republic, all of them being in compliance with the European concept of lifelong learning:

Occupational standards	Education/training standards	Assessment standards
As so called qualification standards (according to the Act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning)	As so called framework educational programmes acting as curricula standards (according to the Education Act)	As so called assessment standards (according to the Act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning and the Education Act)

Based on studies, sector councils processed job descriptions, which have the character of "occupational standards". These are then the basis for the creation of qualification standards. Education, specifically "curriculum" standards as a framework educational programmes reflect, especially in the vocational/qualifying part, what is the content of qualification standards. Assessment standards according to the Act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning are part of NSK, assessment standards according to the Education Act have a character of Unified final examination.

Occupational standards are created by sector councils, development of curricula standards is supported by field groups.

4.1. Basic characteristic of vocational qualifications in the NSK

Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, as amended (the act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - VNFIL) established the National Register of Qualifications (NSK) containing vocational and complete vocational qualifications and their qualifications and assessment standards.

The Act distinguishes between two types of qualification:

- complete (comprehensive) vocational qualifications - ability to work in a particular occupation,
- vocational qualifications - the ability to perform particular activities or groups of activities which lead to employability in the labour market (e.g. assembly of furniture, installation of elevators, sport massage, flower arrangement, ice cream making etc.). Vocational qualifications can be part of complete vocational qualification.

The procedures for awarding of vocational and complete vocational qualifications are specified by the Act. Each vocational qualification is described by a pair of standards, a qualification standard (a list of expected units of learning outcomes) and an assessment standard (set of evaluation criteria):

- Qualification standard (kvalifikační standard) is a list of the skills required for a specific work activity or activities in a particular occupation. These are the skills which are required for the relevant qualification. In other words, it is a set of competences, whose acquirement must on demonstrate at an exam.

- Assessment standard (hodnotící standard) is a list of criteria and procedures for validating the skills required in a particular occupation. It describes how to verify that the candidate possesses the skills required for the qualification. It is a detailed description of ways of validating competences described in the assessment standard.

4.2. Validation and recognition of learning outcomes

The NSK provides a collection of standards, allowing the objective verification (validation) and recognition of abilities.

Vocational qualifications are awarded according to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. by authorized bodies in accordance with the relevant assessment standards. Authorized bodies must have a representative who is a physical person. Conditions for the granting of authorization are governed by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and are of two kinds:

- Requirements regarding the professional competence of the authorized body or its representative
- Requirements regarding material and technical equipment of the authorized body.

Every organisation which wishes to conduct evaluations for a particular qualification must request approval from the authorizing body, which must be an agency of the Czech government, either a ministry or the Czech National Bank according to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., listed for that qualification in the NSK: (www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz).

Information on authorization requests is provided on the web pages of authorizing bodies. Authorizing bodies evaluate whether an applicant meets the conditions of the assessment standard and either grants or rejects the application accordingly.

A list of authorized bodies, including contact information, is included in the NSK web page along with each vocational qualification in the NSK, where authorization has been granted. Applicants for qualifications can then apply to individual authorized bodies for evaluation.

At the examination the applicant must demonstrate all the competences listed in the qualifications standard according to the criteria in the assessment standard. In case of success, he or she is awarded the vocational qualification.

The awarding of complete qualifications can take place in various ways:

- Under the Education Act, i.e., by graduation from a programme of study on successful completion of the examination required by the Act, e.g. the matura examination or the final examination for obtaining a VET certificate .
- Under the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., in one of the following ways:
 - by acquiring the corresponding vocational qualifications and then completing the examination for the corresponding programme of study, where such exists;
 - by acquiring the corresponding qualifications after having already acquired a qualification at the same level in initial education, where no programme of study corresponds to the complete qualification sought.

Vocational qualification certificate is a nationwide valid certificate that contains personal data of the applicant, authorized body data, the exam report and a list of verified and validated competences. The certificate and the exam report are stored as required by the law on archiving.

4.3. Qualifications outside of the NSK recognized on a labour market

In 2015 sector councils were addressed with the intention to map the existing certificates of qualifications that apply and are recognized in the labour market and stand outside of the NSK.

After the agreement with the main actors the sector councils were assigned a task to help create conditions for the future validation and recognition of parts of vocational qualifications based on certificates acquired otherwise than under NSK. The Czech qualifications framework would be the superstructure above NSK making this all possible.

Mapping qualifications recognized in the labour market - description of the task, process and outcomes

The task assigned to the NSK2 research team assumed some form of involvement of sector councils. Therefore, the actual assignment was preceded by consultations with representatives of employers consortium, in which the goal of the task was discussed as well as the possibilities of involving the outcomes in activities related to the referencing process in the country. Current status of the assignment approved in 2011 by the Czech government, is described in the scheme in Chapter 2, chapter *Referencing process and development of the national qualifications framework*.

The main focus of the task was on those qualifications recognized in the labour market that are not marked in the scheme because they are not acquired under the Education Act, nor under the Higher Education Act and they are not a part of the NSK either.

Sector councils were assigned the task in May 2015.

Certificates were allocated to one, in a few cases, to more sector councils. Foreign language certificate were listed as a separate group.

Certificates assigned to more sector councils were marked as *cross-sector*.

Sector councils also described whether the certificate is recommended in the sector or mandatory by law.

Total number of 602 certificates was identified.

102 of them have a status of recommended in the sector and 221 are mandatory by law.
67 certificates are cross-sector and can be used at several sectors.

4.4. Regulated professions and activities

Performance of certain professions is subject to a number of criteria and conditions (e.g. Level of education, experience, integrity, physical fitness, liability insurance for damage caused by carrying out

the activity, etc.); without respecting these it is not allowed to perform such professions. These occupations are collectively called **regulated professions or activities**.

It is a responsibility of each member state to determine which occupations and activities will be regulated. As a consequence, each member state regulates a different number of occupations and activities, has a different scope of this regulation and different requirements. Czech Republic regulates ca 330 occupations and professional activities. Information on regulated professions in the Czech Republic (including the required education, experience and other qualifications and relevant recognition authority) are published in the Database of regulated professions and activities of the Czech Republic. The database currently contains about 330 regulated professions and professional activities (2016). This number is constantly changing in relation to changes to performance requirements for a specific occupation enshrined in legislation or other subordinate legislation.

Requirements for these jobs and professional activities are determined by the level of educational attainment. The EQF terminology is not used in the database. Since the Czech Republic referenced its education and qualifications systems to the EQF (see "Czech referencing process and its results"), it is possible to "convert" these requirements into the language of the EQF and assign the appropriate EQF level to the regulated professions included in the database. Examples of these professions are Pyrotechnic (EQF2), Machinist hoist (EQF3), Mining designer (EQF4), Biotechnical assistant (EQF6), Optometrist (EQF6), Radiological technician (EQF6), Pharmacist (EQF7).

If a person is interested in joining a business, the requirements for a profession are usually looser, featured spectrum EQF level is wider for each profession (e.g. Social services workers, required levels EQF2-EQF6; Teacher's assistant, required levels EQF2-EQF7; Catering, required levels EQF3-EQF7; Tinnery and body repair, required levels EQF3-EQF7; Installation, repair, inspection and testing of electrical equipment, required level EQF3-EQF7; Property and personal security, required levels EQF4-EQF7; Recruiters, required level EQF4-EQF7; Phytopatologists, required levels EQF7-EQF8). In some cases, the required level of education is not determined, e.g. Management of a driving school (governed by the specific instruments, requires 1 year experience).

If one intends to become a professional in a regulated business area in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to ask for the validation and recognition of the professional qualification by the competent recognition authority in the Czech Republic. If the profession is not regulated, a person is entitled to perform such profession without a need of validating and recognizing this qualification. Whether it will carry out the profession, depends on agreement with a potential employer.

The general regulation for the recognition of professional qualifications is the Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the recognition of professional qualifications and other competences of nationals of Member States of the European Union and on the amendment of some Acts (Act on recognition of professional qualifications) implements Directive 2005/36/EC and all the principles of free movement of workers arising from EU primary law.

The recognition authority entitled to decide in a specific case for the recognition of professional qualifications in the Czech Republic is the central administrative authority of the Czech Republic, whose remit includes regulated profession or the scope of the regulated profession in the next (different ministries, chambers, etc.). In case the applicant intends to carry on a regulated activity as an entrepreneur or as an agent of the holder of a trade authorization, the recognition authority is the

Ministry of Industry and Trade. In case the permission to perform a regulated activity according to special legal regulation is given by a professional chamber, this chamber is also the recognition authority.

A certificate of professional competence serves as one of base documents for the request for recognition of a vocational qualification. It must be submitted to the competent recognition authority so that the applicant could carry on a regulated activity for which he is qualified. The recognition authority in the Czech Republic will issue a certificate upon request. Most often, the applications for a certificate of competence are issued by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Czech Chamber of Certified Engineers and Technicians.

Development of legislation on the recognition of professional qualifications brought several ways to allow EU citizens to perform a profession for which they are qualified in another member state. The most common way of recognition of qualifications is a general system for the recognition of professional qualifications. An exception from this system constitutes recognition of professional experience (covering mostly handicrafts), sectoral profession and lawyers.

Professional practice may be recognized for activities, which are listed in Annex IV of Directive 2005/36/EC. Various lists of this Annex differ in combinations and time, how long must the applicant work in the relevant occupation in his/her home country as self-employed, or in a managerial position, in terms of meeting the criteria for recognizing the qualification. In the Czech Republic different conditions than the general system apply, according to Section 18 of Act No. 18/2004/Coll. Generally, it is often crafts in fields of construction, transportation and others.

The provisions of § 36b of the Act No. 18/2004 Coll. regulates the institute of **verification of vocational qualifications** (or a preliminary check of qualifications), which is an implementation of Article 7.4 of Directive 2005/36/EC. According to the directive, it is possible for the recognition authority to verify vocational qualifications prior to the first provision of services only if the profession has implications for public health or safety, and at the same time does not use automatic recognition.

Directive 2005/36/EC establishes minimum requirements for the **performance of selected sector occupations** (i.e. those professions are not regulated by internal regulations of member states). Directive in Annex V specifically appoints individual study fields and faculties, which are accepted and recognized by all member countries, as well as so-called *reference date*, i.e. the date since when the study programmes have been harmonized with European standards (i.e. the reference date of the Czech Republic is May 1st 2004). If a graduate of a programme for one of the sectoral professions graduated from the faculty (or obtained a certificate/diploma) mentioned in this Annex and began the study after the reference date, the qualification should be automatically recognized, in order to legally perform this profession.

In the Czech Republic this adjustment applies to workers in seven sectoral professionals who can benefit from the highest possible degree of harmonization required study programmes and practices preparing individuals to perform these professions. These are the following professions:

- doctor, dentist, pharmacist (based on Act No. 95/2004 Coll., on conditions for obtaining and recognition of professional qualifications for pursuing the medical professions of doctor, dentist and pharmacist);
- nurse, midwife (based on Act No. 96/2004 Coll., On paramedical professions);
- veterinarian (based on Act No. 166/1999 Coll., On veterinary care);
- architect (based on Act No. 360/1992 Coll., On Professional Practice of Certified Architects and on the Professional Practice of Certified Engineers and Technicians in construction).

The recognition of vocational qualifications in selected professions can be applied for from January 18, 2016 through **European professional card** (EPC⁹). The EPC can be requested if the applicant has the following qualifications: a nurse (responsible for general care); pharmacist; physiotherapist; mountain guide; real estate agent (the profession is not regulated in the Czech Republic).

A separate legal regulation exists for two professions; lawyer (regulation of the profession is governed by Act no. 85/1996 Coll., On advocacy and so called "Specialist Directive" 98/5/EC), auditor (regulation of the profession is governed by Act No. 254/2000 Coll. on auditors, Directive 2006/43/EC).

4.5. Legal status of non-formal sector qualifications

Non-formal and informal learning include many disparate activities that have a hobby or professionally specialized character. All leisure and occupational activities going beyond formal schooling fall in this category. During these activities, people mostly unconsciously educate themselves, learn a whole new set of knowledge, skills and competences. Some competences go beyond professional qualifications, they are cross-sectional (e.g. driver's license, PC skills, use of information technology, management groups), other can be added in the system of existing vocational qualifications described in the NSK (e.g. Software designers, Aerobics instructor, Coordinator of volunteers, Mountain guide, Sommelier, Production of desserts and cakes). NSP contains several standardized positions in the field of sport and physical education, which do not have their equivalents in the NSK (Wellness specialist, Dance instructor, Animator of leisure time activities etc.).

In the Czech educational system basic conditions have been created for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning/education and their possible inclusion in the future National qualifications framework of the Czech Republic. These are mainly legislative framework of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, as well as existing tools and structure for describing qualifications (i.e. knowledge, skills and competences) acquired during formal education, and validation and recognition of the results of formal education (NSP, NSK).

Initiatives related to the implementation of procedures for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning/education recommended by the European Commission fit appropriately in this context. Partial steps were already taken related to elaboration of some vocational qualifications in hobby and voluntary sectors and their integration into the NSP and NSK (including the assignment of appropriate EQF level according to descriptors). This has launched preparation and development of some other vocational qualifications in hobby and voluntary sectors, which are in demand on the Czech

⁹ EPC is an on-line process enabling a validation of a qualification in EU member states.

labour market. In the future, other necessary qualifications will be then added in the NSK and assign to EQF levels.

NSK plays a vital role during validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It allows candidates to obtain a professional qualification to pass an examination and obtain the necessary qualifications. For these purposes, the MSMT as an authorizing body establishes so called authorised bodies, accredited to provide vocational examinations and certification. The first steps have been made in the context of creation of NSK qualification standards for selected professions in hobby and voluntary (non-profit) sector.

4.6. Qualifications obtained in hobby and voluntary sector

Validation and recognition of learning outcomes in hobby and voluntary sector and the creation of corresponding qualifications is still not a well elaborated topic in the Czech Republic. Its importance though is expected to grow in the upcoming years. This is apparent both from the changing needs of the labour market (increasing importance of workers' flexibility and diversity of skills and competences required from job seekers), and from Europe-wide trend towards validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Two important projects in this field were implemented in the recent years; "Keys for Life - Development of key competences in non-formal and informal learning" (hereinafter only "Keys for life") and "K2 - Quality and competitiveness in non-formal education", both implemented by the MSMT and coordinated by the National Institute for Children and Youth. Both projects focused primarily on work with children and youth in their free time. These projects created numerous outputs that contribute to tackling this topic and outline its further possible development. Their added value is an attempt to establish a framework for validation and recognition of learning outcomes in hobby and voluntary sector and for defining universally recognized qualifications.

In the project "Keys for life", the so called minimal competency profiles for 11 standardized positions were created for the field of work with children and young people, two of which have a wider overlap in the non-profit sector. Minimal competency profiles are linked to the NSP and NSK (see below), and are thus useful for the validation of achieved learning outcomes. Each profile includes a brief characterization of performed activities and a list of professional skills and competences. None of the profiles is assigned to the appropriate EQF level yet. Summary of the required knowledge and skills, however, helps to assign the required qualifications according to the EQF descriptors.¹⁰

In 2014 several vocational qualifications were created in the area of hobby and voluntary sector, which were submitted for an approval for possible inclusion in the NSK. National Institute for Children and Youth in cooperation with the Fund of Further Education elaborated occupation cards for selected standardized positions in the section of education and training. Some of the proposed qualifications correspond to standardized position in the NSP with the same name; it is therefore possible to assign the appropriate EQF level (e.g. Safety supervisor for work with children and youth in leisure and informal education, EQF5). For several qualifications it is easy to identify the EQF level because they

¹⁰ To assign minimal competency profiles to the EQF levels, an overview of selected standardized positions in the NSP can be used. All standardized positions are assigned to the EQF level / NSP, which correspond to levels of NSK and EQF.

already have an approved and valid qualification standard listed in the NSK (e.g. Leader of leisure activities for children and youth, EQF4; Leader of recreational activities for children and youth, EQF5).

In 2015, more vocational qualifications were developed and presented for approval (e.g. Manager of nongovernmental non-profit organizations, Accounting for nongovernmental non-profit organizations, Ski instructor, Snowboard instructor). From showing these examples of qualifications it is clear that their focus is not limited only on the field of work with children and youth, but extends to the area of work with adults, too.

From this perspective it seems to be most meaningful and useful to continue in mapping professions in hobby and voluntary sector and their development to the level of minimum competency profiles (with assigning appropriate levels according to the EQF descriptors). More minimum competency profiles for selected occupations in hobby and voluntary sector can be developed as part of the preparations for the inclusion of specific vocational qualifications to NSK.

4.7. Qualifications obtained through further education

The legal framework for the development of further education is given by Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. It starts from the premise that lifelong learning is a continuous process which can follow multiple paths. The recognition of diverse educational paths is based on the validation and recognition of knowledge and skills in standardised examinations, on completion of which successful candidates receive a certificate of vocational qualification.

The Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results also specifies assembling individual (i.e. vocational) qualifications into complex (i.e. complete) vocational qualifications. Complete vocational qualifications have their equivalents in study programmes in initial education. The final exam is the same for such complete qualifications and their counterparts in initial education. Equivalence is defined in terms of learning outcomes - competences which are listed in both the NSK and in core curricula in initial education. Credits are not currently used in continuing education.

Each qualification, which can be obtained according to the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, i.e. qualification acquired beyond initial education, vocational qualification, has an assigned qualification level described via working competences (abilities).

Descriptors describing the level of qualifications in the NSK were developed in close relation to the eight levels of EQF descriptors. They comprehensively describe activities that are required at certain level for certain job or occupation. Comparison of the NSK and EQF descriptors of qualifications found that, despite the formal distinction, eight levels of NSK qualifications correspond well with the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. NSK qualification levels consist of an eight level scale and are common for the NSK and the NSP.

Adding qualifications into the NSK is a subject to its own exact procedures described in the guidelines. NSK qualification standards must be approved by the MSMT, which ensures consistency with the content of study programmes in the initial education and their inclusion in the appropriate level of NSK.

Legal status of vocational qualifications is given by the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results.

The Act defines the NSK, it determines the content, how and by whom the qualifications are described and approved, according to which rules the verification (validation) and recognition of qualifications is processed. It also sets out the ways to reach a level of education within the meaning of the Education Act.

The Act is followed by its decree of the MSMT No. 208/2007 Coll., specifying various aspects of the implementation of the Act, particularly in the area of entrusting authorized bodies to verify qualifications, conduct examination, issue certification, set different deadlines, etc. From the perspective of developing NSK is important that the decree explicitly mentions sector councils.

Additional legal documents are important for the implementation of the Act, establishing obtained vocational qualifications as a specific condition. It is mainly the Decree No. 176/2009 Coll., establishing the requirement for accreditation of educational programmes and education organization in retraining programmes. This decree, among others, stipulates that in the fields with existing approved vocational qualifications (under the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.), only those courses which will be completed with an exam for this qualification can be accredited by the MSMT.

The generally closer link to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. was anchored with the amendment of Act No. 455/1991 Coll., on Trades (Trade Act). The assembly of vocational qualifications is now sufficient for obtaining a trade license for craft trades (even without the final examination and obtaining a VET certificate).

NSK received a significant support with introduction of the Government Resolution dated 27 February 2013 (no. 135), which requires members of the government to take into account the existence of NSK and the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results in the creation of its own laws governing the qualifications, qualification prerequisites for certain professions, or verification and exams of qualification eligibility.

