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Czech Presidency
of the EU 2009

Priorities and Events in the Field of Education, Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic
at the occasion of the Czech Presidency in the EU Council
Prague 2009

Priorities and Events in the Field of Education, Youth and Sports



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Editorial



Dear friends,

The Czech Republic has launched its Presidency of the Council of the European Union in hard economic times which for the area of education means rather a challenge than an opportunity to complain and make excuses. We have to actively respond to demographic changes and new labour market requirements. The Czech Presidency is taking place at a time when the terms of the European Commission and the European Parliament are about to expire and therefore it is appropriate to highlight the achievements and draw lessons from the hardships the enlarged European Union has endured in the past years.

The field of education is not an exception. Even here new challenges, new spheres of competence and new questions arise. Learning has become a long-term process, which does not end when education at a certain level is completed but it is a real life-long commitment. On the one hand, schools at all levels benefit from the opportunities offered by mobility programmes, language competence has proven to be essential, we are introducing new mechanisms to recognize learning outcomes all over the EU. On the other hand, European schools have to deal with a decrease in pupil numbers, with an increase in the number of migrants as well as the adults who are returning to the education system because they want

to upgrade their skills or acquire new qualifications. These topics are not limited to individual states only but they require cooperation at European level.

The field of education is often considered to be an internal affair of national governments. The question is: Does this prevent us from coordinating our steps at European level? Good examples of successful cooperation are the field of higher education (Erasmus project), vocational training (Copenhagen process) or the field of youth (European Youth Pact). Therefore our presidency aims to continue and develop this cooperation in accordance with the Member States' wishes as well as with our national goals.

The priorities of the Czech Republic in the field of education, training and youth have been chosen after due consideration and are meaningful for the EU as a whole. In the first place it is a partnership between education institutions and employers by means of which we would like to show that the worlds of education and work are not two separate entities. It is time to tackle the issue of the employability of school-leavers and graduates at all levels of education, their flexibility and the reinforcement of their skills and abilities. Special attention will be given to the field of higher education through which we aim to create the genuine "Europe without Barriers" bearing in mind the upcoming declaration of the European Space for Higher Education.

Growing interest of European and non-European students in mobility programmes highlights our next priority which is the future of the Bologna process. It is also important to assess the progress and achievements of cooperation in the field of youth. I will definitely put a stress on voluntary activities because I can see their universal benefits. Last but not least, the most significant priority is the future cooperation in the field of education beyond

2010. We are interested not only in setting new goals and indicators. We would like to trigger a discussion and give more thought to how existing cooperation at European, national and regional level has been functioning so far.

Education is of key importance for Europe's competitiveness on a global scale. I would be glad if the ideas introduced during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union continued to live turning into a functional link for further successful development in this field. I firmly believe that our partners in the EU will help us with it and we will jointly achieve our goals.

With best regards,

Ondřej Liška

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
of the Czech Republic



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Priorities of the Czech Presidency in the Education, Youth and Culture Council

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Education

New strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training beyond 2010

The Czech Presidency will focus on continuing the discussion on the future strategy following up the work programme “Education and Training 2010” in the field of education beyond 2010 – outlining priority directions and visions.

With regard to the Communication from the Commission “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education” and the existing work programme “Education and Training 2010”, the new strategic framework should define main long-term objectives of the European cooperation in education and training for the next decade, including setting out the benchmarks which correspond to the objectives. In addition, it should contribute to enhance the role of education and training within the future strategic development in Europe. This issue relates also to the preparation of Key Messages in the field of education for the Spring European Council which should give a mandate for approving the new strategic framework in May 2009.

Partnership between the sphere of education and employers/enterprises – openness of educational systems as a prerequisite for socio-economic growth and social cohesion

The Czech Republic will primarily focus its attention on the enhancement of cooperation between the fields of education and training on one hand, and employers/enterprises and regions on the other hand. This partnership is perceived as a prerequisite for future development of Europe – especially with regard to interconnecting the social and economic aspects and needs, where ensuring and enhancing employability of all persons is a common denominator of the two.

