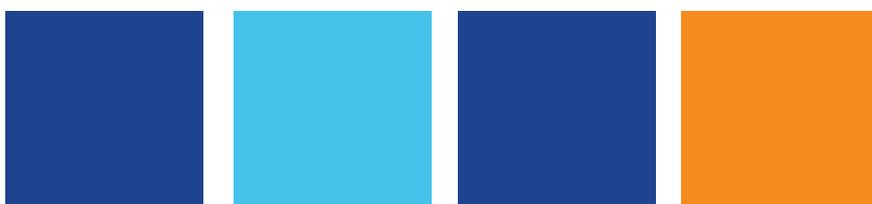

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY
IN APPRENTICESHIPS: FOCUS
ON LONG-TERM MOBILITY
CZECHIA



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Contents

Contents.....	3
CHAPTER 1. Introduction.....	4
CHAPTER 2. Exogenous factors influencing mobility of students in upper secondary and tertiary professional education	6
2.1. Economic sectors and actors	6
2.2. Dynamics of skills demand and supply at the medium level occupation level.....	10
2.3. Attitude of employers towards training	12
2.4. Other relevant factors	13
CHAPTER 3. The link between the IVET system design and students' mobility.....	15
3.1. Type of the system	15
3.2. Governance	17
3.3. Curricula and organisation of the VET programmes	18
3.4. Type of contract and status of the student in the company .	21
3.5. Remuneration.....	22
3.6. Provisions of occupational health, safety and social insurance	23
3.7. Use of validation	24
CHAPTER 4. Lessons learnt from existing policies, initiatives, projects of apprentices' mobility	26
4.1. Erasmus+ and ErasmusPro Mobility 2014-2018	26
4.2. Feedback from schools and companies	28
CHAPTER 5. Conclusions	30
List of abbreviations	31
References.....	32

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

In the Czech Republic, vocational education represents a dominant educational pathway recording the highest proportion of IVET participants in the EU (72.7% of secondary school students in 2018/19, upper secondary level – ISCED 3). However, it is not a typical dual system, where the apprentice is, at the same time, a company employee and the school only provides theoretical instruction, which is the case in Germany or Austria. There are no such educational programmes on national level in the Czech Republic. The curriculum has a high proportion of theoretical instruction in relation to practical training, but practical training is an integral part of IVET educational programmes. And solely the schools are responsible for both theoretical instruction as well as practical training.

For the purposes of this article, we describe the situation in upper secondary and tertiary professional education (non - Bologna programmes) ⁽¹⁾ comprising primarily VET programmes with vocational certificate or Maturita exam, follow-up and shortened training programmes with vocational certificate or Maturita exam and study programmes of tertiary professional education including those provided by conservatoires (upper-secondary as well as tertiary professional education). Students of these study programmes are most frequently the participants in international mobility.

The legislative framework is provided by the *Act on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education – School Act* ⁽²⁾, which has significantly strengthened the role and involvement of social partners in the shaping of content and objectives of VET and in the final assessment and

⁽¹⁾ In the Czech Republic so called tertiary professional schools have been referenced to EQF 6 level, however, these are non-Bologna (do not lead to a bachelor degree) and this type of schools are embedded in the School Act (same as pre-school, primary and secondary education), not in the Higher Education Act (as tertiary, both university and non-university education). These programmes have a significant amount of practical training and are mostly provided by the same institutions as are secondary VET programmes.

⁽²⁾ Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb. o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (Školský zákon) Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, basic, secondary, higher professional and other education (School Act).

evaluation of learning outcomes. It is supported by implementing regulations that define the course and completion of educational pathways. ⁽³⁾

Box 1. The number of students in 2018/2019

In the school year 2018/19, a total of 440 216 students were registered in all types of study programmes (full-time, combined, distance) within upper secondary and tertiary vocational education, of whom 130 133 studied at secondary grammar schools (Gymnázia) and 310 083 (72.7%) students were registered in the study programmes of upper secondary and tertiary vocational education.

Source: Statistical data of the MŠMT. Statistical yearbook of education – Performance indicators 2018/19. <http://toiler.uiv.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>. Extracted on: 12.7.2019. Calculations done by NÚV.

⁽³⁾ Vyhláška MŠMT č. 13/2005 Sb. o středním vzdělávání a vzdělávání v konzervatoři [Decree of MŠMT no. 13/2005 on secondary education and on education at conservatoire].
Vyhláška MŠMT č. 47/2005 Sb., o ukončování vzdělávání ve středních školách závěrečnou zkouškou a o ukončování vzdělávání v konzervatoři absolutoriem [Decree of MŠMT No. 47/2005 Coll. on completing the studies at secondary schools by final examinations and completing the studies at conservatoires by absolutorium].
Vyhláška MŠMT č. 177/2009 Sb., o bližších podmínkách ukončování vzdělávání ve středních školách maturitní zkouškou. Decree of MŠMT No.177/2009 Coll. on more detailed terms and conditions for completing the studies at secondary schools by Maturita examination].

CHAPTER 2.

Exogenous factors influencing mobility of students in upper secondary and tertiary professional education

2.1. Economic sectors and actors

The Czech Republic is a small, open and export-oriented economy. In terms of ownership structure, Czech business owners predominate – 54% of the share capital. Foreign owners account for 38% of the share capital of companies (as for the remaining 7%, the owners are unknown ⁽⁴⁾). According to data provided by the Czech Statistical Office on the registered economic entities, 17% ⁽⁵⁾ of them are foreign-owned. The disproportion between the share of capital and the number of entities suggests that the Czech-owned companies have on average a significantly lower share capital. It is also much more common for them to be entrepreneurs or micro-companies.