Chapter 5. Procedures of the inclusion of qualifications in the NQF

5.1. Incorporating qualifications into NSK

The process of defining qualifications, creating their qualification and assessment standards and approving proposals can be divided into the following phases:

- analysis of needs of certain vocational qualifications for a given area of the national economy;
- review of primary proposals and creation of an annual work schedule for the development and revision of qualification standards;
- development of qualification standards in working groups;
- approval procedures carried out by the competent authorizing bodies and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT).

Processing analysis of needs of certain vocational qualifications for a given area of the national economy

Analysis of the needs of certain vocational qualifications to satisfy requirements of the labour market has been carried out once a year since 2010, most often in the first quarter. Sector councils regularly process professional qualifications needs analysis for each covered area.

Input basis for the commencement of the analysis of needs at the beginning of the project NSK2 were so called "Information summaries for analysing occupational and skill requirements". These documents contained the foundation for a definition of professional and qualification requirements in the sector. Other background materials were also used to define qualification needs, such as:

- structure of NSP;
- overview of existing accredited educational programmes;
- list of regulated professions and activities;
- Annex of the Trade Act - Overview of licensed regulated trades and craft trades;
- previous proposals for the creation of standards which were not approved for the development, yet still meeting the demands of professional qualifications (usability, checkability, verifiability);
- overview of the standards of professional qualifications proposed to be revised after four years of use.

When defining demands for creation of standards of vocational qualifications, members of sector councils proceeded from the situation and trends in the labour market in areas that fall within the competence of each sector council, from their own experience with the requirements of sectors, from generally accepted concepts and assumptions of development in the sector of the national economy and its professional (and qualification) needs in the future.

This phase had two objectives; first to identify areas suitable for processing qualification standards, and second to exclude areas where qualification requirements are defined by other legislation.

Suggestions and justifications of the need for processing new qualification standards were submitted through standard forms according to the Act on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (i.e. "Birth certificates" – rodné listy¹¹). Content of such birth certificate is a basic characteristic, justification of the need and relevance of the qualification (a brief analysis of the specific areas covered in terms of competence, link to the NSP, interest from applicants for certification, authorized persons and educators).

Conditions for the submission of the birth certificates were created not only for the sector councils, but also for external contributors. Standard mechanisms were created for processing new proposals submitted from the outside of sector councils. These procedures are described in detail in relevant methodological materials NSK (see in particular methodology and implementation of NSK and NSK Processing Standards).

Besides members of the sector councils, these following experts also contributed to proposing vocational qualification standards:

- members of working groups;
- feedback consultants;
- confirmation, authorizing bodies, Trade licensing office, Labour office, education providers (e.g. Association of institutions for adult education), MSMT, MPSV;
- other external contributors, who can submit their proposals either through NSK project team or via NSK on-line information system.

Review of primary proposals and creation of an annual work schedule for the development and revision of qualification standards

Originally, birth certificates were reviewed and approved only by the Coordination council. Given the need to increase the effectiveness of the process of development of qualification standards, other institutions, notably the authorizing bodies and the MSMT were involved in the process.

In 2014, the methodology was adjusted and now the Coordination council approves the creation of only those qualification standards, which are recommended by authorizing bodies and the MSMT without any serious comments.

The work tasks are planned in annual periods; new period begins in the second quarter of the relevant year and ended the first quarter of next year. The work schedules contain at least:

- list of approved qualification standards (proposed names);
- level of qualifications;
- status of a qualification standards (new, revised, transfer from previous years);
- anticipated dates for the milestones in the process of creating / revising (set up a working group, first draft, approval of the draft by a field guarantor, handover to the approval team, handover of review to working group);

¹¹ See Annex 2.

- anticipated dates of approval of the standards by sector councils;
- anticipated dates of handover of the standards to NUV;
- active sector councils (in terms of processing qualification standards)

Process of creating qualification standards in working groups

After approval of schedules for creating and revising the qualification standards, the working groups were established and became active. Each phase is described in details in relevant methodological materials (mainly procedural NSK standard no. 4: "The creation and revision of vocational qualifications in the working group"). The actual work was launched with distributing work tasks among members of the sector councils. Chairman of each council established deadlines for qualifications standards development - in accordance with the milestones set out in the work schedule - and appointed head of the working group, which was usually the author of a birth certificate.

Requirements for the composition and size of working groups are also described in the procedural NSK standards. The aim of these standards was to ensure the necessary quality and objectivity in proposals, qualification and assessment standards of professional qualifications. Working group leader worked mostly as a coordinator of activities related to emerging qualification standards and as a communicator between sector council, field guarantor, secretary or coordinator of the sector council on one side and a working group on the other. This person was also responsible for work distribution between members of the working group (and thus rewards for processing and revising standards), all of which are within the project limits.

The process of creating standards was under a methodological supervision of authorized NUV representatives (guarantors, field managers) and under a supervision of a secretary of each sector council. Other tools of methodical support were available for the members of working groups.

Gradually increasing pace of work performance within the NSK2 project is shown in the following chart:

Year	New vocational qualifications	Revised vocational qualifications	Total
2010	43	55	98
2011	173	118	291
2012	257	50	307
2013	199	76	275
2014	322	37	359
Total	994	336	1.330

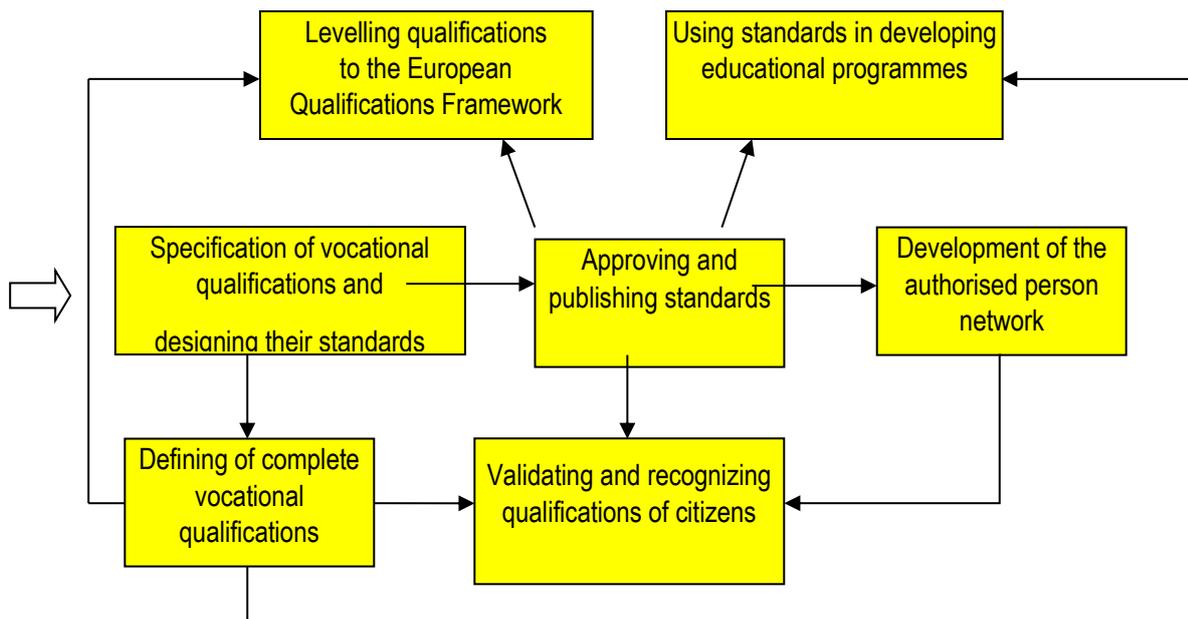
Approval procedures carried out by the competent authorizing bodies and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

The authorizing body is not legally an approving body; standards shall be approved by the Ministry of education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) in collaboration with authorizing bodies. However opinion of the authorizing body is crucial, therefore it is necessary to submit the qualification and assessment standards to the authorizing body before the MSMT.

Proposals are submitted by NUV, part of the submission is a statement of the sector councils, or even a statement of key associations, unions, etc. The ministry oversees primarily on systemic accuracy of the standards, the links between qualifications and compliance with Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. The statement of the authorizing authority has a decisive status.

The entire sequence of above described processes is very demanding and is supported by the NSK information system.

The overall diagram of the processes in the NSK and their relations



5.2. Description of the procedure of submitting proposals for vocational qualifications in the NSK

The main sources of proposing new standards of vocational qualifications are sector councils.

The following table provides a description of a case, in which the initiative to create a new vocational qualification standards does not come from sector councils, but results from the interest of employers (or similar party outside of NSK).

Individual steps	Description, explanation, comments
<p>1 <i>Initial expressions of intent</i></p>	<p>The incentive comes as an "entry order" addressed to NUV as "an organization that maintains and publishes NSK ", possibly as a result of a work meeting. Result: the intention is delivered to NUV</p>

<p>2 <i>Proposed solution</i></p>	<p>NUV experts preliminarily assess the possibilities and offer solutions (a) through NSK under the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. (B) outside NSK - in exceptional cases, offering options for further action.</p> <p>To assess the possibility for further steps under NSK, the applicants are provided information and background materials (e.g. latest wording of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., birth certificate form, selected methodological materials), and links to websites.</p> <p>Result: proposal for further steps under NSK is delivered to the applicant (including the necessary background and information materials)</p>
<p>3 <i>Assessment of the proposal by the applicant</i></p>	<p>The applicant assess proposed options and chooses the most suitable one. Proposals are negotiable.</p> <p>Result: agreement of both parties on further progress under NSK</p>
<p>4 <i>Processing the proposal</i></p>	<p>Applicant completes a birth certificate form – with this step the proposal for creating new vocational qualification becomes official.</p> <p>The birth certificate must contain all information on the applicant’s intentions, as well as convincing arguments for the next steps in the process.</p> <p>If needed, NUV experts provide a methodical support.</p> <p>Result: birth certificate created by applicant and submitted to NUV</p>
<p>5 <i>Proposal evaluation</i></p>	<p>Birth certificate is submitted to NUV to be evaluated and commented on by the representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● overarching organization of employers (if necessary, the proposal can be assessed also in relevant sector council) ● authorizing bodies (relevant ministries) ● NUV, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports <p>Positive opinions from all mentioned entities are necessary for implementing the proposal into the annual work plan.</p> <p>Negative opinion or crucial reminder from any of these entities means that the proposal is not included in the annual work plan</p> <p>Result: proposal is included in the annual work plan for creating and revising vocational qualification standards. Proposal can also be denied.</p>

The above described process ends at the level of evaluation mechanism. With regards to the information set out elsewhere in the report, the next steps are described rather briefly.

The proposal included in the annual plan for creating and revising qualifications standards is passed to a relevant sector council. Selected member of the council will establish a working group, the applicant of the proposal becomes a member of this group, too. The working group drafts qualification and assessment standard of the proposed qualification. It is then evaluated by independent experts and after potential adjustments approved by the sector council.

In the next step, the qualification and assessment standards are linguistically and formally adjusted by NUV staff and submitted for the approval process. As a part of the approval process, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and MSMT can make further comments and objections. After the approval from the MSMT, the qualification and assessment standards are published in the NSK information system and become available for the authorization process and subsequently examination.

Influence of employers on NSK

Some means of influence of employers were mentioned and elaborated in the previous text. The following text illustrates the importance of employers as a target group the process of NSK development.

Employers can possibly affect NSK in following ways:

- applying their direct or indirect (through sector councils) influence, which derives directly from the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, namely direct involvement in NSK development and participation on definition of new vocational qualifications and their description,
- applying its fundamental and essential impact on the use attested qualifications, either employing their owners or supporting further education of their employees, which seeks to extend their skills to the level of the standards in the NSK.

Benefit for employers is therefore primarily associated with using NSK assets:

- opportunity to influence the development of qualifications in the Czech Republic, allowing to meet the needs of employers and thus strengthen the competitiveness of the whole economy;
- NSK can be used to improve qualification structure of employees (recruitment of staff or improve skills of existing staff);
- opportunity to enhance further education of persons in the labour market while using qualification standards as a description of the desired state (ideally reached by employees and used by education providers).

Methodological materials for NSK development and determining levels of qualifications

The methodological support for NSK development consists mostly of materials and various forms of training for groups of professional involved in the development (NUV guarantors, field manager NUV, members of working groups...). All materials are intended for both creating new vocational

qualifications and revision of existing qualifications. Created materials, particularly the *Methodology of developing NSK* reflect the experience gained from creating NSK, legislative changes or changes in the processes and conditions.

One of the themes mentioned in the *Methodology of developing NSK* is determining qualification levels of vocational qualifications. Following paragraph briefly summarizes this topic:

Each and every vocational qualification and its individual professional competences must have a set qualification level. For this purpose a system of eight centrally set national descriptors is used. These descriptors, as well as their relationships with EQF levels and degrees of education under the Education Act are listed in the Annex of the *Methodology of developing NSK*.

The qualification level of vocational qualification as a whole is based on levels of individual competences. Elaborate rules are applied.

5.3. Coordination of processes and activities in creating NSK

The following text focuses on coordination activities related to the target group of employers, concerning the fact, that their role in NSK development is irreplaceable.

Setting the coordination of key activities in the project NSK2

Basic processes related to the involvement of employers in the development and implementation of NSK and their management are described in detail in the general text *Sector council's model* and material *Process Standards in development and revision of vocational and complete qualifications*, which are focusing on NSK. Both materials are available in a version from 2014, only in Czech language.

Within the project NSK2, the management of activities of representatives of employers' was ensured through communication and sharing of information at different levels, from communication guarantor - secretary of sector council to communication at the level of project management and management of public procurement.

Following entities and tools were used for managing processes related to various activities of employers:

The Coordination council (CC) is the executive body of employers responsible for coordination and operational management of the network of sector councils. The focus of the council was especially monitoring of labour market, ensuring quality and representativeness of personnel and institutional staff of sector councils and coordination and operational management of the network. During the project the Coordination council had 5 members (representatives of employers, project management NSK2). From 2013 meetings were also attended by a representative of the MSMT (factual project manager NSK2).

Coordination group for involving employers into NSK processes (CG) is a platform where the contractor reported in an agreed format about the status of public procurement and on the implementation of the contract. The group was addressing issues of strategic character and identifying problems which were subsequently solved by responsible management staff of both parties. During the project the coordination group had 7 members (three representatives of employers, three

representatives of project management, secretary). Meetings were also attended by a representative of the MSMT (factual project manager NSK2).

Methodical group (MS) is a platform for discussing methodological issues. The group was addressing methodological issues related to NSK, linked between NSK and NSP and general issues related to legislative constraints NSK, e.g. Amendments to the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, links to the Trade Act. Besides representatives of employers and project management, the group gathered together also representatives of ministries (MSMT, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Trade), DG for employment and Association of institutions for further education.

Management of processes related to activities of employers in 2016

Based on the previous discussion, it was agreed for 2016 to newly set up and use the necessary structures in new conditions. The management now stands on 3 pillars; (1) The Coordination Council, (2) Coordination Group for NSK and (3) Working group by the National Council for Qualifications.

In connection with the Coordination Council (CC) it was agreed to

- a) Facilitate the functioning of the CC as the executive body of employers which ensures coordination and operational management of the network of sector councils.
- b) Respect the fact that members of the CC will only be representatives of employers. Representatives of the MSMT and NUV may be in specific cases invited to CC meetings as guests.
- c) Ask representatives of overarching organizations of employers to nominate their representatives or CC members into the newly conceived Coordination Group for NSK.

In connection with the Coordination Group (CG) for NSK it was agreed to

- a) Create CG as comprehensively conceived body influencing the processes of management and coordination of the work of sector councils, and working groups of sector councils, NUV activities related to work with creating and revising qualification standards, relevant activities of the MSMT and authorizing bodies, and activities focused on methodology and quality assurance of outcomes and processes .
- b) Establish the CG on the basis of MSMT – NUV – employers, in order to create a working environment in which they can develop synergies to promote sustainable development NSK, NSK use and selected stakeholder groups.

In connection with the Working group (WG) by the National Council for Qualifications it was agreed to

- a) Establish the WG for coordination of NSP and NSK on the basis of Ministry of Labour – Fund of Further Education – MSMT – NUV.
- b) Facilitate and support activities of the WG from the MSMT
- c) Assemble the WG once every three months and invite representatives of employers to these meetings if needed.

Role of employers in sector councils

Human resource development is one of the key requirements for competitiveness of companies and of the whole economy. Putting the right people in the right positions and enabling their further development is particularly important. It is therefore necessary not only to educate people, but also to develop tools for human resource development on company, regional and national levels, and to develop systems which support initial and continuing education.

Cooperation among educators, employers and the state is necessary for creating a flexible, effective and trustworthy system to allow people to acquire qualifications which they can then use in the labour market.

The development of the NSK takes place through the creation of vocational qualifications by sector councils, in which employers and other actors in particular sectors are represented. The sector councils monitor the coverage of their sectors by vocational qualifications and propose, with reference to the National System of Occupations and the needs of the labour market, new vocational qualifications as needed.

They cooperate with experts in the field to monitor the labour market and identify trends. They exchange information on the needs of the sector, particularly in the area of human resources, actively support education and the development of professional skills in their sectors, propose new qualifications and their assessment standards. They communicate with state and educational institutions. One of the principal aims of the sector councils is the creation of sector agreements – see Appendix V, Sector Agreements - and their subsequent implementation.

Sector councils provide an important platform for the exchange of information and viewpoints among all relevant actors in the labour market. The state and stakeholders in the labour market gain detailed information and employers have the opportunity to influence education policy validation and recognition and of non-formal and informal learning.

Coordinators of the Coordination Council monitor and steer the activities of the sector councils. The activities of individual sector councils may vary according to the needs of individual sectors, contracts and projects in which the councils participate. Nevertheless, they must comply with common rules set in the methodological and organizational document *Sector Councils Model*. Sector councils' activities are regularly evaluated on the basis of pre-defined parameters set in Excellence of Sector Councils.

During the project NSK2, activities of sector councils were evaluated based on pre-defined parameters referred to as Excellence of sector councils.

Sector council working groups are created for specific clearly defined tasks. Members of working groups are mostly external experts in the given sector.

More and more companies and other labour market representatives understand the advantages and benefits of participating in sector councils. While the first council sector in the Czech Republic was established in 2005, currently there are a total of 29 sector councils covering the needs of most sectors.

- Sector council for agriculture
- Sector council for forestry, water management and environment
- Sector council for food processing and feed industry

- Sector council for mining and preparation of raw materials
- Sector council for textiles, clothing and leather industry
- Sector council for wood-processing and paper-making industry
- Sector council for glass and ceramics industry and mineral processing
- Sector council for chemical industry
- Sector council for mechanical engineering
- Sector council metallurgy, foundry and smithy
- Sector council for energy
- Sector council for construction
- Sector council for transportation, logistics and post and delivery services
- Sector council for trade and marketing
- Sector council for hospitality, gastronomy and tourism
- Sector council for printing, media and information services
- Sector council for security services, protection of persons and property and work safety
- Sector council for personal services
- Sector council for other services
- Sector council for management and administration
- Sector council for banking, insurance and financial services
- Sector council for information technologies and telecommunication
- Sector council for handicrafts (artisanal)
- Sector council for dedicated equipment
- Sector council for electrical engineering
- Sector council for armed forces
- Sector council for public services and administration
- Sector council for culture
- Sector council for justice and law

Confirmation of the draft of qualification standards by other representatives of the employers

Activities of representatives of employers in sector councils are complemented by so called confirmers. These experts representing certain areas of the labour market comment on draft versions of qualification standards and possibly other material created by expert teams and working groups of sector councils. The main reason for involving the confirmers is to gain greater support for the sector council outputs and to improve quality of these outputs.