In order to make a knowledge-based economy/knowledge-based society a reality in the EU, it is necessary to concentrate on putting the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) at work, on supporting the transfer of knowledge and innovation between education institutions and enterprises and last but not least on promoting the openness of educational institutions towards all individuals and employers. The aim of such cooperation is to ensure that all citizens are equipped with the key competences and skills necessary for their professional and personal fulfilment and also that the employers can cooperate with highly qualified and flexible employees. The prerequisite for reaching these objectives is the development of lifelong learning with all individuals being encouraged to increase their qualifications, improve their skills and thus the employability on the labour market. The recognition of learning outcomes and development of common principles in the field of quality and qualifications frameworks play a crucial role in this field too.

Huge opportunities exist in this area for cooperation on a European scale with regard to developing partnerships between educational institutions at all levels, research institutions and employers, which is irrespective of borders between individual Member States. The promotion and support of platforms dealing with enhancement of this form of partnership, of which European Forum of Universities and Business is the best example, is very important.

Progress in higher education – quality and openness (Bologna process)

In the first half of 2009, the Czech Republic will chair the Bologna Board Meeting preceding the Ministerial Conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve – the last conference before the European Higher Education Area will be officially proclaimed in 2010. It will focus on achieving the priorities of the Bologna Process

defined for the period 2007–2009, in addition to the evaluation of the overall development within the period of 1999–2009, and on the preparation of the materials defining the vision after 2010. One of the most important priorities for 2009 will be the issue of mobility or in other words particular steps to overcome barriers of students' mobility, including for instance recognition of learning outcomes or in general terms overcoming economic and social barriers in higher education, implementation of the national qualifications frameworks, quality assurance systems or strategic cooperation with the countries outside the EU area.



Youth

Evaluation of the framework of cooperation in the youth field

The need to discuss the perspectives of the follow-up activities concerning cooperation in the youth field in the year 2009 was introduced in the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, on addressing concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship, dated on November 24, 2005. The Czech Republic will focus on evaluation of the current Framework of cooperation in the youth field and during its presidency events in June (DG Meeting for youth and Youth Event) it will create a space for discussions on further development in this area.

European youth pact

The European Youth Pact, adopted in 2005, is being implemented within the National Lisbon Programme 2005-2008, and its objectives will be running within the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Employment. An assessment of the achieved objectives will be carried out in 2009 together with the evaluation of cooperation in the youth field.

Voluntary activities

The Czech Presidency will elaborate on the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers Across the European Union adopted during the French Presidency by beginning with its implementation during the European Conference on Youth.

Sports

Autonomy of sport

The Czech Republic is aware of the fact that sport faces transnational threats and obstacles such as doping, violence, commercial pressures, exploitation of young players, etc. However, it is necessary to choose such a form of international cooperation, which will respect the principles of autonomy and specificity of sport as defined in the Declaration on the Specific Characteristics of Sport adopted by the European Council in Nice in 2000. The Czech Presidency will focus on identifying these forms of cooperation. The results of the Czech Presidency should be elaborated by the following Swedish Presidency, which also adopted the topic of the autonomy of sports as its priority.

With regard to the White Paper on Sport and Action Plan of Pierre de Coubertine, the Czech Republic will focus on identifying the current state of affairs, time-tested good practice of voluntary work in the Member States and on supporting opportunities in the field of sport. Experience of national experts and synergies within the youth field will be made use of.



Programme of Czech Presidency Events

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Meetings	Conferences	Date Of Event	Place of Event
High Level Group (Directors General for Education)		December 15-16 2008	Prague
	Launch Conference of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation	January 7 2009	Prague
Meeting of the Bologna Board		January 13 2009	Prague
Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group I		February 12-13 2009	Prague
University Classification Seminar		February 13 2009	Prague
Council of Ministers for Education, Youth and Culture		February 16 2009	Brussels
	European Conference on Youth	March 12-13 2009	Prague
	Cedefop's Agora Conference	March 16-17 2009	Thessaloniki (Greece)
Informal Meeting of Ministers for Education		March 22-23 2009	Prague
Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group II		March 26-27 2009	Prague
	Conference on a Partnership between Education and Training Institutions and Employers for Lifelong Learning	April 6-7 2009	Prague
	Bologna Process Ministerial Conference	April 28-29 2009	Louvain
Informal Meeting of Directors General for Sport		April 28-29 2009	Prague
	Lifelong Learning Programme Conference	May 7 2009	Prague
Council of Ministers for Education, Youth and Culture		May 11-12 2009	Brussels
Meeting of Directors General for Vocational Education and Training		May 17-19 2009	Prague
	New Tools for VET: Conference on ECVET and EQARF	May 20 2009	Prague
European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education System		May 25-27 2009	Prague
Youth Event		June 2-5 2009	Prague
Meeting of Directors General for Youth		June 4-5 2009	Prague
Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education		June 8-9 2009	Prague
Informal Meeting of the Education Committee		June 18-19 2009	Prague
Meeting of Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks		June 25-26 2009	Prague