This ownership structure is directly reflected in the employment structure. More than a quarter of the employed in the corporate sector (except for finance, banking and insurance and agriculture) work in companies controlled by foreign capital, which is significantly above the EU average (Figure 1).

The indicator of exports related to GDP amounts to 78%, which rates above average compared to the EU values (Figure 2), and what is more economic indicators show growing trend in the long run. ⁽⁶⁾ Orientation towards the EU markets is very strong, particularly significant it is in relation to the geographically closest ones such as Germany and Slovakia. Czech exports to EU countries

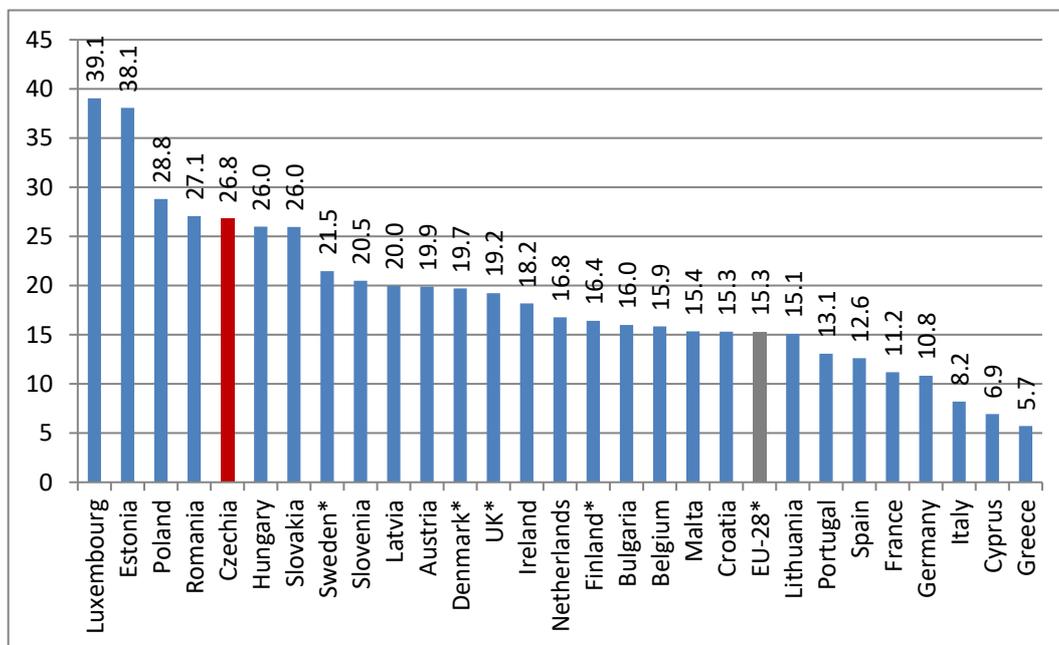
⁽⁴⁾ Source: Bisnode (2018): Objem zahraničního kapitálu v tuzemských firmách atakuje historická maxima. [*Volume of foreign capital in domestic companies is attacking historical highs*], available online (in Czech only): <https://www.bisnode.cz/o-bisnode/onas/novinky/objem-zahranicniho-kapitalu-v-tuzemskych-firmach-atakuje-historicka-maxima/>

⁽⁵⁾ Source: Czech Statistical Office, ČSÚ (2018): Statistická ročenka České republiky – 2018. [Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic], available online: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/12-organizacni-struktura-narodniho-hospodarstvi-dixpon7pd4>

⁽⁶⁾ Source: Eurostat, table code: TET00003, accessed: 10.7.2019.

accounted for 84.1% of total domestic exports in 2018, of which 32.4% were exports to Germany and 7.6% to Slovakia. ⁽⁷⁾