Confirmers assess content, quality of processed standards, and utilization of vocational qualifications.

Identification of confirmers is performed by sector councils, the Coordination group, other representatives of employers (trade unions, guilds, associations ...).

List of confirmers for a certain vocational qualification is reviewed and approved by the appropriate sector council (or the Coordination group in the case of expert teams). The Coordination council is informed about the list of confirmers for each vocational qualification and has the right to supplement it.

Besides the comments received from confirmers, more feedback to the sector councils' outputs is gathered from websites of its members and the projects, and through e-mails collected and presented by the secretary of sector councils.

Comments received from reports, websites and e-mails must be processed in a standard way, i.e. experts from the working groups must create a list of comments specifying how each one of them was dealt with (whether they are incorporated or not and why). List is then given to Coordination group or sector councils for further discussion.

5.4. Need for implementation of laws after closing the NSK2 project

By the end of 2015 several projects were finished, whose common aim was to promote quality of education and skills availability in the Czech Republic.

Characterization of the overall situation after project completion

NSK2 project focused on development and implementation of NSK

NSK is a tool allowing validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It is the basis for changing the content of both further and initial education, and it helps match labour market needs with education. Finally yet importantly, it is a tool that helps to eliminate the disproportion between the demand and supply of skilled labour.

The NSK2 project not only significantly accelerated development of the NSK, but also fundamentally influenced its actual use. This is evident from the following data from the end of 2015:

More than 120,000 individuals who passed an exam	Number of individuals who obtained a certificate of vocational qualification – professional competence approved by a state, when an individual demonstrated required competences and is now entitled to perform a certain profession.
Almost 800 published standards of vocational qualifications	Number of standards approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and published in the NSK information system. Another almost 300 standards are prepared and waiting for an approval to be added in the register.
More than 1000 authorized bodies	Number of authorized bodies (experts, schools, companies, etc.), who have the authorization to organize and conduct examinations, and issue certificates approved by the state.

<p>More than 1300 companies using NSK</p>	<p>Number of companies acting in various fields, which use NSK in their HR activities.</p> <p>Thanks to the interest from employers, the NSK is an important tool in supporting competitiveness of the Czech economy.</p>
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The above described state is a result of an involvement of several thousand professionals who participated in the development and evaluation of standards of vocational qualifications. Standards of vocational qualifications, lists of authorized persons and other relevant information are published at www.narodnikvalifikace.cz. More Information about qualifications NSK is also available at www.vzdelavaniaprace.cz.

Preparation of modular programmes for further education in project UNIV

The aim of the implementation of one of the activities was to prepare at least three programmes for further education for each participating school (centre of lifelong learning). About a quarter of these programmes have been prepared at the request of employers, another quarter was created for the age group 50+; third quarter transformed the study programmes which are not open in initial education into further education; last quarter depended on the choice of each school and was meant to reflect local specifics.

The programmes were prepared in modular form; that way some portion of the modules could have been used in initial education programmes, which contributed to linking initial and continuing education. The programmes were enriched by 3 extra features; development of key competences and a motivational component. Programmes for further education were created as a result of negotiations with employers and other labour market representatives, representatives of state and local government and based on the needs of the regional labour market and offers from the regional education market.

Standardized final examination was implemented at all schools

The reform of final examinations in vocational programmes was completed thanks to the national project Final Exam 2 (NZZ_2, Nová závěrečná zkouška 2). It was launched in 2004 and resulted in implementing common papers for educational programmes in vocational secondary education in the school year 2014/2015.

New topics for written, practical and oral parts of final examinations were prepared within the project NZZ_2 and developed unified requirements for final examinations in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 for all study programmes with VET certificate. In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic the content of every single task was evaluated by experts from relevant fields. After completion of the project, field groups became a platform for cooperation with employers. An expert from practice as a member of a field group has a good comprehension of both theory and practice in the field. He/she can therefore competently assess each newly created theme for compliance with corporate practices and learning outcomes. Without his/her consent the topic cannot be approved and listed in the database.

NZZ information system manages 500 schools which were provided technical and methodological support for the preparation and implementation of final examinations. In each school year, guidelines were created for both creators of unified requirements and teachers, as well as analytical materials to evaluate the implementation of final examinations at school, and comments from practitioners. All above mentioned materials are available at <http://www.nuv.cz/nzz2>.

New final exam was successfully implemented in the system of vocational education. Even before legalization of the final exam in the Education Act no. 82/2015 Coll. 90% of schools were voluntarily using the concept.

Project Pospolu proposed measures for better cooperation between schools and enterprises

Project Pospolu (Promoting cooperation between schools and enterprises focused on training in practice, *Podpora spolupráce škol a firem se zaměřením na odborné vzdělávání v praxi*) mapped the cooperation between schools and companies, verified which elements of dual vocational education system known from German-speaking countries can be transferred to the Czech environment and suggested measures to improve vocational education in initial education.

Proposed measures are elaborately described in the conceptual study called *New Features of Dual Vocational Education which Support Cooperation between Schools and Enterprises*. It indicates, for example, that cooperation between schools and businesses should permeate the entire process of vocational education - from recruiting students through the creation of education programmes, on-site teacher training, training and practice for students in companies, to field specific part of the school-leaving examination. For a smooth and seamless transition of graduates from vocational schools to the labour market it is necessary for students to get in touch with the corporate environment already during their studies. Also, the cooperation between schools and businesses must focus on quality. Schools should therefore specify in advance together with the companies what the students shall learn during their training, and finally evaluate students' results.

The field groups were also involved in the process of negotiating a final version of applied models of collaboration. The list of members of field groups served as one of the background materials for yet another output - *Directory of organizations supporting cooperation between schools and businesses*. The materials were subsequently placed at pospolu.rvp.cz.

5.5. Ensuring sustainability of NSK

Act No. 179/2006 Coll. declared from the very beginning expenses associated with creating and maintaining NSK, which would normally have been paid of the state budget. But given the fact that the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. was adopted in 2006, when the Czech Republic first began to draw funds from the ESF, it was decided to use only these resources for the creation and development of NSK. Up until 2015 the functioning of the NSK was thus financed via ESF as projects NSK1 and NSK2.

Given that the Ministry is the coordinator of the whole system of validation and recognition of further education under Act No. 179/2006 Coll., and in this area also coordinates activities of all authorizing bodies, it was necessary to ensure the long-term conditions for continuous operation and implementation of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and processes there under.

Even after finishing the project it is necessary to maintain the NSK up-to-date, concerning the changing demands of the labour market, including the identification and creation of new vocational qualifications. For that purpose a draft text was developed and approved - *Ensuring the implementation of the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. and the effective functioning of NSK*.

The discussed and approved model of funding takes into account one fundamental change; the operation of sector councils will be financially supported by the employment sphere. The essence of the approved proposal is a following agreement - MSMT funds the creation of standards of vocational qualifications while the employers bear the costs associated with processing proposals of vocational qualifications within the sector councils (including identification of possible proposals for new vocational qualifications in terms of meeting the needs of the labour market).

Options for further development of the NSK

Although NSK was originally created mainly for further education, in the near future it will be also used as a basic source of information for the initial education, specifically for framework educational programmes and school educational programmes. In the future it could also play a vital role in describing the needs of initial education in terms of sector or regional structures.

So far vocational qualifications were used rather as one possible (albeit supported and recommended) sources of information for creating school educational programmes. In the future should create a comprehensive system of reflection and transformation needs of employers in initial education outcomes.

Output will also provide feedback for NSK. This entire system will result in being an interconnected and integrated component of a national qualifications framework.

Constantly updated NSK has so far been researched and developed mainly in projects. In the future, it is anticipated to be used and developed also at the labour market, as well as initial training, retraining system or in several related legal regulations concerning qualifications:

- Candidates for obtaining qualifications, who believe that they have a set of required knowledge, skills and competences, need to be convinced that NSK contains updated qualifications. This will make them sure that obtaining a vocational qualification will help them find a job because they are endowed with demanded competences.
- Employers are interested in using NSK for specifying their current qualification requirements. At the same time, when a job applicant is a holder of a vocational qualification certificate, they want to be able to compare this certificate with the currently valid version of the standards of vocational qualification. Up-to-datedness of the NSK also plays an important role for HR professionals who use the register as a base for building corporate, personal or educational system, or competency models.
- Education providers need latest information on NSK primarily for preparation of their educational programmes. NSK ensures that these programmes will correspond with actual needs of the labour market.

- Finally, the permanent topicality of NSK is also needed for ministries acting as authorizing bodies. The main reason is the links of NSK with other legislation governing the area of qualifications. Based on the use of Government Decree no. 135/2013 the ministries can greatly simplify the drafting of legislation aimed at vocational competence and other qualification requirements in various fields, which are departmentally regulated. Along with this, it also reduces their administrative and financial burden connected with creation of these laws. Often it is sufficient to only refer to the Act no. 179/2006 Coll. and to the relevant vocational qualification in the NSK.

Chapter 6. Quality assurance of qualifications included in the NQF

6.1. Statutory responsibility of institutions

The main coordinator role in the process of NSK development of a validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning lies with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT, the author of the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results).

The MSMT:

- a) Coordinates the activity of central administrative bureaus (ministries) done in accordance with the law
- b) Approves, changes, revokes and publishes the list of complete vocational and professional qualifications, thereby approving the content and form of NSK including the content of the qualification and assessment standards

Other ministries – authorizing bodies (including the MSMT):

- a) Participate in development of the qualification and assessment standards
- b) Decide on granting, extending the validity of and revoking the authorization
- c) Maintain a register of those who were granted the authorization
- d) Provide the MSMT with personal records of those who were granted the authorization, to be included in the register of authorized bodies in the NSK
- e) Supervise the activity of the authorized bodies, whom they granted the authorization to
- f) Maintain a register of exam results of authorized bodies, whom the authorization was granted to, including the register of granted certificates

The validation of the results of further education – the exams – is carried out by authorized bodies.

An authorized body can be any individual or organization that fulfils the criteria set by law (qualification requirements among others). These entities are authorized by the respective ministries according to their field of activity, e.g. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs authorizes in the area of labour law relations, work safety, employment, pension security, social care etc.

Basic principles of quality assurance and its establishment in the guidelines for using the NSK

The basic strategic approach to quality assurance is a "peer to peer" strategy. Its use is especially important at the national level, because it allows involving representatives from the world of work and also representatives from the world of education. The two sides then work together, interact and learn from each other. Their work, however, is always preceded by the deployment of targeted training on the safe management of pre-determined and agreed methodologies and working procedures of quality control processes (especially when monitoring the results) and elements of supervision, e.g. stipulated by law, showing the key position of the MSMT.

Mutual learning and influence at the national level is complemented by impulses from the international environment. These are obtained by active involvement in international projects, which bring the possibility of cooperation with experts in other states who are dealing with similar or the same tasks.

Due to its content and obligation, the method of using the NSK can be observed as important means of quality assurance.

For demonstration purposes, here is an excerpt from the „Feedback and supervision“ chapter.

Getting feedback about feasibility of the exams in accordance with the standards

For quality assurance of the validation and recognition system in accordance with the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., it is valuable to determine directly during the vocational qualification examinations how the standards are set up for their execution, especially from the following aspects:

Competence

- intelligibility
- adequacy to the aim of vocational qualification

Evaluation Criteria

- intelligibility
- adequacy (whether the criteria lead to proving the necessary competence or its part)
- clarity (whether the criteria do not lead to multiple levels of difficulty for multiple sorts of applicants)
- actual validation (whether a criterion can be validated)

Method of validation

- adequacy (whether the method of validation can be used to validate a certain criterion)
- actual validation (whether the method of validation can be applied)

Instructions for exam execution

- adequacy (whether the instruction lead successful execution of the exam)
- executables (whether the instructions can be carried out)

Requirements for competence of the authorized body

- adequacy (whether the exam is led by a qualified person)

Requirements for technical and material equipment of the authorised body

- adequacy (whether it is possible to perform an unbiased validation of all the criteria on a given technical and material equipment)

Exam term and exam preparation period

- adequacy (whether it corresponds with the content and extent of the exam)

Supervision of the exam process

The Act No. 179/2006 Coll. entrusts relevant authorizing bodies with execution of supervision of the exam process for vocational qualifications. Act No. 552/1991 Coll. on state supervision also relates to execution of supervision.

The subject of exam supervision is, in particular:

- a) Whether formal requirements for exam execution are met (establishment of a commission, presented documents, exam duration, occupational health and safety requirements etc.)
- b) Whether all criteria of all competences are validated against the assessment standards
- c) Whether the successful passing of all criteria by the applicant is rated unbiasedly
- d) Whether the method of validation is complied with (practical demonstration, written or oral validation, test questions etc.)
- e) Whether the requirements for material and technical equipment are met
- f) Whether the standards are set in such a way that applicant's competence for a given vocational qualification can be objectively validated, and if they are not, determine how the standards should be revised (e.g. whether any criterion is not set as disproportionately strict, if it is ambiguous, whether the exam is not needlessly extensive etc.)

Quality assurance of revision of vocational qualification standards

Essential element of quality assurance of vocational qualification standards in NSK is setting up the mechanism for their revision.

Guidelines for using NSK counts on the fact that revision suggestions of already established vocational qualification standards come from multiple sources. If more than 4 years pass since the date when the vocational qualification standards were published, the revision requirement is essentially generated automatically. Besides that the revision suggestions come in shorter intervals as well, particularly from sector advice, employers outside sector councils and other members of the professional public, e.g. based on development and changes of the qualification content, requirements to implement EU regulations, unification of technologies concerning vocational qualifications, based on experience with vocational qualifications validation in other projects, based on feedback from practical execution of exams of authorized bodies etc. and from particular authorizing bodies.

Guidelines were developed for processing the revision, and the chapter **Types of revision and their consequences** was selected for demonstration purposes:

■ „Blank“ revision

Vocational qualification is subjected to examination, whether its content is in accordance with the requirements of the job market or whether it can be re-evaluated and if it's educable and the result is positive.

Vocational qualification stays in unchanged form, authorization and accreditation continue to be valid without changes.

■ **"Small" revision**

Its scope are some if the following changes:

- Administrative changes (count of committee members, authorizing body, sector council etc.)
- Contextual changes (composition matrix of the complete vocational qualification, connection with the unit of labour, entry requirements on the applicant)
- Change of method and process of validation (validation methods, exam execution instructions, duration of exam, exam preparation time)
- Partial content changes (in competences or evaluation criteria), which do not change the overall concept and focus of vocational qualification nor the requirements on authorized bodies or necessary length and difficulty of the course

No change of name or code of vocational qualification is carried out.

Result for authorizations:

- Authorizations are still valid
- Authorized bodies are due to be sent a memo on change of standards

Result for retraining:

- Decision to grant the accreditation does not need to be changed. It is noted that before commencing the retraining course leading to the final exam from the vocational qualification set by the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., the educational institutions must confirm the validity of the qualification standard and execute the course in accordance with the standard.

■ **"Medium" revision**

Its scope are more substantial content changes (in competences or evaluation criteria), which do not yet change the overall concept and focus of vocational qualification, but result in one of the following changes:

- Change of requirements for the authorized bodies (authorized representatives)
- Increasing the financial demands of the course

No change of name or code of vocational qualification is carried out.

Result for authorizations:

- Authorizations are still valid
- Authorized bodies are due to be sent a memo on change of standards.
- Authorized bodies must be invited to present documents related to the change in requirements for them (if those requirements had changed).

Result for accreditations:

- Educational institutions are obliged to monitor these changes themselves. Educational institutions can require an amended contract (if the course financial demands increased), but in most cases an amended contract will not be possible, as if there is a change in price, the current tender has to be terminated.

- **"Large" revision**

Its scope are some if the following changes:

- A substantial content change, which changes the whole scope of the vocational qualification in such a way that the result is a completely new vocational qualification
- Splitting the original vocational qualification into two or more vocational qualifications
- Merging two or more vocational qualifications into one vocational qualification
- Change of the qualification level of a vocational qualification

A change of name or code of vocational qualification is carried out.

Results:

The following options are possible:

- No authorized body exists anymore – the original vocational qualification can be terminated with immediate effect
- Some authorized bodies exist – then the relevance of the original vocational qualification has to be determined and there are two options:
 - Original vocational qualification is incorrect or inapplicable – goes into „decay mode“, i.e.:
 - Validity is set to 5 years,
 - The website will states it is running out
 - Authorizations and accreditations will cease to be granted
 - Current Authorizations and accreditations are valid
 - Original vocational qualification is applicable – both vocational qualifications stay side by side with mutual validity
 - Current Authorizations and accreditations are valid, for the new vocational qualification it starts "from scratch".

6.2. Mechanisms using employers' input

Substantial role in quality assurance of the process of establishing and implementing NSK is with the employers.

Vocational qualification standards provide a clear and concise idea of what competences do potential employees truly have and how can they contribute in fulfilling the tasks of a company or a firm and in increasing its competitiveness.

Since the beginning, the employers have been and still are one of the main target groups for whom the NSK is developed. The overall success of this demanding project is thus greatly dependent on them.

It's because they will really use the new features and demand the new vocational qualifications, among other reasons.

Basic scope for employers to come into the process of NSK is established by the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. The most important tool enabling the employers to come in to development and implementation of NSK are sector councils.

Employers as developers and users of NSK

The model form of the method of inclusion of employers' representatives into the NSK processes is the following „standard cycle“:

- Analysis of the need to cover the market with vocational qualification. For analysis of the job market needs and leveraging of the already created vocational qualification, feedback consultants are utilized as well as sector councils.
- The proposal approval process and the creation of a timetable for development and revision of vocational qualification standards for the given year. The timetable is a solution for establishing work groups, in which the vocational qualification standards themselves are established.
- Established vocational qualification standards are then examined by a network of independent external experts (approvers). In the final stage, the content of the standards is commented on by the entire sector councils.
- The stage of creating vocational qualification standards is finalized by handing over the standards to NUV for further action.
- Action outputs are disseminated and fed back to the employers through a network of feedback consultants.

Further information on the aforementioned activities as well as on their executors are listed in other parts of the Report.

Confirmers of the vocational qualification standards

As already mentioned in the text above, the confirmers are independent external evaluators of proposed vocational qualification standards with verifiable expertise in the field appropriate to the evaluated vocational qualification.

This way, other representatives of the professional public (usually from the ranks of employers) are involved in the process of vocational qualification development and revision on top of the sector council members and work groups. Their primary task is to contribute to further improvement of proposed vocational qualification standards.

Addressing the broad professional public also had significant impact on the NSK publicity and broadens the public awareness of this tool. The following table demonstrates the gradual increase of the confirmers' activity.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Number of evaluations	58	605	1,134	1,018	1,811
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Feedback consultants

The inclusion of *feedback consultants* in to the process of NSK development and implementation was a major part of the process of NSK2 project. It was prepared and launched as another important means of supporting the quality assurance of sector council's work outputs and their work groups in the field of vocational qualification identification, establishing boundaries and the vocational qualification standard development itself. Another aim for the inclusion of consultants was to accelerate the processes leading to approvals of created standards.