Information on Czech Presidency Events

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- **High Level Group
(Directors General for Education)**
December 15-16, 2008, Prague

A regular meeting of Directors General responsible for education from the Member States will provide an opportunity to discuss mainly a new strategic framework for future European cooperation in education and training beyond. The discussion will define priorities, goals and instruments for the future development of education and training within the new framework and will set the role of education as a prerequisite for competitiveness, social cohesion and global cooperation. Another issue discussed will be progress toward fulfilling the work programme on Education and Training 2010.

- **Launch Conference of the European Year
of Creativity and Innovation**
January 7, 2009, Prague

The kick-off conference launching the European Year 2009 will gather about 150 high-level experts from Europe, European Commission, enterprises, universities and cultural institutions. Its objective is to enable the exchange of ideas and good practices on innovative solutions and overlaps of the fields of education, science, culture and economy within and outside the EU and to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and capacity for sustainable growth through fostering a more innovation-friendly climate.

- **Meeting of the Bologna Board**
January 13, 2009, Prague

At the meeting of the Bologna Board its members will prepare the agenda and the background material for future discussions in the Bologna Follow-up Group meetings which will take place in February and March. Special attention will be paid to the preparation work on a draft Ministerial Communiqué for the ministerial conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve.

■ Meetings of the Bologna Follow-up Group

February 12-13 and March 26-27, 2009, Prague

The meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) gathers representatives from 46 European countries and the European Commission together with representatives of the international organisations in charge of higher education. The BFUG is responsible for the follow up work between ministerial conferences to coordinate a work programme. The meetings in Prague are the last to be held before the Ministerial Conference on the Bologna process which will take place in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in April. The meetings play an important role because the aim to finalise the agenda of working groups, to put forward the conclusions of the official Bologna seminars and conferences and to present documents necessary for the evaluation of the past two years of development. Another objective is to present visions of a short term as well as long term strategy and to continue to finalise the draft ministerial communiqué, which is supposed to outline the development of higher education in the next decade (Bologna Beyond 2010).

■ University Classification Seminar

February 13, 2009, Prague

There will be a thematic seminar on classification and rankings of universities for members of BFUG as well as the representatives of Czech Rectors' Conference and Council of Higher Education Institutions. The event will address the latest developments in university classification/typology and rankings and open a discussion on the impact of university classification/typology also in connection with further higher education developments.

■ European Conference on Youth

March 12-13, 2009, Prague

This conference will provide a room for discussion between representatives of state administrations and

experts from the non-profit sector. The objective of the conference will be to discuss the possibilities in relation to the implementation of the Council Recommendation on trans-national mobility of young volunteers focusing on five main areas of activity: improving the level of knowledge of volunteering schemes; developing opportunities for trans-national European volunteering; developing basic quality standards for these activities; ensuring the appropriate recognition of non-formal learning outcomes of young volunteers; and providing support and training for those who work with young people with a specific focus on the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities in international volunteering.

■ Informal Meeting of Ministers for Education

March 22-23, 2009, Prague

The main topics of the Informal Meeting of Ministers for Education will be a partnership between education institutions and employers with linkage to creativity and innovation. In the context of the current financial crisis, the unfavourable demographic development, globalisation, technological developments and environmental challenges, the Ministers will discuss the strategic issue of active cooperation between the education field and all relevant stakeholders (particularly employers) in connection to the future European development in the post-Lisbon period.

■ Conference on a Partnership between Education and Training Institutions and Employers for Lifelong Learning

April 6-7, 2009, Prague

This conference is a flagship event of the Czech Presidency in the field of education. The conference is held for more than 200 participants and decision makers from various educational institutions, companies and authorities from the EU. It will focus on the topic of creating a partnership between education institutions and employers. In particular, the participants will discuss the issue of motivation of education institutions and

employers to actively cooperate, the recognition of learning outcomes and qualification frameworks from the perspective of the employers. A special attention will be further given to the development of key competences and transversal skills at all levels of education.