Figure 1. **Employment in foreign-controlled companies, 2015 (%)**

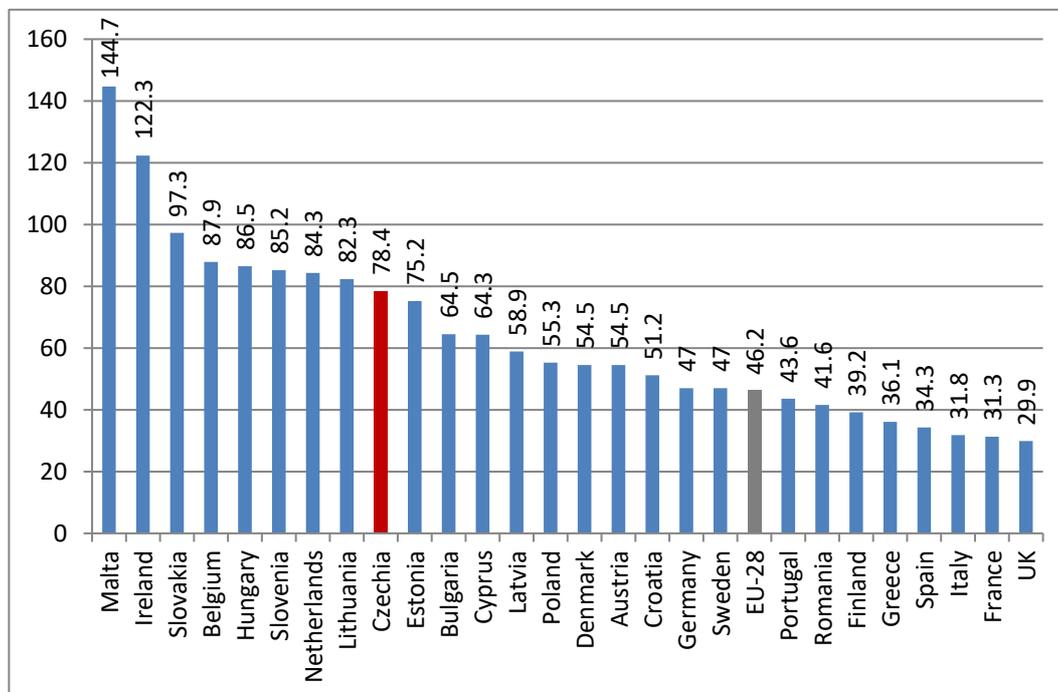


Note: data for corporate sector except for agriculture, forestry and fishery and finance, banking and insurance (NACE: B-N_S95_X_K); * = data as of 2014

Source: Eurostat, table code: egi_em1, accessed: 11.7.2019

⁽⁷⁾ Source: Ministry of Industry and Trade (2019): Statistický přehled zahraničního obchodu ČR za 1-12/2018, [*Statistical Survey of Foreign Trade of the Czech Republic*], available online in Czech: <https://www.mpo.cz/cz/zahranicni-obchod/statistiky-zahranicniho-obchodu/statisticky-prehled-zahranicniho-obchodu-cr-za-1-12-2018---zpresnene-udaje-k-28-2-2019--244360/>

Figure 2. Exports of goods and services in % of GDP, 2018



Source: Eurostat, table code: TET00003, accessed: 10.7.2019.

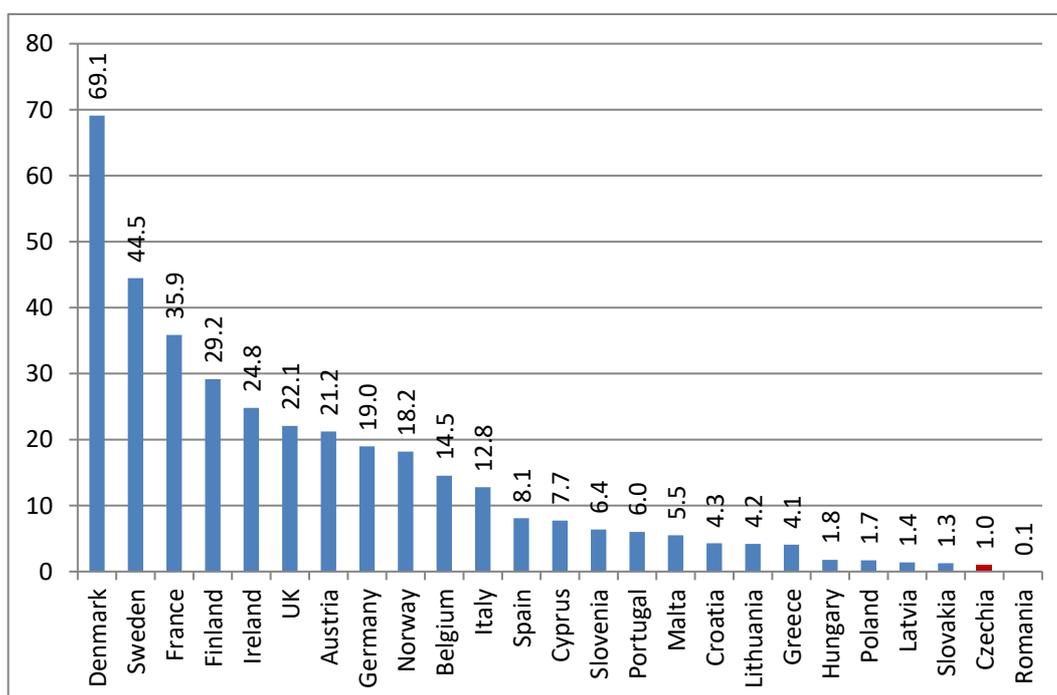
These facts reflect an environment that has many international links and support an observation that in general employers value international mobility and recognize its benefits. Although, in the “real world” to support it concretely may not be currently one of their top priorities (Part 2.2 Dynamics of skills demand and supply at the medium level occupation level).

As a matter of rule, in the Czech Republic, it is usually large multinational companies that are foreign-owned and that are closely interconnected with European and world business structures. However, even smaller Czech companies are highly oriented towards the international business environment, although the degree of this orientation varies from entity to entity. For many, their presence on international markets features as fundamental issue of competitiveness, and most seek to reach this goal or if they already have, they strive to expand their existing international activities. Significant orientation towards foreign countries is also related to the fact that Czech companies are strongly anchored (particularly at lower levels) in supply chains securing various components or larger units. To a large extent, this concerns companies operating within the industrial sector, which embodies a key sector of Czech economy (30%

of all employees). In the sector of manufacturing, there is an exceptional situation in the field of ‘manufacturing of motor vehicles (except for motorcycles), trailers and semi-trailers’ (NACE 29), which is the most significant in terms of its contribution to the whole and makes up for a reliable driver of domestic economy in times of boom. Foreign-controlled companies play by far the most important role as they employ more than 80% of all persons working in the sector. ⁽⁸⁾ Large international companies usually highly value foreign language knowledge and mobility experiences at their prospect employees, namely for middle- and high-level positions. Some of them also send their trainees to their foreign branches or headquarters for a period of time.