The consultants are to achieve the aforementioned and other targets by obtaining the feedback to said activities in all stages of the vocational qualification lifecycle in real employment environment.

Consultants were primarily recruited from representatives of the employer associations operating in the regions. They were in close contact with company representatives and, either on their own or based on sector council request, were facilitating the consensus of employers on the collection of currently examined vocational qualifications and the final form of their standards, in parallel with their development.

Both the activities related to identifying the necessity of new vocational qualifications and identifying the necessity of changes to existing vocational qualifications (feedback obtained based on the utilization of vocational qualification in practice), as well as activities editing/correcting the form of qualification and assessment standards in their development stage in sector councils work groups fall into the same field of activity.

Key activities of confirmers thus were, in particular:

- Identification of the necessity of new vocational qualification creation;
- Gathering suggestions and comments to existing vocational qualifications (the so-called „blank“ revision of standards, usability of a vocational qualification, its intelligibility, exam relevance...);
- Gathering suggestions and comments from employers to currently developed vocational qualification standards;
- Negotiations with actual and potential authorized bodies with the aim of identifying exam obstacles and their elimination
- Collection of suggestions from actual authorized bodies to the vocational qualification standards (intelligibility of formulations describing evaluation criteria, validation methods, method instructions, comments on exam feasibility in terms of time, financial and technical-material demands, comments on the standard structure...);
- Discussion about gathered suggestions and comments to the vocational qualification with sector councils and work groups representatives, as well as the Coordination council and NUV;
- Negotiations and consultation with sector council (eventually work groups, the Coordination council, NUV) about the employers' needs in given regions

- Recruiting confirmers from the ranks of employers;
- Key activities had the form of visits and employer sites and discussions with their representatives, this way any particular sub-activities framework to the key tasks can be identified
- Employer identification (with the specific aim of discussion with regards to sector councils' needs);
- Contacting the employer and setting up a meeting;
- Preparation for meetings (study of the standards to be discussed, consulting with sector councils/work groups);
- The meeting itself
- Processing the meeting outputs in standardized form (suggestion formulation, feedback...);
- Discussing gathered suggestions and comments with their target audience.

All outputs from the feedback confirmers were then used to improve the quality of activity outputs of the sector councils and to improve the established methods.

In relation to the primary aim of integration the employers' representatives to the NSK processes, the significant achievement was to increase awareness of NSK among specific employers. This was contributed to by a motivation tool in the form of an honorary certificate „NSK in practice“, which was gradually awarded to over 1,000 companies in different fields of activity and from different regions.

Most often, the companies implemented NSK in the area of recruiting and hiring new employers (58% of the organizations), where the certificate of vocational qualification was accepted as a relevant proof of qualification for specific job roles.

34% of the organizations utilize NSK primarily in the area of an employee education and development, i.e. prefers education completed by a vocational education exam, or eventually the organization itself carries out the vocational education examinations or the education related to those. Furthermore, organizations leveraged NSK for optimizing the professional composition of their employees in the sense of using qualification amendments or amendments to the job catalog.

So far, very few organizations have utilized NSK and a motivation tool in the form of a benefit or as part of a quality control audit.

From the sector composition point of view of companies using NSK, admittedly the most companies are from the engineering industry (16.4%), followed by a management and administrative sector (7.6%), construction sector (6.7%), food and feed industry (6.4%), textile, garment and leather industry and food service, hospitality and travel industry each covered 6% of businesses from the total number.

For the implementation in the engineering industry, the management and administrative sector, the food and feed industry and the textile, garment and leather industry, a large part was played by the member organizations of the network of sector councils, who also became the leaders in the implementation in these respective fields. The statistics do not count the security of persons and property and work safety sector, which has, from the legislative perspective, mandatory obligation of vocational qualifications Security Guard and Detective Trainee having 100% implementation in the hiring process of new employees.

In terms of regional location of employers utilizing NSK in personnel related processes, the highest impact has been in the Prague region, followed by Moravia-Silesia, South Moravia, Liberec and South Bohemia regions (58% of the total count of companies).

Chapter 7. Costs of including qualifications in the NQF

7.1. Costs in the NSK and current methods of cost coverage

Thanks to NSK, alongside the existing „school system“ that guarantees and enables the initial education, new ways are being paved to getting a qualification accepted by the employers through acknowledging the results of previous studies and further education. Therefore, a parallel system is created, whose actual potential and utilization is, from the state-approved vocational qualification certificate holders' point of view, currently already comparable with the number of graduates in the field of professional education within initial education. Its importance will surely keep growing and its extent is projected to be multiple times higher than that of the system of initial education. From the mutual openness, permeability and compatibility of the systems of initial and further education point of view, it is absolutely necessary that these systems are not developed separately, on the contrary – they should cooperate closely and develop mutually.

The system of initial education is guaranteed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) legislatively and in terms of content, as well as being implemented through a network of schools of all kinds within a budget that exceeds 100 bil. CZK annually.

Contrary to that, the current situation in the field of further education is significantly different. The MSMT only sets up the system framework, defines qualifications and consequently accredits the requalification programmes, however it is not responsible for the actual implementation of further education, nor does it finance it.

The reason for maintaining of a functional validation and recognition system based on the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results is also a recommendation from the EU Council on recognition of non-formal and informal education from 2012, which concludes that by 2018 the latest, all EU member states should have a functional system of recognition of non-formal and informal education, which will enable individuals to obtain validation and recognition of gained knowledge, skills and competences and obtain complete vocational or vocational qualification of such. The NSK is already fulfilling all the requirements that EU put across.

Until 2015, all requirements for NSK system operation NSK secured and supported within ESF – NSK1 a NSK2 projects. The aim of these projects was and still is to fulfil the NSK system as well as to validate and run it.

For further NSK development, the crucial importance lies with the fact that based on agreements with the representatives of umbrella organizations of employers, a document called „*Ensuring the implementation of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results in 2015 and onward*“ was drafted and approved by the MSMT in succession to the end of those project.

The approved document stipulates that the MSMT will cover roughly 70% of total annual costs of the NSK maintenance and further development. Within the multi-source financing, 30% of set annual costs will be contributed by the employers, which will cover the operation of sector councils.

With regards to the fact that it is an ensuring of the statutory agenda, it was the MSMT that in 2015 and onward, the financial costs will be added to the core activities and budgets of NUV and the MSMT, including workload systematization.

7.2. Costs related with implementation and quality assurance in NSK

NSK is since the beginning formulated in close relation with the job market. If a holder of the vocational qualification certification is to stand a chance at succeeding on the job market, it is necessary to retain the inclusion of employers in the process of preparation and review of vocational qualification standards even after cessation of project funding.

With regards to importance of NSK, it is essential to maintain its validity, quality and reliability. That means carrying out revisions and changes of existing vocational qualification standards (circa 300 per year) and creation of a smaller amount of new vocational qualification standards (circa 40 per year) in reaction to changes on the job market or requirements of different departments related to the evolution of legislation.

Currently, the relation to the job market is ensured through the creation of vocational qualification standards in 29 sector councils. Sector councils identify possible vocational qualifications, whose proposals and descriptions are then being approved by applicable authorizing bodies (usually appropriate ministries). If a proposal for a vocational qualification is approved by authorizing bodies, the sector council passes the standard creation on to the appropriate workgroup. Standards created or revised in work groups are evaluated in sector councils and in case of their agreement, they enter the approval process at the respective ministry.

The approved document *„Ensuring the implementation of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results in 2015 and onward“* stipulates that the MSMT finances the development of vocational qualification standards and the employer sphere bears the costs related to reviews of the proposals of vocational qualification by the sector councils including the identification of the potential for creating new vocational qualifications with regards to covering the job market needs.

Costs of maintenance and further development of existing IT systems

Also, the IT systems – IT System NSK (IS NSK), IT System for Qualifications and Authorizations (ISKA) and IT System for Education and Job Market (VAP) will have to be maintained and continuously updated.

IS NSK must publish revised and newly created vocational qualification standards. At the same time it is necessary to register all authorized bodies, which were authorized to carry out examinations for given qualifications. Within this IT system, the vocational qualification creation, revision and changes are also controlled and carried out.

IT system ISKA was developed as another element of the validation system based on the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. The primary aim was to create an IT system, that would enable securing and support of developmental and organizational side of all essential

processes related to validation system implementation, particularly then the processes related to granting, extending and revoking authorization as well as function and activity of authorized bodies. ISKA is the primary communication platform for mutual information and data provision between authorized bodies and authorizing bodies. ISKA aids to and simplifies the activity of both the authorized bodies and authorizing bodies. Using the system should also lead to decreasing the administrative for both the authorized bodies and authorizing bodies.

IT system VAP is intended to be used by the broad professional and nonprofessional public and publishes the paths to getting the desired employment through obtaining a vocational qualification. This tool is important for the consulting point of view at the labour office.

Proceeds connected to NSK implementation

Implementation of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and NSK development does not only carry costs, it brings finances to the state budget, namely from two sources.

The first source is finances connected to collection of administrative fees for granting the authorization, the second being the taxation on vocational qualification exams.

The fee for granting an authorization (administrative fee) is 1,500 CZK for each requested vocational qualification. Currently, almost 4,000 authorizations have been granted.

The Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results stipulates that the authorized body is entitled a payment for conducting the vocational qualification exam, which is the salary to an authorized body. If the average price of an exam is approximately 2,500 CZK and the number of exams taken up until now is over 140,000, then the amount collected on VAT is reported to be in the range of tens of millions.

Side projects connected to finalized systemic projects

Halfway through year 2016 development works started for project „Setting up the mechanisms for cooperation and communication of employers and employer representatives with authorized bodies to increase the quality of exams and the process of applicant preparation in the system of recognition of further vocational education“, which is financed by the operational programme Employment (coordinated by the Ministry of Labour) and co-financed from ESF resources and the state budget of the Czech Republic. The beneficiary of the grant is Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, its partner is Czech-Moravian Trade Union Confederation.

The aim of the project is to create conditions for efficient social dialog between social partners and authorized bodies (i.e. both individuals and corporations entitled to execute vocational qualification exams) to enhance the process of exam execution and thus improve competence of employees of future employees – vocational qualification exam graduates.

The social dialog will be carried out through visits for monitoring of the exams and at round table sessions dedicated to exam execution problem solving.

The project's contributions should be setting of the rules and mechanism of flexible and quick cooperation, which will replace ad hoc communication, which is not only inefficient but also time

consuming. One prerequisite is also defining the mechanisms in the applicable legislation – based on a proposal compiled by the project managers and discussed by a broad spectrum of people involved in further vocational education.

Both parties will be able to communicate along set up rules already in the new vocational qualification standard creation stage, namely by inclusion of a competent, potential authorized body (representative) especially in creation of the vocational qualification proposal in work groups. The attendance of authorized representatives at the revision process of an appropriate vocational qualification, for which they have an authorization and are interested in discussing the matter with the creators of the standard, should be a completely standard approach.

On the other hand, employers, standard creators' representatives or potential employers of graduates would become, after notifying the authorized body, official participants of the exams with the right to recommend correctional and modified solutions to the authorizing bodies, NSK administrator and last but not least representatives of given industries involved in sector councils.

This should be a significant innovation of the project, as controlled monitoring of the exams by employers, standard creators and their cooperation with authorized bodies would be a guarantee of improving the quality of the exams if supported by legislation. It wouldn't just be an addition to the definition of the employers' participation in creating new proposals or revising existing qualification and assessment standards of vocational qualifications as declared by § 7 and 8 of the Act, but a completely new quality control element, which could be included in the prepared novelization of the Act.

Chapter 8. Current debates on further NQF developments

8.1. Process of ensuring the implementation of Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

As mentioned in the previous chapter - the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) approved the document „*Ensuring the implementation of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results in 2015 and onward*“, which is essential for further development of NSK.

An important characteristic of the situation in which the document was approved, describes *Final report on implementation of the Plan of Implementation of Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2009-2015*. The report was submitted to the Government in October 2015. It states (among others):

- Significant legislative changes have been done at the secondary school level that encourages permeability and openness in the education system.
- The Czech government has approved new measures to support the vocational education, which are aimed at further improving of quality of education. The measures also include systemic adjustment of the number and content of the framework educational programmes and linking them with NSK qualification and assessment standards.
- 975 educational programmes for further education were prepared at secondary schools in terms of development of further education. Part of the prepared programmes for further education was created in compliance with the NSK standards; part was made upon request from employers regarding education needs of their employees. Emphasis was also placed on supporting the process of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- An extensive upgrade of an information system was completed, providing information on employability of school graduates, the current offer of educational programmes at secondary schools, colleges and universities in the Czech Republic. The upgraded system now also offers different ways to search for the information.

In compliance with the document approved in 2015, the MSMT was given a task for 2016 which mainly relates to activities aimed at reviewing and creating qualification and assessment standards demanded by the labour market, including the support for their use. The structure and content of the qualifications are the result of a consensus, in which representatives of employers' association in the sector councils played a key role. In the first half of 2016 proposals of new vocational qualifications were discussed with authorizing bodies and the MSMT. The task further sets the responsibility for ensuring operation and further development of information systems, including their potential modifications.

Activity Plan for 2016 anticipated basic support activities focusing on information and publicity towards the implementation of the NSK to enhance its use among target groups and stakeholders. Revision and editing of methodological materials will continue to be done, following the needs of target groups (employers, citizens) and stakeholders (authorized bodies, education providers, counsellors, mediators, labour offices, state administration authorities ...), and based on previous acquired experience. An amendment of the Act (see further) will also be taken in account.

A complex of activities necessary for the introduction of the foreman examination in the Czech Republic was launched in direct connection with NSK. This was preceded by proposal of draft concept of the foreman examination approved by the MSMT, conclusions of a series of meetings of methodical team for the foreman examination, creation of pilot qualification standards *master craftsman* created within NSK2 project, and by discussion on implementation of the foreman examination with representatives of the MSMT.

Preparation of the amendment of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

During 2016, in accordance to fulfil the annual plan of development and revision of the vocational qualification standards, it was necessary to devote a considerable part of working capacity to the preparation of a new model of ensuring the NSK sustainability in 2017, based on the intended amendment of the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. Following the decision of the MSMT from November 2016 not to submit the draft Act amendment to the Government, the negotiation between the MSMT and the National Institute for Education took place with a view to ensuring the involvement of employers into development and revision of the vocational qualification standards during the time of sustainability, i.e. up to November 2020. The most suitable form of ensuring this involvement was agreed. Subsequently, the invitation to tender was prepared and published in the end of 2016.

8.2. Continuation of formation of external links of NSK

The basic characteristic of the current national and international connections is set in *Methodology of developing NSK*. Given that this is a document approved by the MSMT (with respect to the role given by law) based on prior consultation of the National Council for Qualifications (this establishes a broader consensus over the draft), it is possible to understand the setup described in the introductory chapter (Putting NSK into the outer frameworks) as binding.

Further text in this section is based on what is stated in the *Methodology* and if necessary, it also develops and supplements the original document.

Developing national connections

Human resources are the key factor for a competitiveness of any economy. It is important that graduates entering the labour market have skills matching requirements of employers.

The rapid development of technologies, changes in division of labour, the development of new kinds of goods and services, globalization and the associated movements of individual productions and entire sectors between countries and continents; all these factors cause that all previously acquired knowledge must be continuously developed and extended. That is the only way to obtain and maintain qualifications needed for labour market, and to progress along the career path.

The above given information lead to two important principles:

- The basis for NSK are requirements of labour market. They are expressed and updated through the National System of Occupations.
- NSK Qualification standards are both the source for education and criteria for validation and recognition of qualifications. They are a source for the development of framework educational programmes for secondary schools and other educational programmes for educators.

More information about the context of national development of NSK (link to the NSP, the impact on initial and further education) is given in Chapter 3.

More information about the validation and recognition of qualifications can be added by following text (quotes from the text of the Methodology):

The main purpose of the NSK is to provide a register of standards for objective verification and recognition of meaningful qualifications related to the system of professions. Validation and recognition of vocational qualifications is processed/performed by authorized bodies, in accordance to the assessment standards of relevant vocational qualifications.

Verification takes the form of an examination. The candidate must demonstrate all the skills listed in the qualification standard according to criteria and other rules set out in the assessment standard. If he/she succeeds in doing so, he/she obtains a certificate of a vocational qualification.

Certificate of a vocational qualification is a nationally valid document. It contains information about candidates, the authorized body and an examination, and a list of proven and recognized professional competences. Certificates and records of the examination are archived in accordance with the legislation on archives.

Any natural or legal person can become an authorized body for a specific vocational qualification. A candidate needs to fulfil requirements specified in the assessment standard of a vocational qualification. There are two kinds of the requirements:

- *The requirements for the competence of authorized body, respectively on the professional competence of its authorized representative.*
- *Requirements for material and technical base of the authorized person, given by the list of required equipment.*

Requirements for applications for authorization are published on websites of each authorizing body. The authorizing body inquires whether the applicant for authorization meets the requirements for the authorized body specified in the assessment standard. These standard requirements must be clearly defined.

The list of authorized bodies for each vocational qualification, including contact information, is provided for each vocational qualification in the NSK (in case the relevant vocational qualification has already been granted an authorization). Applicants for a vocational qualification can apply for the exam by contacting individual authorized bodies.

National qualifications framework and NSK

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008) (Recommendation) sets two milestones in the implementation of the EQF. First is to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010 and second to adopt measures, so that, by 2012, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level. Establishing an explicit national qualifications framework is not stated in the Recommendation as a necessary precondition for fulfilling of these milestones, but it is expected that at the end all European countries will reference their national qualifications framework to the EQF. This is the only way where referencing to the EQF could be acceptable and comparable for other member states.

To develop an NQF is among the short term deliverables in the Bruges Communiqué, which was signed by all European ministries for vocational education in December 2010.

The existence of a comprehensive NQF cannot be overestimated. It gives clear signal to other European countries that there is agreement among stakeholders on basic principles in designing, defining, validation and levels of qualifications, that there is a common system of quality assurance, and that after extensive discussions among stakeholders a consensus was reached.

The Czech Republic did not yet decided whether it will develop a comprehensive NQF, but discussions and surveys conducted so far conclude that establishing an NQF could be an important tool for better coordination and communication among sectors of education and other stakeholders.

It requires inclusion of the broadest circle of experts and public possible, with representation of all relevant stakeholders. Only then can be the NQF used and respected by all sectors and social partners and the sense of ownership among them can develop.

A comprehensive NQF could be potentially a very useful and important instrument for further development in education, especially because of its learning outcomes approach and cooperation among educational sectors that the NQF promotes.

Many steps were already taken in the Czech Republic. There are adopted level descriptors of the NSK and there is also the Qualifications Framework for Tertiary Education. The development of the National Programme for Education (a framework for primary and secondary education) is currently being discussed. The next step could be the decision, whether and how to overarch existing and emerging sector frameworks. In some European states the creation of an NQF provides opportunity for education reforms (e.g. Poland), in others, where learning outcomes approach is well established; it only facilitates classification of existing qualifications (e.g. the Netherlands). Other, especially smaller countries such as Estonia or Austria use the EQF descriptors for overarching their sector sub-frameworks.

According to Ron Tuck, an expert on qualifications frameworks, three factors have been identified as inhibiting the implementation of NQFs. They are:

1. over-complex approaches;
2. over-ambitious visions;
3. top down strategies.