■ Lifelong Learning Programme Conference

May 7, 2009, Prague

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) Conference brings together representatives from the European Commission and LLP experts from ministries as well as national agencies (NA). Its aim is to identify the role of creativity and innovation in the LLP and stimulate their impact on education policy. The conference will honour innovative pedagogical approaches of Johann Amos Comenius – a Czech innovative teacher – and will be followed by an award ceremony for outstanding projects from education and training programme. One day before the conference a joint meeting of the LLP Committee and the NA Directors will take place.

■ Informal Meeting of Directors General for Sport

April 28-29, 2009, Prague

A regular meeting of Directors General responsible for sports from the Member States will provide an opportunity to discuss the current problems in sports policy at the EU level formulated in White Paper on Sports and Action Plan of Pierre de Coubertin. In addition, the participants of the meeting will deal with the issue of autonomy of sports and volunteering in sports as the priority topics of the Czech Presidency.

■ Meeting of Directors General for Vocational Education and Training

May 17-19, 2009, Prague

The event is a regular meeting of Directors General for Vocational Education and Training from the Member

States. Besides introducing the Czech national qualification framework in VET and a new concept of the educational programmes, the meeting will focus on outlining the main tendencies of development in the employment policy and the area of further vocational education and training. In addition, openness of educational systems to employer's requirements in relation to the April conference on partnership will be discussed.

■ New Tools for VET: Conference on ECVET and EQARF

May 20, 2009, Prague

This conference is a launching event aiming to promote new tools for vocational education and training - European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF). It will provide an opportunity for specific interest groups and decision makers to meet and discuss the implementation of the above tools. Moreover, the conference will deal with reports on the existing use of these frameworks and other European tools for VET, best practice examples and problems related to the evaluation of training institutions.

■ European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education System

May 25-27, 2009, Prague

The European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education System consists of members representing each Member State. These will meet in Prague to discuss country updates of the evaluation of education systems, results from the Czech assessment system as well as various evaluation activities in the Czech Republic. In addition, the participants of the meeting will be informed in detail about the Czech education system as such.

■ Youth Event

June 2-5, 2009, Prague

This event is one of the largest meetings of representatives of the young people who are active at national and European levels. The meeting is part of the structured dialogue process with young people at European level. The objective of the Czech Youth Event will be to evaluate the current framework for cooperation in the youth area at European level.. Moreover, participants in the Youth Event will deal with the preparation and evaluation of specific and practical proposals for working with children and youth in the future.

■ Meeting of Directors General Responsible for Youth

June 4-5, 2009, Prague

In terms of themes this meeting will be a follow-up of the Youth Event and its conclusions. The participants will therefore focus on the evaluation of the youth co-operation framework and also on the European Youth Pact. The meeting will create a unique space for the exchange of good practices, as the participants will have an opportunity to take part in the opening of the annual "fair" of leisure activities "Bambiriada" that will be held simultaneously throughout the Czech Republic.

■ Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education

June 8-9, 2009, Prague

This meeting is a regular joint meeting of Directors General for Higher Education from Member States of EU and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences. The event will primarily address the conclusions from the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve conference of higher education ministers and synergies with the Lisbon agenda. Further, it will deal with the latest developments, challenges and good practice in the financing of higher education with an emphasis on sustainable

funding of higher education based on full costing models. The exchange of views could contribute to future policy development and practice in the area of sustainable funding of higher education as one of the most topical issues in European higher education.

■ Informal Meeting of the Education Committee

June 18-19, 2009, Prague

The last meeting of working group of the EU Council within the Czech Presidency, which regularly takes place in the Presidency country, will conclude the Czech Presidency of the EU Council in the field of education. It will mainly focus on reports about the outcomes of the Presidency conferences and meetings, current Commission's agenda and information on programme of incoming Swedish Presidency.

■ Meeting of Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks

June 25-26, 2009, Prague

The Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, which encompasses experts from EU Member States, representatives of the European Commission, Eurostat, ETF, CEDEFOP, CRELL and other research institutions, is an expert group in the field of development and validating of educational indicators which are/will be suitable for mapping of the Lisbon process. The meeting will focus on issues related to data sources, needs of new surveys and new indicators development.



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