On the other hand, Czech capital companies rarely have the economic strength and capacity to establish their own branches abroad. Employment in foreign branches of domestic companies is one of the lowest in the EU, only about 1% (Figure 3). Thus, a low number of companies with a branch or representation abroad, that might serve as a destination for traineeships, can be one of the limiting factors in terms of international mobility of students.

Figure 3. **Employment in foreign affiliates of domestic companies, 2014 (%)**



Source: Eurostat, table code: egi_em2, accessed: 11.7.2019

⁽⁸⁾ Source: NVF (2016): Iniciativa Práce 4.0. [*Initiative Work 4.0*] available online in Czech:

https://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/politikazamest/prace_4_0/studie_iniciativa_prace_4.0.pdf.

2.2. Dynamics of skills demand and supply at the medium level occupation level

In recent years, the Czech labour market has been featuring extremely low unemployment rate (2.2% in May 2019, the lowest rate in the EU ⁽⁹⁾) and a serious shortage of workforce. The number of vacancies recorded by the Labour Office is one third higher than the number of registered unemployed. Workforce shortages exist across all levels of working positions (highly qualified, medium-skilled as well as low-skilled). In terms of fields of education, the most demanded are the professionals from technical fields – at the middle level, we can name engineers, technologists, draftsmen, technical and economic workers, IT specialists, craftsmen (welders, locksmiths), etc. Conversely, a relatively good supply of workforce has been recorded in the area of more general office positions (such as business and administration). A large proportion of companies, mainly in manufacturing and construction (but also in other sectors) are engaged in filling the low-skilled (but not only those) job vacancies with foreign workers. In 2018, the Czech Republic recorded almost 560 thousand ⁽¹⁰⁾ employed foreigners, which represented almost 11% of total employment. The most common were workers from EU countries (65%) – from Slovakia ⁽¹¹⁾ (35%), Poland (7%), Romania (7%), Bulgaria (6%) and others. The remaining 35% were the workers from third countries, primarily from Ukraine (19%) and Vietnam (6%). The Czech Republic has its own *Migration Policy Strategy* ⁽¹²⁾, whose one of the priorities is to promote legal migration, which is beneficial for the state and its citizens as it allows the Czech Republic to respond swiftly to the needs of its labour market.

The state of almost full employment is further reflected in the situation of school graduates, who have had, in recent years, a relatively good chance to find a job and their employment rate is relatively high in the EU comparison (Figure 4). However, the year-on-year decline recorded in the last two years may signal a changing situation (Figure 5), which may be further aggravated in the coming period by the generally expected gradual economic slowdown, which is already being pointed out by some economic indicators.

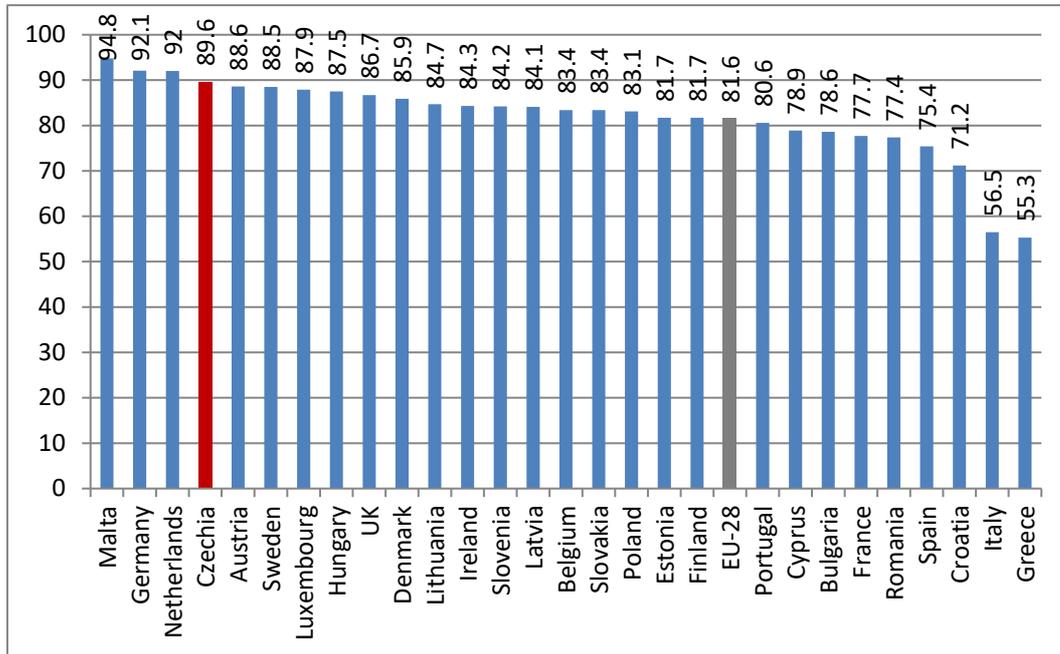
⁽⁹⁾ Source: Eurostat, table code une_rt_m, accessed: 11.7.2019.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Source: ČSÚ (2018): Cizinci v ČR – 2018. [CSO (2018): *Foreigners in CR*] available online in Czech only: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cizinci-v-cr-2018>.