None of these approaches to implementation take account of the realities in which qualifications actually work. A logical conclusion would appear to be that any future strategy especially for a

developing country with limited resources should be based on simplicity, an incremental vision and encouraging local initiative.

The process of mapping certificates proving vocational qualifications outside NSK is an important step, which can lead to a desirable increase of the transparency of qualifications in direct connection with the creation of the Czech qualifications framework.

A list of vocational qualifications well-established and recognized in the labour market, with an inherent quality assurance mechanism was another output of the task performed by sector councils in 2015. Therefore, it makes no sense to convert them into vocational qualifications described through qualification and assessment standards in the NSK.

As already mentioned, NSK is a register of qualifications and inherently framework of vocational qualifications. If it is not appropriate to transfer qualifications into the framework of NSK it is possible and highly desirable to describe or identify their relationship to the overarching framework which is (will be) the Czech qualifications framework.

The basic proposal for the validation and recognition of certified sets of competencies acquired in the Czech Republic outside of NSK must also address the relationship between qualifications "inside and outside NSK". In connection with formulation of this relationship it is primarily important to realize the difference between the Czech qualifications framework and the National Register of Qualifications.

The Czech qualifications framework should be an overarching framework including all types of qualifications acquired both within the formal education system and through informal and non-formal education, while the NSK includes vocational qualifications, which are gained through validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are focused primarily on the needs of the labour market and are subject to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results.

An example can be a qualification from the list created by the sector councils:

ID NSK	Name	Status	Cross-sectional certificate	Sector council
136	ECDL Advanced Certificate	Recommended in the field	x	Sector council for information technologies and telecommunication

This qualification has all already mentioned attributes:

- it is not explicitly obtained as a result of compulsory schooling;
- it is not part of NSK and would not make sense to transfer its content to the form of NSK qualification and assessment standards;
- it is precisely defined in the system EDCL, which is so well known and recognized in the Czech Republic, that the sector council proposed a status of recommended in the field. With that it's

also related the fact that EDCL has its own quality assurance system. Credibility of the system is proven by the fact that the qualification is recognized internationally.

The proposal for the validation and recognition of certified competences acquired in the Czech Republic outside of NSK can be formulated as follows:

Sector councils create a draft, which can be used as a basis for continuing work of competent professionals, leading to include (or not) individual qualifications in the Czech qualifications framework. This can be processed in the future right after an approval of descriptors for each qualification level of the Czech qualifications framework.

Developing international connections with NSK

Among all European links, EQF has the crucial role. First NSK descriptions of qualification levels were approved, which allowed to define and specify the relation to EQF levels for each professional qualification.

Subsequent embedding of the NSK into the qualification system in the Czech Republic (as described in the referencing report) confirmed the position of NSK also in relation to the international environment.

Strategic documents were successfully supplemented for their implementation by other measures focused on communicating and using NSK in an international context. This is particularly true of the English versions of qualification standards of vocational qualifications, which are created and approved in parallel with their Czech counterparts and presented in the English NSK web site.

Within the project NSK2 it was also established a framework of linking NSK with the European tool ECVET.

Relation to EQF

Relation to EQF has been since the early NSK development distinct and crucial. It is described in several places in the text of this report. This can be supplied as follows.

Since July 2011, the qualification standards of vocational qualifications are submitted for the approval process at the MSMT also in English. An English portal, which is part of the information system NSK was designed, created and filled for their publication. It contains general information about NSK and all approved qualification standards for vocational qualifications.

Relation to Europass

Initiation of creating English versions of qualification standards pursued the possibility of using standards as the basis for the possible entry of Europass and many other things. The plan of the National Europass centre for 2016 contained two activities aiming at pilot issuing Europass Certificate Supplement to the certificate of vocational qualifications and a seminar for authorized bodies.

Relation to ECVET

A working group continued with its activities, preparing guidelines for creating units of learning outcomes based on standards of NSK vocational qualifications (*Designing ECVET units of learning outcomes based on standards of vocational qualifications in NSK*).

Several drafts were prepared. The 2016 version was discussed in detail not only in the *Coordination Centre for ECVET*, but also with relevant NUV staff and NSK2 project members.

The 2016 version of the guidelines was published on the website and then used for revision of more than a hundred units of learning outcomes developed on the basis of standards of NSK vocational qualifications. Thanks to the field groups the units of learning outcomes were revised and will be available on the website to inspire and to be used by other VET professionals.

Relation to EQAVET

Part of the current international project that addresses NUV is task focused on preparing an analysis of the proposed methodology for identifying the need for revision and description of the reasons leading to the revision of individual standards of vocational qualifications and factors playing a major role in the revision.

The focus is mainly on deepening the culture of quality assurance in VET and the application review stage in the cycle of quality, including the use of feedback.

Annexes

Annex 1. List of legal acts (and relevant brief summary) referred to in the country report

Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results.

- NSK is defined by Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results. The Act came into effect on August 1st 2007 and its main objective is to enable all individuals to recognize their actual knowledge, skills and competences, regardless of how they were obtained (at school, in the course, during training, self-study and others.). Mastering the required skills is what matters, not the education path.
- The Act establishes the National Register of Qualifications and defines what its content is, how and by whom are the qualifications described and approved, according to which rules is verification and recognition of qualifications processed. It also sets out the ways in which one can reach a certain level of education through these qualifications within the meaning of the Education Act.
- The Act was modified by an amendment No. 53/2012 Coll. The Act is followed by an implementing decree of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) No. 208/2007 Coll., which specifies various aspects of the implementation of the Act, particularly in the area of authorization of bodies authorized to verify qualifications, to conduct examinations, to issue certificates etc. From the perspective of using NSK it is important that the Decree embodies the sector councils.
- Act No. 179/2006 Coll. defines the relation of qualifications and professions. These are part of the National System of Occupations, whose creation, updating and content are prescribed by Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment.

For the implementation of the Act are relevant other legislations setting qualifications as a specific condition.

- Decree no. 176/2009 Coll., specifying the particulars of the application for accreditation of education programme and an organization of education in a retraining programme. This decree, among others, stipulates that in areas where there are approved qualifications under the Act no. 179/2006 Coll., the accreditation of the MSMT can only be obtained for a course that will end with examination for this qualification.
- Vocational qualification is one of the conditions to perform certain chimney sweeper activities, given by the Government Regulation no. 91/2010 Coll., on conditions of fire safety during the operation of chimneys, flues and fuel appliances.
- Decree no. 16/2009 on the content and scope of qualifications for physical security and services of a private detective, issued by the Ministry of Interior, specifies the condition of vocational qualifications to gain licensed business permits in some of the security services. Although this condition was eventually cancelled, the vocational qualification still remains in the Trade Act as one of the requirements to perform these activities.
- Along with the aforementioned amendment to Act no. 179/2006 Coll., the Trade Act was simultaneously also amended in the sense that an assembly of vocational qualifications leading

to a complete qualification will be a sufficient condition for obtaining a trade license for craft trades (even without the final examination and acquiring a vocational certificate.

Annex 2. Forms used in the procedure of including qualifications in the NSK

Based on past experience, the process of proposing vocational qualifications is standardized. The majority of the proposal is submitted by filling out the so called **birth certificate**.

Proposal of new qualification

to be verified according to Act no. 179/2006 Coll. on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

Qualification title:
Qualification level:
Position in National System of Occupations (NSP) related to the proposed qualifications or activities allowing to perform the qualification (if there is no related position in NSP)
Position title (as listed in NSP):
Activities („job description“):

Arguments supporting the inclusion of a qualification in the priority group created for its importance and usefulness:
1. Please submit arguments supporting an assumption that such qualifications will be of interest from parties attempting to obtain a certificate, and that this qualification will be an object of demand in the labour market, and person with this qualification will be employable - e.g. an expected range of recruitment with this qualifications to your company, an expected number of employees of your company involved in training leading to obtaining this qualification, etc. Do you know of another company that will recognize this qualification and use it in their human resources work, for example during recruitment or training for existing employees? Quantify the expected interest in examinations. Your arguments can be strengthened by submitting a needs analysis of the labour market in the region - in relation to the proposed vocational qualification.

Applicant's statement:

- 1. Do you know of a person or entity, which might be interested and able to become an authorized body, AO – *autorizovaná osoba* (i.e. to perform verification according to an assessment standard)?**

Provide specific proposals for possible AOs, e.g. one strong AO or more smaller AOs?
Strengthen your argument by adding a guarantee - a written statement of the entity that declares interest in becoming the AO.

Applicant's statement:

- 2. Do you know of an education provider, who might be interested and able to provide education for this qualification and manage related PR activities?**

Provide names of specific education providers. Take into account:

- *Interest to provide education*
- *Ability to provide education*
- *Ability to advertise*

Applicant's statement:

3. Indicate whether the qualification requirements are **regulated by any current law**. If so, specify which and how.

Applicant's statement:

Applicant:

.....
First name and surname, name of organization

.....
Signature

Similar form can be also used to initiate a revision of an existing (approved) vocational qualification standard.

Annex 3. Documents used in the procedure of including qualifications in the NSK

■ **Methodology of using NSK**

The document is approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) based on prior consultation by the National Council for Qualifications.

Basic material is complemented by a number of other documents and instruments, e.g.:

- A set of methodological papers with guidelines
- A programme on electronic support for field guarantors (a simple e-learning programme and a set of instructional videos)
- A programme on electronic support for creators of qualification standards (a simple e-learning programme and a set of instructional videos)
- Guidelines for assessing vocational qualifications by employers
- Guidelines for creating standards for foreman qualifications
- A list of steps for IS NSK

■ **Sector council model (Model of involvement of social partners in describing the world of work through sector councils)**

An aggregate of rules of cooperation of many entities setting up and explaining the duties, powers and responsibilities of various actors and network of sector councils as a whole. The goal is to ensure the network of sector councils meets the needs of different projects in the area of human resource development and supports creation of objective and representative positions on issues of the Czech labour market.

■ **Process standards in development and revision of vocational and complete vocational qualifications through the sector council model**

A set of rules that describes and defines role of networks of sector council in creating standards of vocational qualifications, complete vocational qualifications and other NSK related activities.

It sets rules to optimize network performance when creating NSK. Sector councils can be used as a whole or modular.

NSK procedural standards are defined so as the processes in the creation and development of NSK are quality and transparent. They are based on rules of *Sector council model* and *Methodology of using NSK*.

Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and the relevant decree of the interpretation of the MSMT are always superior.

Annex 4. Levels and Descriptors in the NSK

A framework for qualifications awarded under the act 179/2006 Sb. was developed in 2005 and approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in January 2010.¹²

The level descriptors of the NSK were developed in close connection with the eight levels of the EQF. They describe the activities required at each level for employment. Despite formal differences – the NSK descriptors are not divided into three categories knowledge, skills and competences, a comparison of the NSK descriptors to those of the EQF shows that the eight qualification levels of the NSK correspond well to those of the EQF.

Level descriptors in the NSK	Level	Level descriptors in the EQF Knowledge Skills Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify work tools, equipment, raw materials, etc. Carry out tasks according to simple, unchanging instructions Identify problems which occur while following these instructions 	1	<u>basic general knowledge</u> <u>basic skills required to carry out simple tasks</u> work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be familiar with materials describing the work to be done Choose appropriate tools, materials etc. for use in each procedure or method from among the various options Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services Identify problems which occur while following instructions Carry out instructions in standard situations with a minimum of changes 	2	<u>basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study</u> <u>basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools</u> work or study under supervision with some autonomy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be familiar with documentation, norms and standards in common use in the field Select appropriate procedures, methods, tools, raw materials etc. from various options, according to conditions and requirements Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services, and those of others Carry out quality control, determine the causes of deficiencies and decide how to eliminate them 	3	<u>knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study</u> <u>a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information take responsibility for</u>

¹² Memorandum *Qualification Levels in the National Qualifications System: Description of the levels and how they relate to the EQF*, MSMT, Executive Committee no. 1, 5 January 2010

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify problems which occur while following the selected procedures, determine their causes and decide how to solve them • Carry out selected procedures depending on conditions and requirements including taking into account social, economic, and ecological considerations • Present his or her work, products or services • Direct a small group carrying out simple or supporting activities 		<p>completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Be familiar with documentation, norms, standards and regulations in common use in the field</u> • Select appropriate procedures, methods, tools, raw materials etc. from various options, according to conditions and requirements • Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services, and those of others; carry out quality control, determine the causes of deficiencies and their consequences and decide how to eliminate them • Identify problems which occur while following the selected procedures, determine their causes and implement the required changes to the procedure • Identify social, economic and environmental aspects of any problems which arise • Determine the causes of unusual behaviour from individuals and objects in the workplace • Assess the relevance of vocational information • Evaluate the methods of others from the point of view of using them in his or her own work • Carry out selected procedures, with modifications depending on conditions and requirements including taking into account social, economic, and ecological considerations • Use technical information from a variety of sources in problem solving • Make suggestions for improving results • Design simpler analogues of existing procedures and products • Further development of proposals for new products and procedures • Present his or her work, products or services, discuss problems and find solutions and communicate effectively • Direct a small group carrying out selected procedures depending on conditions and requirements 	<p>4</p>	<p><u>factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study</u></p> <p>a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study</p> <p>exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Be familiar with documentation, norms, standards and regulations in use in the field to the extent that he or she can explain them to others in standard situations</u> • Select appropriate procedures, methods, tools, raw materials etc. from various options, according to conditions and requirements • Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services, and those of others; carry out quality control, determine the 	<p>5</p>	<p><u>comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge</u></p>

<p>causes of deficiencies and their consequences and decide how to eliminate them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify problems which occur while following the selected procedures, determine their causes and implement the required changes to the procedure • Identify social, economic and environmental aspects of any problems which arise • Distinguish between usual and unusual behaviour from individuals and objects in the workplace, determine causes and context of unusual behaviour, and draw conclusions and formulate proposals • Analyse moderately complex systems, phenomena and processes • Evaluate the relevance of technical information to resolving standard problems • Evaluate the methods of others from the point of view of using them in his or her own work • Carry out selected procedures, with modifications depending on conditions and requirements including taking into account social, economic, and ecological considerations • Independently carry out common technical tasks by standards methods • Solve problems requiring abstraction and employ simple research methods • Use technical information from a variety of sources in problem solving • Integrate several components into complex solutions • Formulate proposals for improvements including proposals for new processes • Design moderately complex procedures and products • Present his or her work, products or services, discuss problems and find solutions, communicate effectively and present convincing arguments • Direct a group carrying out moderately complex technical tasks depending on unforeseen conditions and requirements 		<p>a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</p> <p>exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Be familiar with documentation, norms, standards and regulations in use in the field to the extent that he or she can explain them to others in standard and non-standard situations</u> • Select appropriate procedures, methods, tools, raw materials etc. from various options, according to conditions and requirements • Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services, and those of others, carry out quality control, determine the causes of deficiencies and their consequences and decide how to eliminate them • Identify problems which occur while following the selected procedures, determine their causes and implement the required changes to the procedure 	<p>6</p>	<p><u>advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles</u></p> <p>advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify social, economic and environmental aspects of any problems which arise • Analyse the causes and context of unusual behaviour from individuals and objects in the workplace, draw conclusions and formulate proposals • Analyse moderately complex systems, phenomena and processes • Assess the relevance of technical information • Evaluate the methods of others from the point of view of using them in his or her own work • Carry out selected procedures, with modifications depending on conditions and requirements including taking into account social, economic, and ecological considerations • Carry out fairly complex tasks for which there are no available procedures and methods • Solve problems requiring abstraction • Use technical information from a variety of sources in problem solving • Integrate several components into complex solutions • Propose system improvements • Design fairly complex procedures and products • Solve problems requiring broad theoretical knowledge, use research methods and simple scientific principles • Present his or her work, products or services and justify them in the face of criticism, discuss problems and find solutions, communicate effectively and present convincing arguments • Direct a group carrying out complex technical activities in unforeseen conditions 		<p>a specialised field of work or study</p> <p>manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Be familiar with documentation, norms, standards and regulations in use in the field to the extent that he or she can explain them to others in standard and non-standard situations and evaluate whether there is a need for changes in these norms and documents</u> • Plan procedures, methods and the use of tools and materials etc. according to desired results • Evaluate the quality of his or her products or services, and those of others, carry out quality control, determine the causes of deficiencies and their consequences and decide how to eliminate them • Identify problems which occur while following the selected procedures, determine their causes and implement the required changes to the procedure • Identify social, economic and environmental aspects of any problems which arise • Analyse the causes and context of unusual behaviour from individuals and objects in the workplace, draw conclusions and formulate proposals • Analyse complex systems, phenomena and processes 	7	<p><u>highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields</u></p> <p>specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the relevance of technical information and findings from other scientific fields • Evaluate the results of the works of others from the point of view of applying them in his or her own work • Carry out selected procedures, with modifications depending on conditions and requirements including taking into account social, economic, and ecological considerations • Design procedures and methods for the solution of complex problems and coordinate their implementation • Solve problems requiring abstraction and generalisation • Use technical information from a variety of sources and findings from various scientific fields in problem solving • Integrate several components into complex solutions • Propose fundamental systemic changes • Plan and implement new, complex procedures and products • Solve problems requiring broad and highly specialised theoretical knowledge, use research methods and simple scientific principles • Present his or her work, products or services, design new procedures, justify them in the face of criticism, lead discussions of complicated problems and find solutions, communicate effectively and present convincing arguments • Organise and plan complex processes carried out by multiple groups in unforeseen conditions, including strategic decision making 		<p>manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>
<p>Qualification level 7, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve problems requiring innovations of importance to the whole field • Contribute to the dissemination of the results of original research • Develop theories and methods for the most demanding creative activities, including scientific research and development • Present proposed procedures and research results and defend them in the face of criticism, and lead discussions on research and scientific problems • Direct wide-ranging research and development activities 	8	<p>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</p>

Annex 5. Act No 179/2006 Coll., on the Recognition of Further Education Results

179

ACT

of 30 March 2006

on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

The Parliament has resolved upon the following Act of the Czech Republic:

PART ONE

VERIFICATION AND RECOGNITION OF FURTHER EDUCATION RESULTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS

Section 1

Subject and Scope of Application

- (1) This act shall regulate
- a) the system of verification and recognition of further education results;
 - b) qualifications;
 - c) qualification standards for partial qualifications;
 - d) assessment standards for partial qualifications;
 - e) the National Register of Qualifications
 - f) rules for granting, extending validity and withdrawing authorisation for the verification of further education results;
 - g) rights and duties of participants of further education;
 - h) the scope of competencies of bodies executing state administration with regard to verifying and recognizing further education results.

(2) The provisions of special legal regulations¹³ regulating education, the assessment and verification of results of education, professional training or conditions of qualifications, and the assessment and recognition of professional qualifications and other competences for starting up employment or self-employed regulated activities and their performance in the Czech Republic shall not be prejudiced by this Act.

Section 2 Definitions

For the purpose of this Act the following definitions shall apply:

- a) initial education shall mean pre-school education, basic education, secondary education, education at conservatories, and tertiary professional education carried out in accordance with a special legal regulation¹⁴ in nursery schools, basic schools, secondary schools, conservatories and tertiary professional schools, and studies carried out on accredited study programmes under a special legal regulation¹⁵ at higher education institutions and their faculties;
- b) further education shall mean educational activities which are not considered to be initial education;
- c) complete qualifications shall mean professional qualifications of a natural person to duly perform all work activities pertaining to a relevant profession¹⁶;
- d) partial qualifications shall mean professional qualifications of a natural person to duly perform a certain work activity or a set of work activities in a relevant profession or in two or more professions respectively, in the scope defined in a qualification standard;
- e) the National Register of Qualifications shall mean a publicly accessible register of complete or partial qualifications acknowledged, distinguished and recognised in the Czech Republic;
- f) a qualification standard for partial qualifications shall mean a structured description of professional competence of a natural person for the due performance of a certain work activity or a set of work activities in a relevant profession or in two or more professions respectively;

¹³ For example Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act), as amended by Act No. 38/2005 Coll.; Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on Higher Educational Institutions Amending and Supplementing Some Other Acts (the Act on Higher Education Institutions), as amended; Act No. 18/2004 Coll. on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Other Competencies of Nationals of European Union Member States and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications), as amended; Act No. 95/2004 Coll. on Conditions for Attaining and Recognising Professional Qualifications and Special Qualifications to Perform Professions of a Surgeon, Dentist and Pharmacist, as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll.; Act No. 96/2004 Coll., on Conditions for Attaining and Recognizing Qualifications to Perform Professions Other than Medical Professions and to Perform Activities relating to Health Care Provision and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Professions Other than Medical Professions), as amended by Act No. 125/2005 Coll.; Act No. 85/1996 Coll. on Advocacy, as amended; Act No. 312/2002 Coll., on Officials of Territorial Self-governing Units and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts as amended by Act No. 46/2004 Coll.; Act No. 360/1992 Coll., on Performing the Profession of Certified Architects and on Performing the Profession of Certified Engineers and Technicians Working in Construction, as amended; Act No. 111/1994 Coll., on Road Traffic as amended; Decree No. 224/1995 Coll. on Qualifications of Persons to Navigate and Service Vessels as amended by Decree No. 295/2005 Coll.; and Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Public Health and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts; as amended.

¹⁴ Act No. 561/2004 coll. as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll.

¹⁵ Act No. 111/1998 Coll., as amended

¹⁶ For example Section 6 (1) (c) of Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment

- g) an assessment standard for partial qualifications shall mean a set of criteria, organisational and methodological procedures and material and technical prerequisites specified for the verification of the attainment of professional qualifications to duly perform a certain work activity or a set of work activities in a relevant profession or in two or more professions respectively;
- h) authorisation shall mean the authorisation of a natural person or a legal entity to verify, using the manner defined in a relevant assessment standard, the attainment of professional qualifications of a natural person specified in a relevant qualification standard for partial qualifications for which the authorisation in question has been granted;
- i) an authorised person shall mean a natural person or a legal entity who has been authorised hereunder;
- j) an authorised representative shall mean a natural person who is a member, partner, managing body, member of a managing body or an employee of an authorised legal entity or is involved in such a legal entity within a different labour-law or contractual relation, and who is entitled by the authorised person concerned to verify, on its behalf, whether the professional qualifications have been attained;
- k) an authorising body shall mean a central administration body competent to make decisions on granting, extending or withdrawing authorisation on the basis of the fact that a relevant partial qualifications is necessary for performing a profession or a work activity which falls under or is nearest to the competence of such body included in the Annex hereto; in the event of any dispute the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter referred to as the 'Ministry') in agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs shall determine the competence of an authorising body.

CHAPTER II

QUALIFICATIONS, THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS, QUALIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT STANDARD

Section 3

Breakdown of Qualifications

For the purposes of this Act, complete and partial qualifications shall be differentiated, whilst partial qualifications are usually part of complete qualifications. One and the same partial qualification may be part of two or more complete qualifications.

Section 4

Complete Qualifications

- (1) Attainment of complete qualifications for a certain profession shall be confirmed by
 - a) a document or a set of documents (hereinafter referred to as the 'evidence') on due completion of a relevant accredited Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral study programme specified in the National Register of Qualifications;

b) evidence of attaining a relevant degree of education or education in a respective field of education specified in the National Register of Qualifications, and attained after completing initial education.

(2) Attainment of complete qualifications for a certain profession shall be also confirmed by

a) passing a final examination, a school-leaving examination or a graduation examination ('absolutorium') at a conservatory in accordance with a special legal regulation¹⁷ at schools inscribed in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and by evidence of attaining a degree of education in a relevant field of education specified in the National Register of Qualifications which was preceded by attaining relevant partial qualifications confirmed hereunder, or by

b) evidence of attaining a relevant degree of education specified in the National Register of Qualifications issued after completion of initial education and by attaining a relevant partial qualification or relevant partial qualifications which are confirmed hereunder and specified in the National Register of Qualifications.

(3) The Ministry shall approve, amend, repeal and publish in the National Register of Qualifications the list of complete qualifications distinguished, acknowledged and recognized in the Czech Republic. Professional competence achieved by attaining a degree of education in a certain field of education under a special legal regulation¹⁸ shall be always specified in the National Register of Qualifications as at least one complete qualification.

Section 5 Partial Qualifications

(1) With regard to the needs of the labour market, the Ministry shall approve, amend, repeal and publish in the National Register of Qualifications the list of partial qualifications.

(2) Partial qualifications shall always be part of a complete qualification in so far as the attainment of a complete qualification has been confirmed by evidence of attaining a degree of education in a relevant field of education under Section 4 (2) (a). A partial qualification does not have to be part of a complete qualification if a complete qualification is attained through a procedure under Section 4 (2) (b) herein. When developing framework educational programmes under a special legal regulation² the Ministry shall take into account the division of complete qualifications into partial qualifications.

(3) A partial qualification attained within the system of further education shall be verified under the conditions laid down in Sections 17 through 20 herein.

(4) Attainment of a partial qualification shall be confirmed within the system of further education by a certificate issued under Section 19 herein.

¹⁷ Sections 113a through 113c of Act No. 561/2004 Coll. as amended by Act No. 179/2006 Coll.

¹⁸ Government Regulation No. 689/2004 Coll., on the List of Educational Branches within Basic, Secondary and Tertiary Professional Education.

Section 6 The National Register of Qualifications

(1) The National Register of Qualifications shall be maintained and published by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, an organisation receiving contributions from the state budget (hereinafter referred to as the 'Institute'), electronically in a manner enabling remote access.

(2) The following data on complete qualifications shall be at all times included in the National Register of Qualifications:

- a) the name and number ('the code') of a complete qualification;
- b) determination of the profession⁴ or professions which the relevant complete qualification relates to;
- c) in the event of a complete qualification broken down into partial qualifications, the list of all partial qualifications the attainment of which is a precondition for attaining the complete qualification in a manner stipulated in Section 4 (2) shall be also included; and
- d) evidence under Section 4 (1) and (2), or a combination of evidence confirming attainment of the relevant complete qualification.

(3) The following data on partial qualifications shall be at all times included in the National Register of Qualifications:

- a) the name and number ('the code') of a partial qualification;
- b) the qualification standard for the partial qualification concerned including its links to other qualifications;
- c) determination of the profession⁴ or professions which the relevant partial qualification relates to;
- d) the assessment standard for the partial qualification concerned and data indicating whether a certain health condition shall be required for taking an examination;
- e) in the event of a partial qualification which is part of a complete qualification, the list of all related partial qualifications the attainment of which is a precondition for attaining a complete qualification in a manner stipulated in Section 4 (2) shall be included;
- f) the name of a competent authorising body;
- g) the list of authorised persons competent to verify hereunder the attainment of professional competence required for attaining a partial qualification, including data stipulated in section 15 (b) through (f); and
- h) data indicating whether the relevant examination shall be taken before an authorised person or an examination panel; and in the case of an examination taken before an examination panel, the necessary number of members of such panel for the partial qualification concerned.

Section 7

Qualification Standard for a Partial Qualification

(1) The Ministry, acting in agreement with the relevant authorising body, shall approve, amend or repeal qualification standards.

(2) A draft qualification standard or its amendments shall be prepared by the Institute in cooperation with the National Board for Qualifications (hereinafter referred to as the 'Board') and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and shall be submitted to the Ministry for its approval. In so doing, the Institute shall also cooperate with professional chambers, interest and occupational associations, organisations of employers, professional societies, associations of legal entities carrying out activities of schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and representatives of higher education institutions.

(3) The approval, amendment and repeal of qualification standards shall be published in the Official Journal of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter referred to as the 'Journal').

(4) The Institute shall publish qualification standards by including them in the National Register of Qualifications.

Section 8

Assessment Standard for a Partial Qualification

(1) Assessment standards shall be derived from qualification standards.

(2) Assessment standards shall be approved, amended, or repealed by the Ministry.

(3) The Institute, in cooperation with the Board, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the relevant authorising body, shall prepare the draft assessment standard or its amendment and submit it to the Ministry for its approval. In so doing the Institute shall also cooperate with professional chambers, interest and occupational associations, organisations of employers, professional societies, associations of legal entities carrying out activities of schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and representatives of higher education institutions.

(4) The approval, amendment and repeal of assessment standards shall be published in the Journal.

(5) The Institute shall publish assessment standards by including them in the National Register of Qualifications.

CHAPTER III

RULES FOR GRANTING, EXTENDING THE VALIDITY OF AND WITHDRAWING AUTHORISATION

Section 9

Granting Authorisation

- (1) An authorising body shall decide on granting authorisation on the basis of a written application.
- (2) An applicant is legally entitled to be granted authorisation provided that he/she satisfies all conditions for granting authorisation hereunder.
- (3) Granting authorisation shall be subject to an administrative fee under a special legal regulation¹⁹.

Section 10

Conditions for Granting Authorisation to Natural Persons

- (1) Where an applicant for granting authorisation is a natural person, an authorising body shall grant authorisation to the applicant provided that he/she
 - a) is fully legally competent;
 - b) has reached the age of twenty three (23) years;
 - c) is without a criminal record;
 - d) proves the attainment of professional competence corresponding to the partial qualification concerned;
 - e) proves not less than five (5) years of experience in the profession for the performance of which a professional competence he/she will verify is necessary, in the case he/she has authorisation for the relevant partial qualification;
 - f) submits an affidavit proving that he/she is aware of the current development in the field of the relevant partial qualification and related professions;
 - g) proves necessary material and technical prerequisites for the organisation of examinations stipulated in Section 18 and specified in the assessment standard of the relevant partial qualification;
 - h) proves that his/her assets have not, during the recent five (5) years, been subject to bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings, he/she is not being wound up, a proposal for bankruptcy proceedings has not been rejected due to insufficient assets of the applicant, bankruptcy proceedings have not been cancelled as a result of compliance with the resolution to distribute the estate, and bankruptcy proceedings have not been cancelled since the assets of an applicant were not sufficient to cover bankruptcy costs;
 - i) has not during the recent five (5) years had tax in arrears, has not been deficient in payments of social security contributions, health security contributions, contributions to national employment policy or payments of related fines;
 - j) has applied for granting authorisation for a partial qualification for which both qualification and assessment standards had been approved.

¹⁹ Act No. 634/2004 Coll., on Administrative Fees, as amended

(2) For the purposes of this Act a person without a criminal record shall be a person who has not been sentenced, by final and conclusive judgement,

- a) for a wilful criminal offence, or
- b) for a negligent criminal offence the grounds of which relate to the performance of the activities of an authorised person hereunder, unless such sentence was expunged or if he/she is not considered to be convicted.

(3) Requirements for professional competence of a person possessing authorisation for a certain partial qualification and the manners of proving that such qualification has been satisfied are specified in the assessment standard for the relevant partial qualification.

(4) Direct teaching by teachers at schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities and providing education in the field in which complete qualification may be attained according to the National Register of Qualifications shall be considered experience stipulated in sub-section 1 (e).

(5) The satisfaction of the condition laid down in sub-section 1 (c) shall be proven by an extract from the Criminal Register, the date of which must not be older than three (3) months. If an applicant is not a national of the Czech Republic the satisfaction of such condition shall be proven by a corresponding document issued by a competent authority of the country of origin of the applicant or of the country where he/she has resided continuously for longer than three (3) months during the last three (3) years. Such document must not be older than three (3) months. If it is not possible to deliver relevant documents because of serious reasons these may be replaced by an affidavit. Proving the satisfaction of conditions stipulated in subsection 1 (h) may be replaced submitting the affidavit of the applicant. If the documents or an affidavit are written in a foreign language, with the exception of the Slovak language, applicants shall submit them along with official translation into the Czech language.

Section 11

Conditions for Granting Authorisation to Legal entities

(1) Should an applicant for granting authorisation be a legal entity, an authorising body shall grant authorisation to an applicant provided that

- a) the subject of the activities of the applicant relates to a relevant partial qualification;
- b) the applicant proves necessary material and technical prerequisites for the organisation of examinations stipulated in Section 18 and specified in the assessment standard for the relevant partial qualification;
- c) the applicant designates among its members, partners, managing bodies, members of the bodies, employees or other persons in labour-law or other contractual relations to the applicant at least one natural person about whom the applicant shall prove that such person satisfies conditions stipulated in Section 10 (1) (a) through (f) and will carry out the activities of an authorised person on behalf of the applicant as an authorised representative;

- d) the assets of the applicant have not been during the recent five (5) years subject to bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings, the applicant is not being wound up, a proposal for bankruptcy proceedings has not been rejected for the reason of insufficient assets of the applicant, or bankruptcy proceedings have not been cancelled as a result of compliance with the resolution to distribute the estate, or bankruptcy proceedings have not been cancelled since the assets of the applicant are not sufficient to cover bankruptcy costs;
- e) the applicant has not had during the recent five (5) years tax in arrears, and has not been deficient in payments of social security contributions, health security contributions, contributions to national employment policy or payments of related fines;
- f) the person who carries out the duties of a statutory body of the applicant or a member of the statutory body of an applicant are without a criminal record (Section 10 (2));
- g) the applicant applied for granting authorisation for a partial qualification for which both qualification and assessment standards had been approved.

(2) Proving satisfaction of the conditions laid down in sub-section 1 (d) and (e) may be replaced by the affidavit of the applicant. Satisfying the condition laid down in sub-section 1 (f) shall be proven, in the case of a natural person, by an extract from the Criminal Register, the date of which must not be older than three (3) months. If a natural person is not a national of the Czech Republic the satisfaction of such condition shall be proven by a corresponding document issued by a competent authority of the country of his/her origin or the country where he/she has resided continuously longer than for three (3) months during the last three (3) years. Such document must not be older than three (3) months. If it is not possible to provide relevant documents because of serious reasons these may be replaced by an affidavit. If the documents or an affidavit are written in a foreign language, with the exception of the Slovak language, applicants shall submit them along with official translation into the Czech language.

(3) Satisfying the conditions stipulated in sub-section 1 (a) and (d) through (f) shall not be required in the case of a legal entity carrying out activities of a school and authorised by its inclusion in the Register of Schools and School Facilities to provide education and issue certificates in the field of education in which the complete qualification, the part of which is a partial qualification whose attainment is to be verified by an authorised person, may be attained according to the National Register of Qualifications. The legal entity specified in the first sentence of this provision may prove by an affidavit the fact that a natural person stipulated in sub-section 1 (c) satisfies the conditions laid down in Section 10 (1) (a) through (e).

Section 12 **Authorised Representative**

(1) One and the same natural person may be designated as an authorised representative for only ever one authorised legal entity.

(2) An authorised representative may not be simultaneously an authorised natural person for the same partial qualification.

(3) The execution of activities of an authorised representative are subject to Section 75 of the Labour Code.

(4) An authorised representative shall satisfy the conditions stipulated in Section 10 (1) (a) through (f).

Section 13

Common Provisions for Awarding Authorisation

(1) Authorisation may be granted for a partial qualification for which both qualification and assessment standards have been approved.

(2) Authorisation shall be granted for five (5) years.

(3) The validity of authorisation may be, even repeatedly, extended for further five (5) years upon an application filed not later than three (3) months prior to the date of expiration of the authorisation. The provisions hereof shall reasonably apply to proceedings on extension of authorisation.

(4) Awarded authorisation shall be non-transferable to other natural persons or legal entities and may not be devolved upon legal successors.

Section 14

Duties of Authorised Persons

(1) An authorised person shall be obliged to inform in writing the authorising body which granted the authorisation in question of any changes which occurred during the validity of authorisation and which concern data on satisfying the conditions stipulated in Section 10 (1), if the authorised person is a natural person, or Section 11 (1) and Section 12 (4), if the authorised person is a legal entity, within fifteen (15) days from the date on which the authorised person realised the change concerned. An authorised legal entity shall be also obliged to provide information on changes decisive for applying the provisions of Section 11 (3).

(2) An authorised person shall be obliged to inform in writing the authorising body which granted the authorisation in question of any changes which occurred during the validity of authorisation and which concern data on the authorised person included in the National Register of Qualifications, namely in the list of authorised persons under Section 15 (b) and (c) including data on authorised representatives within fifteen (15) days from the date when the authorised person realised the change concerned.

Section 15
Records on Authorised Persons

Authorised persons shall provide, always as of the first day of the following month, the Institute with the below data, to be published in the National Register of Qualifications, on persons who were granted authorisation or whose data, stipulated under letters (a) through (f), has changed:

- a) the name of the authorising body which granted authorisation;
- b) if the authorised person is a natural person, the name or names, surname, date of birth, and the place of permanent residence of the authorised person, or if the authorised person is a legal entity, corporate or trade name, registered seat, legal form and identification number of the authorised person as well as names, surnames and dates of birth of authorised representatives;
- c) the contact address of the authorised person or their e-mail address or telephone number;
- d) the reference number and the date on which the decision granting or extending authorisation was issued;
- e) the name of the partial qualification for which authorisation was granted;
- f) the period for which authorisation will be in effect.

Section 16
Expiry and Withdrawal of Authorisation

(1) Authorisation shall expire

- a) in case of a natural person
 - 1. on the death of the authorised person;
 - 2. on the declaration of the death of the authorised person;
 - 3. on expiration of the period for which the relevant authorisation was granted; or
 - 4. on withdrawing authorisation;
- b) in case of a legal entity
 - 1. on the abolishing or dissolving of the authorised person;
 - 2. on the expiration of the period for which the relevant authorisation was granted; or
 - 3. on withdrawing authorisation.

(2) An authorising body shall decide on withdrawing authorisation based on the following reasons:

- a) the data upon which authorisation was granted was not true;
- b) the authorised person ceased to satisfy some of the conditions required for grant authorisation;
- c) the authorised person lost its position allowing Section 11 (3) to apply and did not forthwith prove satisfaction of the conditions stipulated in Section 11 (1) (a) and (d) through (f);
- d) the authorised person seriously or repeatedly violated legal regulations concerning the performance of its activities;
- e) the authorised legal entity does not have for a period of longer than two (2) months any authorised representative, or
- f) the authorised person applied for withdrawal of authorisation.

(3) Serious violation of legal regulations under sub-section 2 (d) shall mean

- a) breaching duties to inform the authorising body of any changes under Section 14;
- b) breaching duties to inform the authorising body of the place and date of an examination taken under Section 17 (5), (8) and (10);
- c) breaching duties to assess the attainment of professional competence in compliance with the relevant assessment standard;
- d) if the authorised person or its authorised representative fails, without a well-founded reason, at least twice to examine an applicant.

(4) If authorisation is withdrawn from an authorised person for the reason stipulated in sub-section 2 (d) such person may not be granted authorisation for a partial qualification concerned in the following five (5) years from the date when the decision of authorisation withdrawal came into legal force.