⁽¹¹⁾ Due to common history and very similar language is their situation rather specific.

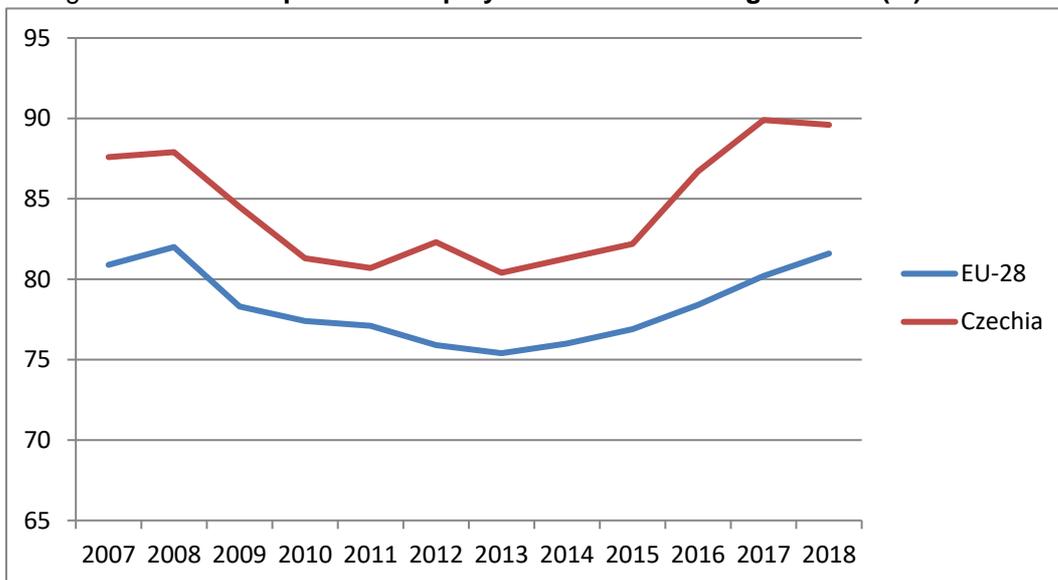
⁽¹²⁾ MV ČR (2015): Strategie migrační politiky České republiky, Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (2015): *Migration Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic*. available online in Czech only: <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/strategie-migracni-politiky-cr.aspx>.

Figure 4. Employment rates of recent graduates, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat - Employment rates of recent graduates, Code: TPS00053, accessed: 9.7.2019

Figure 5. Development of employment rate in recent graduates (%)



Source: Eurostat - Employment rates of recent graduates, Code: TPS00053, accessed: 9.7.2019

Over a long-term frequently cited reason for graduate unemployment has been the mismatch between the skills available and the actual needs of labour market. However, due to the general workforce shortage, the employers have been forced to lower their requirements and investments in training newly recruited

employees are viewed as a must. The main issue is no longer what candidates “can do” but whether they are willing to do the job at all and whether they dispose of basic working habits (such as coming to work on time, completing the task, etc.). Particularly in technical fields, there is a great demand for graduates of secondary VET schools and therefore the potential candidates feel no pressure to increase their competitiveness in the labour market through, for example, acquiring some work experience abroad.

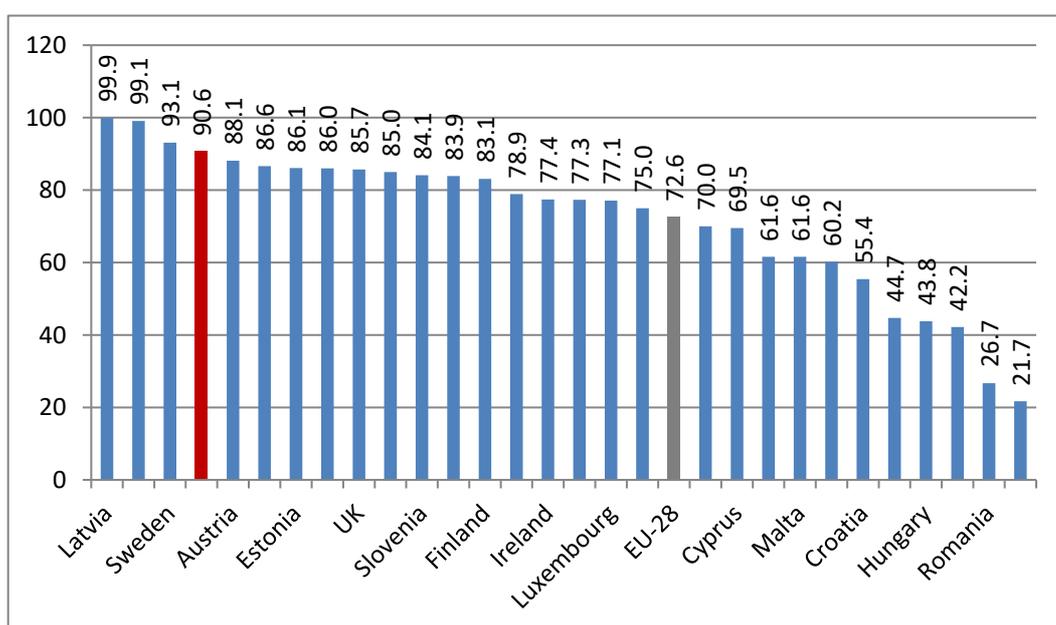
Therefore, the current situation on the Czech labour market does not increase the motivation of VET students or adult employees to engage in international mobility. The previously described context also implies that the long-term mobility is currently not high on the list of priorities of the employers. It can be inferred from the individual observations that the employers, particularly large companies, would be theoretically interested in these activities as they would improve students’ and employees’ language skills, enhance their working habits and cultivate their professional skills. However, due to the basic set-up of the system, mobility of secondary school students is perceived as a responsibility of schools, not of employers. In some cases, the attitude of employers towards international placements of their employees (or prospective employees) may be reluctant if the placement increases the risk that the participant decides to opt for job abroad rather than return. More comprehensive data (such as surveys) are not available.

2.3. Attitude of employers towards training

In recent years, employers’ attitude towards training have undergone certain shifts which were linked to more general developments in the field of technology (Industry 4.0) and on the labour market. Traditionally, the most common attitude of employers in the Czech Republic was to assume that the graduates of secondary technical schools would be very well prepared for the performance of a specific profession as the system of fields of education was well structured and to a great extent reflected the array of professions required by the labour market. However, rapid development of technologies and the gradual transformation of professions towards both higher specialization and blending of different disciplines (typical is the need to combine literally any skill with IT knowledge) leads to the fact that the traditional structuring of fields no longer matches the needs of employers, who are aware that almost every incoming graduate needs an introductory training to be able to carry out a specific position. Businesses routinely implement these trainings in different forms. Large multinationals have developed career systems comprising programmes for recent graduates. These programmes include traineeships in branches or headquarters of these companies abroad. Unfortunately,

comprehensive overviews or detailed data on these activities are not available. From observations it can be nevertheless suggested that in the field of international mobility the traditional mindset still dominates that it is rather a school related thing. But the more the employers are aware of the necessity to “own” the training of their new or prospective employees, the more they embrace the idea of supporting their mobilities as well.

Figure 6. **Companies providing continuing vocational training to their employees, 2015 (%)**



Source: Enterprises providing training by type of training and NACE Rev. 2 activity - % of all enterprises. Eurostat, CVTS, Table Code: trng_cvt_01n2, accessed: 8.7.2019

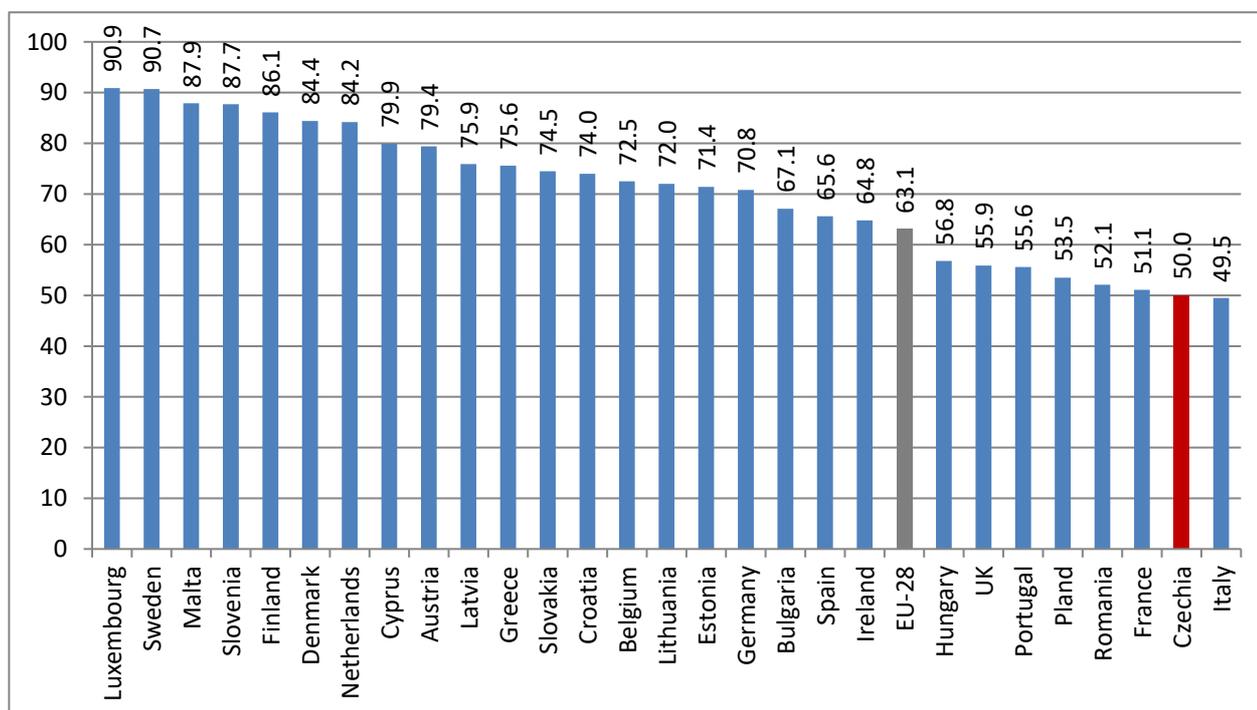
2.4. Other relevant factors

A frequent reason that is, in the Czech context, often mentioned as an impediment to the international mobility of students is a language barrier. Despite a foreign language (usually English) being taught as a mandatory subject as latest since the third grade of basic schools, the proficiency level and self-confidence of Czech population in terms of language skills are traditionally relatively low. Although, in case of younger generations the situation is gradually improving, it is still unsatisfactory in comparison with other EU countries. This has been confirmed also by the AES, where only 50% of respondents in the youngest surveyed cohort (25-30) stated that their foreign language knowledge was good or that they were

foreign language proficient (Figure 7). This rates as the second worst result within the EU.