(5) Data on the expiry or withdrawal of authorisation shall be submitted by authorising bodies to the Institute to be published in the National Register of Qualifications without any undue delay after the relevant decision on authorisation withdrawal comes into legal force or after they are informed of other reasons pertaining to the expiry of authorisation.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF ATTAINED PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Section 17

General Conditions for Assessing Attained Professional Competence

(1) Assessment as to whether a natural person acquired relevant professional competence defined by a qualification standard for a relevant partial qualification shall be carried out by an examination in accordance with an assessment standard for the partial qualification concerned.

(2) An applicant for taking an examination (hereinafter referred to as the 'Applicant') may be any natural person older than eighteen (18) years who has achieved at least basic education.

(3) The condition for taking an examination is to apply for such examination using the form published by the Ministry in a manner allowing remote access and to pay a specified amount for the examination (hereinafter referred to as the 'fee'). An Applicant shall send the application form to any authorised person included in the National Register of Qualifications and authorised for the partial qualification concerned even if the examination is to be taken before the examination panel under Section 18 (1).

(4) An authorised person or the examination panel of an authorised person or persons (Section 18 (1) and (2)) shall assess the attainment of professional competence. The examination may be taken only if both qualification and assessment standards were approved for the partial qualification concerned and if authorisation was granted for the partial qualification concerned at least to one person in the event that the examination is to be taken before an authorised person, or two or three persons in the event that the examination is to be taken before the examination panel.

(5) An authorised person who receives an examination application form shall send to the Applicant within twenty one (21) days from the day of delivery of the application an invitation to take the examination. The copy of the invitation shall be, at the same time, sent to the authorising body for its information only.

(6) Unless an Applicant requests an earlier date the examination may not be taken earlier than after twenty (21) days from the date on which the invitation for the examination was sent to the Applicant. If the proposed date does not suit the Applicant the relevant authorised person shall determine, in agreement with the Applicant, another date, however not later than six (6) weeks from the delivery of the invitation.

(7) An authorised person is entitled to payment for organising such examination. In the event the examination is taken before the examination panel the Applicant shall pay the fee to the Chair of the examination panel (Section 18 (3)). The Applicant shall pay the fee to the authorised person not later than seven (7) days prior to the date on which the examination is to be taken or commenced unless the Applicant agrees with the authorised person on a later date. The fee shall be the income of the authorised person; in the event that the examination is taken before the examination panel the fee shall be distributed equally among authorised persons who are members of the examination panel or who are represented in the examination panel by their authorised representative or their authorised representatives. If the examination panel consists of only authorised

representatives of one authorised legal entity the fee shall constitute the income of such legal entity. The fee shall not be the subject of general regulations on fees and charges²⁰.

(8) If an Applicant cannot take an examination on the determined date for health or other serious reasons he/she may, not later than two (2) days prior to the determined date of the examination, request the authorised person or the Chair of the examination panel in writing, stating the reasons, to specify another date. The authorised person or the Chair of the examination panel may, on the basis of reasons deserving special consideration, waive the lapsed time. If the authorised person or the Chair of the examination panel accepts the request and determines an alternative date for the examination it shall inform both the Applicant and the authorising body of such date. If the proposed date does not suit the Applicant the authorised person shall specify an alternative date in agreement with the Applicant not later than six (6) weeks from the delivery of the invitation.

(9) If an Applicant does not take the examination on the date specified under subsection 6 or 8 he/she shall be assessed as failing the examination. He/she shall not be refunded the fee paid.

(10) If the examination is not taken on the date specified under sub-section 6 or 8 due to the absence of the relevant authorised person or any member of the examination panel, an alternative date for the examination shall be specified in agreement with the Applicant without prejudice to general regulations on damage compensation. The authorised person or the Chair of the examination panel shall inform the relevant authorising body of the alternative date of the examination.

Section 18 Examination Performance

(1) An examination shall be taken before the authorised person who was granted authorisation for the partial qualification concerned or, if it is specified in the assessment standard for the relevant partial qualification, in the presence of the examination panel comprising two (2) or three (3) members (hereinafter referred to as the 'Examiner').

(2) An Examiner shall be either an authorised representative of an authorised legal entity possessing authorisation for the partial qualification concerned, entitled on behalf of such legal entity to verify the attainment of the partial qualification in question, or an authorised natural person possessing authorisation for the partial qualification concerned, or the examination panel consisting of members who are authorised natural persons possessing authorisation for the partial qualification in question, or the authorised representative of the authorised legal entity possessing authorisation for the partial qualification in question entitled on behalf of such legal entity to verify the attainment of the partial qualification concerned. Authorised representatives of the same authorised legal entity may be members of the same examination panel.

(3) Should the examination be held before the examination panel which received the examination application of an Applicant, the Chair of the examination panel, who is an authorised natural person or an authorised representative of an authorised legal entity possessing authorisation for the partial qualification concerned, shall designate, from among authorised natural persons possessing authorisation for the partial qualification concerned or among authorised representatives

²⁰ For example Act No. 634/2004 Coll., as amended

of legal entities possessing authorisation for the partial qualification concerned, other members of the examination panel and shall ensure their cooperation during the examination.

(4) Prior to the commencement of an examination an Applicant shall be obliged to prove his/her identity by his/her identity card²¹, and as regards partial qualifications as laid down in the National Register of Qualifications to submit also evidence on his/her health condition for carrying out relevant work activities. If the Applicant does not submit his/her identity card or evidence he/she shall not be permitted to take the examination.

(5) An examination is public. The practical part of an examination and practical examination shall not be public where this is necessary for hygienic reasons or for occupational and health safety.

(6) An Examiner shall be obliged to ensure with due care that the examination is held in compliance with the relevant assessment standard, and that the evaluation is objective and corresponds to the demands laid down in the relevant assessment standard.

(7) Should an examination be taken before an examination panel the Chair of the examination panel shall be responsible for the examination itself and for meeting all duties stipulated in sub-sections 11 and 12. All members of the examination panel shall be present during the examination. In the event that the organisation or duration of an examination or some of its parts exclude the permanent presence of all members of the examination panel during the examination the Chair shall assign a member of the examination panel who shall be responsible for the course of the given part of the examination. The examination panel shall decide on the result of the examination by resolution upon a majority vote of its members. In the event of equal voting, the vote of the Chair shall decide.

(8) The form of an examination or its parts shall be given by demands concerning the scope of work activities relating to the verification of professional competence and shall be specified in the relevant assessment standard.

(9) The time for preparing the examination or its individual parts and the time specified for taking the examination itself or its individual parts shall be defined in the relevant assessment standard.

(10) An Applicant shall successfully pass an examination if he/she satisfies the requirements specified in the relevant assessment standard.

(11) The authorised person shall inform the Applicant of the result of the examination, in writing, delivered or sent to the Applicant within five (5) days of the date of the examination or its last part. If the Applicant passed the examination successfully the authorised person shall, within the aforementioned time limit, deliver or send a certificate under Section 19 herein.

(12) An authorised person shall write the minutes on the course and results of the examination and send these along with a duplicate of the certificate to the relevant authorising body, which granted authorisation to the authorised person, within one (1) month of the date of the

²¹ Section 36 (4) of Act 500/2004 Coll. on the Rules of Administrative Procedure

examination or its last part unless the authorising body requires this in a shorter period of time since it wishes to review the course and results of the examination under Section 20 herein.

Section 19 Issuance of a Certificate

(1) The evidence confirming that an examination was passed successfully and that the relevant partial qualification was attained shall be a certificate. Such certificate, which is a public document, shall be issued by the authorised person – Examiner, and in the case of an examination taken before an examination panel it shall be issued by the Chair of the examination panel.

(2) A certificate shall contain the following data:

- a) the name, or names, and surname and, if applicable, academic title and scientific degree of the Applicant;
- b) the birth identification number of the Applicant, if this was assigned; otherwise the date of birth;
- c) the place of birth of the Applicant;
- d) the date of the examination and the date of issue of the certificate;
- e) the name of the partial qualification the attainment of which is being confirmed on the basis of acquiring professional competence.

(3) A certificate shall also include a list of attained professional competences. Furthermore, it shall contain data on the Examiner or members of the examination panel provided that the examination was held before the examination panel, in particular the name or names, surname and the number of authorisation of the authorised natural person, or the name or names and surname of the authorised representative and the number of authorisation and corporate or trade name and the seat of the relevant authorised legal entity. The certificate shall be signed by the Examiner or by the Chair of the examination panel and shall bear the official stamp with the small coat of arms of the Czech Republic²², as well as the name, surname and the number of authorisation of the authorised person in the case of a natural person, and the corporate or trade name and the seat of the authorised person in the case of a legal entity.

(4) The certificate and records on the course and the examination results and their duplicates shall be archived. When archiving duplicates of records and certificates authorising bodies, authorised legal entities and also reasonably authorised natural persons shall follow the provisions of the special legal regulation on archiving²³ relating to schools inscribed in the Register of Schools and School Facilities.

²² Section 2 (t) and Section 6 of Act No. 352/2001 Coll., on Using State Symbols of the Czech Republic and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts.

²³ Act No. 499/2004 Coll., on Archiving and Filing Services and on the Amendment to Some Acts, as amended.

(5) The provisions of the special legal regulations on the issuance of true copies and duplicates of school reports by schools inscribed in the Register of Schools and School Facilities²⁴ shall apply accordingly. If a person who issued the original of a certificate has already lost its authorisation for the relevant partial qualification or if the Chair of the examination panel, provided that the examination was taken before the examination panel, or the legal entity represented in the examination panel by the Chair concerned have lost their authorisation, the original shall be issued by the authorising body on the basis of documents stipulated in Section 18 (12). If the documents are archived, special legal regulations shall apply²⁵.

Section 20

Review of the Course and Results of an Examination

(1) Every person who has taken an examination may, within fifteen (15) days of the date he/she received the information on the result of the examination, demand, in writing, that the competent authorising body reviews the course and the examination results.

(2) The competent authorising body, according to documents of the Examiner and other persons present during the examination, shall decide on the request for review within sixty (60) days of the date of its delivery. The authorising body shall either confirm the result of the examination or, if the examination was evaluated contrary to the procedure stipulated in Section 18 or if other serious deficiencies occurred which could affect the due course of the examination or its evaluation, the authorising body shall order that the examination be repeated. The decision of the authorising body shall be delivered both to the applying person and the authorised person or the Chair of the examination panel.

(3) An examination shall be repeated not later than thirty (30) days from the date of delivery of the decision on the request to review the examination to the applying person in the presence of the same authorised person or the examination panel in presence of which the previous examination was taken. A representative of the authorising body concerned shall be present during the repeated examination. If the authorising body finds serious deficiencies in the course or evaluation of the repeated examination it shall follow Section 16 (2) (d).

(4) The costs of the repeated examination shall be covered by the authorising body which ordered the repeated examination. No fee shall be paid.

(5) Everyone is entitled to inspect the documents concerning him/her which are relevant to the decision on the course and results of the examination.

²⁴ Section 28 (8) of Act No. 561/2004 Coll.; Section 3 of decree No. 223/2005 Coll., on Some Certificates on Education

²⁵ Act No. 499/2004 Coll., on Archiving and Filing Services and on the Amendment to Some Acts, as amended.

CHAPTER V

RECOGNITION OF FURTHER EDUCATION RESULTS IN THE SYSTEM OF INITIAL EDUCATION

Section 21

The head teacher of the school shall recognise partial qualifications acquired in the system of further education under Section 5 for the purpose of attaining a degree of education in the system of initial education upon the conditions specified in a special legal regulation².

CHAPTER VI

BODIES COMPETENT FOR VERIFICATION AND RECOGNITION OF FURTHER EDUCATION RESULTS

Section 22

Authorising Bodies

Authorising bodies shall carry out in relation to verification and recognition of further education results the following activities:

- a) they shall participate in preparing qualification standards and assessment standards and their amendments (Sections 7 and 8);
- b) they shall decide on granting, extending validity and withdrawing authorisation (Sections 9 through 13 and Section 16);
- c) they shall maintain records on persons who were granted authorisation (Section 9), containing the data laid down in section 15;
- d) they shall provide the Institute with data on persons who were granted authorisation in the lists of authorised persons included in the National Register of Qualifications (Section 15);
- e) they shall be entitled to inspect the activities of authorised persons who were granted authorisation including adherence to the procedure relating to examinations and the issuance of certificates, in particular by means of the presence of their representatives during examinations under Sections 18 and 20;
- f) they shall send to the social security authorities a copy of the decision on granting, extending validity and withdrawing authorisation of a natural person within thirty (30) days of the date on which such decision entered into force;
- g) they shall maintain records of results of examinations taken before authorised persons who were granted authorisation, including records of issued certificates (Sections 18 through 20).

Section 23

Ministry

The Ministry shall carry out in relation to verification and recognition of further education results the following activities:

- a) it shall coordinate the activities of central administration bodies carried out hereunder;
- b) it shall approve, amend, repeal and publish the list of complete and partial qualifications broken down according to the competences of authorising bodies;
- c) it shall approve, amend and repeal qualification standards and assessment standards (Sections 7 and 8);
- d) it shall support the activities of the Board materially and financially;
- e) it shall earmark and through Regional Authorities allocate to legal entities carrying out activities of schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities which are not established by the state or a registered church or religious society authorised to establish church schools²⁶ funds from the state budget to be used for covering necessary eligible costs relating to the organisation of final examinations, school leaving examinations and graduation examinations ('absolutorium') at conservatories for persons who under this Act have acquired partial qualifications which all together confirmed the attainment of all professional competences laid down in accordance with the National Register of Qualifications for the due performance of all work activities carried out within a certain profession and who take, under a special legal regulation²⁷, the aforementioned examinations at a secondary school or conservatory without being a student of the school in question;
- f) it shall earmark and allocate to legal entities carrying out activities of schools and included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities which are established by the state or a registered church or religious society authorised to establish church schools²⁶ funds from the state budget to be used for covering necessary eligible costs relating to the organisation of final examinations, school-leaving examinations and graduation examinations ('absolutorium') at conservatories by persons who under this Act acquired partial qualifications which all together confirmed the attainment of all professional competences laid down in accordance with the National Register of Qualifications for the due performance of all working activities carried out within a certain profession and take, under the special legal regulation²⁷, the aforementioned examinations at a secondary school or conservatory without being a student of the school in question.

Section 24

Board

- (1) The Board shall be an advisory body of the Ministry in the field of qualifications.

²⁶ Section 7 (1) (e) of Act No. 3/2000 Coll., on Freedom of Religious Belief and the Position of Churches and Religious Societies and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Churches and Religious Societies)

²⁷ Section 113c of Act No. 561(2004, as amended by Act No. 179/2006 Coll.

(2) The Board shall consist of eighteen (18) members. The Minister of Education, Youth and Sports shall appoint and remove the Chair, vice-Chair and other members of the Board.

(3) The Minister of Education, Youth and Sports shall appoint the members of the Board, taking into account their professional competences,

a) from among persons proposed by

1. central administration bodies and other organisational units of the Czech Republic;
2. professional chambers, interest and occupational associations, organisations of employers, trade union organisations, professional societies, associations of legal entities carrying out activities of schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and higher education institutions; and

b) from among experts in the fields of education, qualifications, labour-law relations or funding further education.

(4) Members of the Board shall be appointed for a period of three (3) years. When appointing members of the Board for the first time the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports shall determine one third of the members whose office will terminate after one (1) year and one third of the members whose office will terminate after two (2) years. Members of the Board may be appointed repeatedly.

(5) The Board shall meet its tasks hereunder, in particular it shall

- a) discuss matters concerning the preparation of the National Register of Qualifications and its application in practice; and
- b) assess further issues concerning qualifications or further education which are submitted by the Ministry, and shall deliver its opinions.

(6) The Board may establish working groups for professional preparation of its meetings.

(7) The manner of the Board's and its working groups' meetings and the composition of working groups shall be regulated by the Rules of Order which shall be approved by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports.

(8) The Ministry shall cover the activities carried out by the Board materially and financially.

(9) The activities of members of the Board and their working groups are acts in the general interest²⁸. Such persons shall be entitled to days off without salary or wage refund and to reimbursement of travel and board expenses in the amount and scope specified by a special legal regulation²⁹ for employees in labour relation. They may also receive bonuses in the amount specified

²⁸ Section 124 of the Labour Code, as amended

²⁹ Act No. 119/1992 Coll. on Travel Expenses, as amended

by the Ministry and they shall be entitled to reimbursement of other eligible costs, determined by the Ministry, relating to the performance of the office of a member of the Board or its working group.

CHAPTER VII COMMON PROVISIONS

Section 25

(1) The procedure regulated by Sections 4 through 8, 17 through 19 and Section 23, shall not be procedure the purpose of which is to take a decision constituting, amending or repealing, in certain matters, rights or duties directly determined for a certain person, or which declares, in a certain matter, that such person shall have or shall not have such rights or duties³⁰.

(2) The Rules of Administrative Procedure shall not apply to decision-making under Section 20.

(3) If the last day of the time limit stipulated in Section 14, Section 17 (5) through (8), Section 18 (11) and (12) and Section 20 (1) through (3) is a Saturday, Sunday or a national holiday, the last day of the time limit shall be the next working day.

(4) The relevant provisions of the Rules of Administrative Procedure³¹ shall apply to the delivery of documents under Sections 17 through 20 accordingly.

(5) The Ministry shall lay down in the implementing legal regulation details for the authorisation of natural and legal entities, the data to be included in an invitation for an examination, the form of an examination, the amount of the fee for an examination, the procedure for legal entities carrying out activities of schools when reporting eligible costs provided for in Section 23 (e) and (f), details and the lay-out of certificates, the detailed procedure for archiving duplicates of issued certificates and records on the course and results of an examination, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs the Ministry shall specify details for the content, structure and manner of maintaining the National Register of Qualifications including conditions and terms for the inclusion of data concerning individual qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications.

³⁰ Section 9 of Act No. 500/2004 Coll.; Section 65 of Act No. 150/2002, the Rules of Administrative Procedure

³¹ Act 500/2004 Coll. as amended by Act No. 413/2005 Coll.

PART TWO

Amendment to the Act on Establishing Ministries and Other Central State Administration Authorities of the Czech Republic

Section 26

At the end of the text of Section 7 (2) of Act No. 2/1969 Coll. on Establishing Ministries and Other Central State Administration Authorities, as amended by Act No. 60/1988 Coll., Act No. 575/1990 Coll., Act No. 21/1993 Coll., Act No. 272/1996 Coll., Act No. 18/2004 Coll., and Act No. 362/2004 Coll., the following words shall be added “and in the field of acquiring qualification in the system of further education under a special legal regulation^{1a}”.

Footnote No. 1 shall read as follows:

^{1a} Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment of Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

PART THREE

Amendment to the Education Act

Section 27

The Act on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act), as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll., shall be amended as follows:

1. The heading of Part Nine shall read “**FURTHER EDUCATION AT SCHOOLS**”:
2. Paragraph 8 in Section 8 shall be repealed.
3. New Section 8a shall be inserted after Section 8 which shall read, including its heading, as follows:

Section 8a

The Name of a Legal Entity or Organisational Unit of the State

(1) The name of a legal entity or organisational unit of the state carrying out activities under sub-section 8 (7) must always include the following:

- a) a denotation of the kind or type of school if it carries out activities of a school;

- b) a denotation of the type of school facility to perform institutional education, protective education or preventive educational care if it carries out the activities of this kind of school facility;
- c) a denotation of the kind or type of school facility which is not specified under letter b) if it carries out the activities of only this type of school facility;

(2) The name of a legal entity or organisational unit of the state carrying out activities under sub-section 1 (a) and (b) may further include denotations of all kinds or types of school facilities if such legal entity or organisational unit of the state carries out the activities of such school facilities.