Many important companies have German or Austrian owners and prefer German knowledge, but only a small fraction of students study German at school. This may also be a limiting factor for mobility, especially in programmes with vocational certificate.

Figure 7. **Population within 25-30 age group stating that their foreign language knowledge is good or that they are foreign language proficient, 2016 (%)**



Source: Eurostat, data AES, Table Code edat_aes_I32, accessed: 9.7.2019.

CHAPTER 3.

The link between the IVET system design and students' mobility

3.1. Type of the system

VET still benefits from its long tradition and represents a substantial part of the Czech education system. There is no formal apprenticeship programme in the Czech Republic. The text of this article focuses on the following IVET schemes in terms of most frequent participation in mobility: upper secondary VET programmes with vocational certificate and Maturita exam and tertiary professional (non-Bologna) programmes, including the study programmes provided by conservatoires (upper secondary as well as tertiary professional education).

Upper secondary qualification with vocational certificate can be acquired by a successful completion of two or three-year vocational programmes (ISCED 353) or shortened vocational programmes allowing to achieve upper secondary qualification with vocational certificate (ISCED 353). In the Czech Republic, upper secondary education with vocational certificate is often perceived as an apprenticeship scheme despite the term “apprentice” not being included or mentioned in the School Act. In this type of programmes, students are primarily trained to enter the labour market (e.g. bricklayer, plumber, toolmaker, hairdresser, cook – waiter, etc.). However, they may also continue their studies in 2-year follow-up programmes that will enable them to enter tertiary education. Share of practical training, depending on the field of education, represents approximately 40-60%.

Upper secondary qualification with Maturita exam can be achieved through a successful completion of four-year study programme (ISCED 354), including programmes combining vocational certificate and Maturita exam, two-year follow-up programmes (ISCED 354) or shortened vocational programmes allowing to achieve upper secondary qualification with Maturita certificate (ISCED 354). Tertiary qualification (ISCED 655) can be acquired through a successful completion of accredited three-year study programmes that include practical training (in health education such programmes last 3.5 years).

In three-year training programmes, which are the most common, practical training makes up for about 50% of all instruction time. The schools may, after reaching an agreement with their social partners, increase the scope of practical

training in their curriculum and modify its organization. It is possible for the practical training to be carried out in its full at a workplace on employer's premises.

Four-year programmes concluded by Maturita exam (ISCED 354) prepare graduates both for the entry into the labour market in mid-level technical, administrative or social professions (e.g. construction technician, IT systems administrator, social worker, tourism worker, etc.) as well as for further studies at a higher level of education. However, in the Czech context, this type of programmes is not perceived as an apprenticeship scheme. Students in these programmes need to complete a practical training of at least 4 weeks in the course of their studies. Nevertheless, the scope of practical training can be significantly higher depending on the nature of the field. In the case of fields with practical training and work placement, the proportion of practical instruction is higher than in the other fields concluded also with Maturita exam. The Maturita exam comprises the so-called 'state' (general) and profiling/vocational parts.

At tertiary level, there are programmes of tertiary vocational education (ISCED 655) that prepare secondary school graduates (those with Maturita exam) to carry out demanding professions (such as nutritional specialist, dental assistant). The programmes last three to 3.5 years and the studies are completed by an absolutorium. The graduate attains the title of a specialist with a diploma (*diplomovaný specialista*, DiS). These programmes comprise a high proportion of practical training (45-55%) and are closely aligned with employers' needs.

In recent years, the possibility of introducing dual education has been discussed. In October 2017, a *Memorandum on dual education* was concluded and signed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic and Moravian Silesian Region. The signatories undertake to promote, in technical fields, the elements of dual education in co-operation between schools and employers under the current legislative framework. These elements are being piloted in the framework of cooperation between three companies and four schools. It is only individuals who are involved in these pilots, not the whole grades in given schools. In practical terms it implies the realization of larger part of practical work-based training at employers' workplaces and financial remuneration of students. A contract is drawn up between the company, student's parents and the school obliging the student to become an employee of the company upon the completion of their vocational education.

By the nature of IVET system, which is predominantly school based, it is assumed that students' mobility is tackled almost exclusively by schools and not by employers. Even if employers were interested in being involved, they would be, to a great extent, dependent on schools for organization and formal provision.

As for the system, there are no barriers impeding realization of long-term mobility within the framework of IVET. The schools have a relatively high degree of autonomy in terms of achieving their goals and they are allowed to implement the mobility period into their educational programmes, therefore the only barriers are the financial (in terms of sustainability and securing international internships for a higher number of students or even all students if the mobility is embedded in the school educational programme) and logistical limitations.

3.2. Governance

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for vocational education and training at the national (strategic) level, school founders (regions) bear the responsibility at the regional level. Practical responsibility for IVET, i.e. both theoretical instruction and practical training, lies, in the Czech Republic, solely with the schools.