(3) The name may also contain a clarifying description or an honourable title, provided that such honourable title has been granted by the Ministry.

- 4. The wording “of the relevant grade” shall be repealed in Section 14 (2).
- 5. The wording “with the consent of the Regional Authority” shall be repealed in Section 16 (8) and (9).
- 6. Section 16 (10) shall be amended as follows:

“(10) To open an individual class, department or study group with adjusted educational programmes in a school under sub-section 8, and to establish the post of teacher’s assistant under sub-section 9, the consent of the Ministry is required in the case of schools established by the Ministry or registered churches or religious societies, and the consent of the relevant Regional Authority in the case of schools established by other entities.”

- 7. The wording “with regard to the field of education ‘Gymnasium Focusing on Sports’, a maximum of 46 school lessons per week” shall be added at the end of the text of Section 26 (2).
- 8. The wording “children, pupils and students” shall be replaced by the wording “children, pupils, students and applicants” in Section 28 (1) (c).
- 9. The sentence “School reports, VET certificates, and diplomas on completion of education shall contain the birth identification number of a pupil or student if such number has been assigned to him/her” shall be inserted after the first sentence of Section 28 (7).
- 10. The wording of the first sentence of Section 60 (8) “so that the enrolment proceedings must be closed not later than by the end of August” shall be repealed.
- 11. The first sentence of section 61 (4) shall be repealed.
- 12. Paragraph 6 pf Section 79 shall read as follows:

“(6) Prior to the commencement of the school-leaving examination pupils shall not attend school lessons for a period of five (5) teaching days in order to prepare for taking the school-leaving examination before its date specified by the head teacher of the relevant school.”

13. The wording “The Centre for Gathering Educational Results” shall be replaced in Section 80 (10) by the word “Ministry”.
14. The sentence “A pupil who has already acquired secondary education completed by a school-leaving examination by passing such an examination under previous legal regulation shall not take the common part of the school-leaving examination” shall be inserted after the first sentence of Section 81 (6).
15. The sentence “An application shall always contain the birth identification number of the applicant if such number has been assigned to him/her” shall be added at the end of Section 94 (1).
16. New Section 113a through 113c shall be inserted after Section 113 and shall read, including footnotes 26a and 26b as follows:

“Section 113a

Recognition of Further Education for Enrolment in a Higher Grade of Education

A certificate on acquiring partial qualification issued under a special legal regulation ^{26a)} shall be, for the purposes of Section 63, considered a certificate on previous education.

Section 113b

Recognition of Partial Education in the Course of Education

A certificate on acquiring partial qualification issued under a special legal regulation ^{26a)} shall be, for the purposes of Section 70, considered a certificate on partial education of a pupil.

Section 113c

Taking a Final Examination, School-Leaving Examination or Examination on Completing Education at a Conservatory

(1) A person having at least basic education who, under a special legal regulation^{26a)}, has acquired partial qualifications confirming all professional qualifications laid down in the National Qualification System for Due Performance of all Working Activities Carried Out Within a Certain Profession may, even without previous education at a secondary school or conservatory and without previous successful passing of examinations in all subjects or other comprehensive parts of a core curriculum laid down by a framework or school educational programme in a relevant field of education for all grades of education, acquire a level of education by successfully passing a final examination,

school-leaving examination or examination on completing education at a conservatory in a relevant field of education. The head teacher of a school in the respective field of education shall, upon the application of such person stated in the first sentence, enable that person to take a final examination, school leaving examination or examination on completing a conservatory on the date specified by the head teacher.

(2) The person specified in sub-section 1 may take a final examination, school-leaving examination or examination on completing education at a conservatory even though he/she is not a pupil of the relevant school. In such a case the person shall take the examination under similar conditions as if he/she were a pupil of the school. Unless the school has been established by the state, a region, a union of municipalities or a municipality, the head teacher of the school may make the option of taking a final examination, school-leaving examination or examination on completing education at a conservatory conditional upon payment of a fee of an amount specified by the head teacher; such fee shall be the income of the legal entity carrying out the activities of the school in question.

(3) Sub-sections 1 and 2 shall not apply to the fields of education within which qualifications for performing medical professions under a special legal regulation^{26b)} are acquired.“

26a) Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment of Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

26b) Act No. 96/2004 Coll., on Conditions for Attaining and Recognizing Qualifications to Perform Professions Other than Medical Professions and to Perform Activities Relating to Health Care Provision and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Professions Other than Medical Professions), as amended by Act. 125/2005 Coll.

17. The wording “the state budget further provides finance to cover eligible costs relating to final examinations, school-leaving examinations and examinations on completing conservatories under Section 113c” shall be inserted in the first sentence of Section 163 (1) after the word “founders”.

18. The wording “under Section 171 (1) and (2)” in the introductory part of the second sentence of Section 163(1) shall be replaced by the wording “under Section 171 (1) and (2) and for covering eligible costs relating to final examinations, school leaving examinations and examinations on completing conservatories under Section 113c”.

19. Section 174 (9) shall read as follows:

“(9) An auditor may be a person who has completed higher education, who has at least five (5) years of professional experience, and who satisfies other prerequisites laid down in special legal regulations⁴⁵⁾, or a person who has completed secondary education accomplished by a school-leaving examination, who has at least twenty (20) years of professional experience and who satisfies other prerequisites laid down in special legal regulations⁴⁵⁾.”

20. The following paragraph 7 shall be added to Section 183:

“(7) The Ministry, or an organisation established by the Ministry, shall, when gathering and processing data retrieved from the documentation of schools, school facilities and school registers and when collecting statistical data⁴⁹⁾, be entitled to use the birth identification numbers of applicants, children, pupils, and students. A legal entity carrying out the activities of a school or school facility shall be, for the purposes specified in the first sentence, obliged to provide the birth identification numbers of applicants, children, pupils, and students”.

21. The second sentence of Section 185 (1) shall read as follows: “The validity of teaching and study documents from the first grade up issued in accordance with current legal regulations shall terminate on such a date; until then, enrolment into education, the process of education and the completion of education shall be governed in accordance with such study documents”.
22. The figure “3” shall be replaced by figure “7” in Section 185 (2) and a second sentence shall be added after the first sentence which shall read as follows: “Tertiary professional schools may provide education in accordance with study documents approved under current legal regulations until the end of the school year 2011/2012 at the latest”.
23. In Section 185 paragraph 24 shall be added which shall read as follows:

“The head teacher of a school shall pursue a course of action under Section 60 (4), the second part of letter a), starting with the words “and further according to the final evaluation” from the school year 2007/2008.”

PART FOUR

Amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Staff and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts

Section 28

Act No. 563/2004 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on Pedagogical staff), as amended by Act No. 383/2005 Coll., shall be amended as follows:

1. Section 32 shall read as follows:

“Section 32

A natural person who does not satisfy the prerequisite under Section 3 (1) (b) may perform a direct educational function after the date of the entering of this Act into effect

- a) if they, as of the date of the entering of this Act into effect, have reached the age of fifty (50) years and by long performance of direct pedagogical activities in the relevant kind or type of

school for a period of at least fifteen (15) years proved their capability to carry out the required activities;

- b) not longer than for a period of five (5) years, unless they commence studies through which they will attain the required qualifications and if they complete such studies successfully;
- c) if higher education institutions providing education in vocational subjects taught at secondary and post-secondary vocational schools do not enable access to higher education in an accredited educational programme for the relevant study field; in such a case acquisition of the highest possible education in the relevant field shall be satisfactory.”

2. New Section 32a shall be inserted after Section 32 and it shall read as follows:

“Section 32a

A head teacher of a school may be a natural person who does not satisfy the prerequisite under Section 3 (1) (b) if he/she has acquired education by studying on an accredited master’s study programme and shall not later than within two (2) years from the date he/she began to perform the office of the head teacher of the school commence studies ensuring the required prerequisite and shall complete such studies successfully.”

P A R T F I V E

Amendment to the Act on Trade Licensing

Section 29

In Section 3 of Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing (the Act on Trade Licensing), as amended by Act No. 600/1992 Coll., Act No. 273/1993 Coll., Act No. 303/1993 Coll., Act No. 38/1994 Coll., Act No. 42/1994 Coll., Act No. 200/1994 Coll., Act No. 237/1995 Coll., Act No. 286/1995 Coll., Act No. 147/1996 Coll., Act No. 19/1997 Coll., Act No. 49/1997 Coll., Act No. 79/1997 Coll., Act No. 217/1997 Coll., Act No. 15/1998 Coll., Act No. 157/1998 Coll., Act No. 167/1998 Coll., Act No. 356/199 Coll., Act No. 360/1999 Coll., Act No. 363/1999 Coll., Act No. 121/2000 Coll., Act No. 122/2000 Coll., Act No. 123/2000 Coll., Act No. 124/2000 Coll., Act No. 149/2000 Coll., Act No. 151/2000 Coll., Act No. 158/2000 Coll., Act No. 247/2000 Coll., Act No. 258/2000 Coll., Act No. 362/2000 Coll., Act No. 409/2000 Coll., Act No. 458/2000 Coll., Act No. 100/2001 Coll., Act No. 120/2001 Coll., Act No. 256/2001 Coll., Act No. 274/2001 Coll., Act No. 477/2001 Coll., Act No. 281/2002 Coll., Act No. 162/2003 Coll., Act No. 224/2003 Coll., Act No. 167/2004 Coll., Act No. 257/2004, and Act No. 499/2004 Coll., the full stop at the end of paragraph 3 shall be replaced by a comma and the letter ag) shall be added which, including footnote 23p, shall read as follows:

“ag) activities of authorised persons entitled to verify the attainment of professional competence required for a partial qualification under a special legal regulation^{32p}).

^{32p} Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment of Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

PART SIX

Amendment to the Act on Administrative Fees and Charges

Section 30

In part I, item 22 of the Annex to Act No. 634/2004 Coll. on Administrative Fees and Charges, as amended by Act No. 217/2005 Coll., Act No. 228/2005 Coll., Act No. 361/2005 Coll., Act No. 444/2005 Coll., Act No. 545/2005 Coll., and Act No. 553/2005, letters (j) and (k) shall be added which, including footnote 26a, shall read as follows:

“j) Award of authorisation^{26a} (authorisation to verify the attainment of professional competence required to attain a partial qualification or partial qualifications) shall be charged for by the amount of CZK 1,500 for each qualification; however, the maximum amount shall not exceed CZK 10,000;

k) The extension of authorisation validity^{26a} stipulated in letter (j) above shall be charged for by the amount of CZK 500.

^{26a} Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment of Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

PART SEVEN

Amendment to the Act on Income Tax

Section 31

Act No. 586/1992 Coll. on Income Tax, as amended by Act No. 35/1993 Coll., Act No. 96/1993 Coll., Act No. 96/1993 Coll., Act No. 157/1993 Coll., Act No. 196/1993 Coll., Act No. 323/1993 Coll., Act No. 42/1994 Coll., Act No. 85/1994 Coll., Act No. 114/1994 Coll., Act No. 259/1994 Coll., Act No. 32/1995 Coll., Act No. 87/1995 Coll., Act No. 118/1995 Coll., Act No. 149/1995 Coll., Act No. 248/1995 Coll., Act No. 316/1996 Coll., Act No. 18/1997 Coll., Act No. 151/1997 Coll., Act No. 209/1997 Coll., Act No. 210/1997 Coll., Act No. 227/1997 Coll., Act No. 111/1998 Coll., Act No. 149/1998 Coll., Act No. 168/1998 Coll., Act No. 333/1998 Coll., Act No. 63/1998 Coll., Act No. 129/1999 Coll., Act No. 144/1999 Coll., Act No. 170/1999 Coll., Act No. 225/199, Ruling of the Constitutional Court published under No. 3/2000 Coll., Act No. 17/2000 Coll., Act No. 27/2000 Coll.,

Act No. 72/2000 Coll., Act No. 100/2000 Coll., Act No. 103/2000 Coll., Act No. 121/2000 Coll., Act No. 132/2000 Coll., Act No. 241/2000 Coll., Act No. 340/2000 Coll., Act No. 492/2000 Coll., Act No. 117/2001 Coll., Act No. 120/2001 Coll., Act No. 239/2001 Coll., Act No. 453/2001 Coll., Act No. 483/2001 Coll., Act No. 50/2002 Coll., Act No. 128/2002 Coll., Act No. 198/2002210/2002 Coll., Act No. 260/2002 Coll., Act No. 308/2002 Coll., Act No. 575/2002 Coll., Act No. 162/2003 Coll., Act No. 438/2003 Coll., Act No. 19/2004 Coll., Act No. 47/2004 Coll., Act No. 49/2004 Coll., Act No. 257/2004 Coll., Act No. 280/2004 Coll., Act No. 359/2004 Coll., Act No. 360/2004 Coll., Act No. 436/2004 Coll., Act No. 562/2004 Coll., Act No. 628/2004 Coll., Act No. 669/2004 Coll., Act No. 676/2004 Coll., Act No. 179/2005 Coll., Act No. 217/2005 Coll., Act No. 342/2005 Coll., Act No. 357/2005 Coll., Act No. 545/2005 Coll., and Act No. 552/2005, shall be amended as follows:

1. Paragraph 8, including footnote^{82a}, shall be added in Section 15 and shall read as follows:

“(8) Fees for examinations verifying further education results pursuant to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results^{82a} may be deducted from the tax base in the relevant taxation period unless these were paid by an employer and were not charged as an expense under Section 24 by a tax payer with income under Section 7, however the maximum amount to be deducted shall not exceed CZK 10,000. A tax payer who is considered to be a disabled person may deduct within the relevant taxation period a fee of up to CZK 13,000 and a tax payer who is considered to be a disabled person with more serious disability may deduct a fee of up to CZK 15,000.

^{82a} Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment of Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results)

2. In Section 24 the full stop at the end of paragraph 2 shall be replaced by a comma and the letter zv) shall be added and shall read as follows:

“zv) expenses (costs) paid by a tax payer with income under Section 7 for paying fees for an examination verifying further education results pursuant to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results^{82a} which relate to a business undertaking or the self-employed activities of the tax payer however the maximum amount of such fees shall not exceed CZK 10,000. A tax payer who is considered to be a disabled person may deduct within the relevant taxation period expenses of up to CZK 13,000 and a tax payer who is considered to be a disabled person with a more serious disability may deduct expenses of up to CZK 15,000.”

3. In Section 38k (5) new letter j) shall be inserted after letter i) and shall read as follows:

“j) in what amount the tax payer paid fees for examinations verifying further education results under Section 15”.

The current letter j) shall be marked as letter k).

4. In Section 381 the full stop at the end of paragraph 1 shall be replaced by a comma and a letter l) shall be added and shall read as follows:

“l) by confirming the amount of the fee paid for an examination verifying further education results pursuant to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results^{82a} if he/she shall require deduction of the tax base under Section 15.”

PART EIGHT

Amendment to the Act on Providing Subsidies to Private Schools, Pre-school and School Facilities

Section 32

Section 1 (3) of Act No. 306/1999 Coll. on Providing Subsidies to Private School, Preschool and School Facilities as amended by Act 562/2004 Coll., shall reads as follows:

“(3) Subsidies to a legal entity which carries out activities of a basic artistic school shall be provided for ensuring education determined for pupils prior to their commencement of compulsory school attendance, pupils fulfilling compulsory school attendance, pupils attending daily secondary schools or conservatories, and students daily attending tertiary professional schools.”

PART NINE

ENTRY INTO EFFECT

Section 33

This Act shall come into effect on 1 August 2007 with the exception of the provisions of Part One, Chapter I and II, Section 22 (a), Sections 23 and 24, Section 25 (1), Part Two, Part Three, points 2 through 15 and 19 through 23, Part Four and Part Eight, which shall come into effect on the date of its publication.

Authorised signatures

Zaorálek

Klaus

Paroubek

Annex to the Act No. 179/2006 Coll.

Competencies of Central Administration Authorities for Professional Authorisation

Central Administration Authority	Competencies for Professional Authorisation in the Relevant Field
Ministry of Transport	Transport and its operations
Ministry of Finance	Financial management, prices, financial controls and audits, accounting, tax advisory services, management of property under public ownership, insurance operations
Czech National Bank	Banking
Ministry of Informatics	Information and communication technologies, postal services
Ministry of Culture	Art, cultural and educational care for cultural goods, churches and religious societies, press and other information media, Copyright Act, production and trade in the field of culture
Ministry of Defence	Defence of the Czech Republic, civil defence
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Labour-law relations, labour safety, employment and requalification, pension scheme, social services, care for family and children, care for citizens who need special care
Ministry for Regional Development	House and flat maintenance, land planning and construction rules, investment policy, tourism, funeral and related rules
Ministry of Industry and Trade	Utilisation of mineral resources, energy industry, heating industry, gas industry, mining, dressing and refining of crude oil and natural gas, solid fuels, radioactive raw materials, metal ores and ores other than metal ores, metallurgy, machinery, electro-technical and electronic industry, chemical industry and processing of crude oil, rubber and plastic industries, glass and ceramics, textile and clothing industry, leather processing and printing industry, paper and cellulose industry, wood-processing industry, industry producing construction materials, construction production, medical production, salvage and scrap metal, internal trade, international trade, technical standardisation, metrology and state testing, industrial research, technical and technological development, precious metal stamping and testing

Ministry of Justice	Courts and state prosecutors' offices, prison service, probation and mediation
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	Activities of schools and school facilities inscribed in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, higher education
	institutions, science, research and development, public care for children, youth, physical training, sports, hiking and sporting representation of the state
Ministry of the Interior	Public order, internal order and security including supervision over road traffic safety, register of inhabitants, archiving and filing services, weapons and ammunition, fire protection, residence of foreign nationals and refugees, crisis management, civil emergency planning, protection of inhabitants and integrated rescue system, administrative proceedings, administrative punishment and sanctions, the Police of the Czech Republic, regional and local authorities of state administration
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Foreign policy and diplomatic services
Ministry of Health	Health care, public health protection, medical scientific research activities, searching, protecting and use of natural curing resources, natural spa and curing sources, natural mineral waters, medicines and medical devices for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of people, health insurance and health information system
Ministry of Agriculture	Agriculture (with the exception of the protection of agricultural soil), water management (with the exception of the protection of natural water accumulation), protection of water sources and protection of the quality of surface and ground water, food processing industry, forests, forestry and fishery (with the exception of areas of national parks), commodity exchanges organising trades in goods originating from agricultural and forest production including products made by its processing, veterinary administration, control and testing relating to agriculture, pedigree animal breeding, veterinary care, phytosanitary care, food safety, the protection of animals against torture, and protection of rights relating to new plant varieties and breeds of animals

Ministry of the Environment	Environment, protection of natural accumulation of water, protection of water sources and protection of quality surface and ground water, air protection, protection of nature and countryside, operations of zoological gardens, protection of agricultural soil, execution of public geological service, protection of rock environment including protection of mineral sources and ground water, geological work and ecological supervision over mining, waste management, forestry, fisheries and forest management in national parks, maintenance of single information system on the environment including overall monitoring, hydrometrollogy.
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