In the Czech education system, students are in primary relationship with schools and the schools secure their vocational training, including its practical component that should, according to the relevant legislation ⁽¹³⁾, be ideally carried out at employers' workplaces. However, it is down to possibilities of individual schools, availability of companies and their willingness to accept students at their premises.

In the area of VET, the state does not formally require any co-responsibility from the employers and since 2014 it has been offering employers the tax relief for demonstrable involvement in work-based training provision. ⁽¹⁴⁾ A prerequisite for applying tax deductions is the conclusion of a contract with the school on the content, scope and conditions of practical training. ⁽¹⁵⁾ In case of motivation allowance (scholarship), a contract needs to be concluded between the employer

⁽¹³⁾ With effect from September 2017, § 57 Section 2 of the School Act explicitly lays down the obligation for schools to "endeavour to cooperate with employers in creating preconditions for the pursuit of a profession or occupational activity where appropriate and feasible in relation to the field of education" primarily by means of: "c) ensuring that practical training is provided in the workplaces of natural or legal persons who are authorized to engage in activities related to the field of education in question."

⁽¹⁴⁾ It is a deduction in the amount of CZK 200 for the support of expenses spent on one student per hour during their practical training in the employer's workplace; a deduction for the acquisition of employer's property for the purposes of vocational training ranging between 50-110% of the initial price depending on the extent of its use by the students; and increased limit for tax deductibility of motivation allowance including the scholarships in the amount of CZK 5 000 for secondary school students and CZK 10 000 for tertiary school students.

⁽¹⁵⁾ All details are stipulated in § 12 of Decree No. 13/2005 Coll.

and the student, however in case of minors, this contractual relationship is not viewed as labour-legislation relationship.

Even though international mobility does not constitute a mandatory component of training programmes, it is still in various contexts brought up by some strategic documents. Rather than addressing mobility by means of national resources, they suggest for it to be financed by Erasmus+ and other Community programmes or schemes.

From a systemic point of view, at the management level, there are no real impediments to long-term international mobility as such. It is rather the existence of certain features within the education system and the everyday organisation of teaching that might cause some difficulties in implementing long-term mobility (Chapter 3.3).

3.3. Curricula and organisation of the VET programmes

According to school legislation, practical instruction ⁽¹⁶⁾ includes vocational training, practical training, vocational, professional and artistic practice. In cooperation with employers, most of the time, practical training and work placements are carried out, while practical work-based training in programmes with vocational certificate (ISCED 353) is mostly implemented in regular one-week or two-week blocks. Nevertheless, it is possible to create also longer blocks (e.g. 2.5 months) that are repeated in the course of the school year and alternate with the theoretical instruction.

Work placement in fields with Maturita exam usually takes place in larger blocks, the most common scheme is two times 14 days in the course of the programme. However, in the services fields, the proportion of work-based practical training is larger (8-15 weeks, even more for health education fields). This kind of practical training can be spread throughout the year and supplemented by individual practical training, which can also (as well as the practical training in larger blocks) take place during the summer holidays. Such arrangements are typical for agriculture or hospitality fields, however, the headmaster of the school must, in line with the relevant decree ⁽¹⁷⁾, shorten the school year accordingly.

Work placement as well as practical work-based training can also take place partly abroad. The authority to recognise the learning outcomes acquired during

⁽¹⁶⁾ §65 of the School Act and Decree of MŠMT No. 13/2005 on secondary education and on education at conservatoire.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Decree of MŠMT No. 16/2005 on organization of the school year.

mobility lies fully with the headmaster of the school. The headmaster of the school is also responsible for the quality of practical training, also the one taking place at the employers' workplaces. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that students preparing for the final exam have covered all the areas and topics they need for the exam and have acquired appropriate knowledge and skills. Similarly, in the case of Maturita exam, the greatest pressure in terms of timing and volume of the learning content is mainly related to the common ('state') part of the exam for which the students are not primarily preparing in the course of their practical work-based training abroad.

Maturita exam, in upper-secondary VET, includes the 'state'/common (general education) part. Students' longer absence during theoretical instruction might cause some problems in terms of mastering the curriculum assigned for the given year, especially if the absence occurs during the period of preparation for the Maturita exam.

The system of teaching would, therefore, need to be specifically designed for cases of long-term absences. In programmes concluded by final examination, barriers to mobility may also arise, as students are trained according to a uniform curriculum and the content of the practical training or work placement abroad might not be fully identical. There are schools that equip their students with e-learning material and students keep in touch with their teachers through online consultations, but that would not be sustainable for a higher number of students traveling abroad. Curricular documents as such do not constitute any barriers to long-term mobility.

In the Czech Republic, students have the option, but no obligation, to complete part of their work-based training or work placement abroad. If such a goal is an integral part of the schools' international strategy, the schools must seek resources outside their allocated budgets as these do not comprise any means for such purposes.

The main source of funding is usually Erasmus+ programme. Given the high number of applicants and quality projects within this programme, the grant allocation is likely not to be repeated every year causing thus a sustainability issue. For that reason, internships and work placements abroad remain more of an attractive bonus rather than a standard part of the school curriculum and schools do not include mobility in their curricula as a mandatory part of their students' practical training because it is not possible for them to secure it for all students due to grant scheme. A traditional set-up of the system where short-term work placements and mobility prevail can be viewed as a certain barrier to long term mobility. Students, schools and parents are used to thinking in these dimensions

and planning a long-term stay means to step out of one's comfort zone, in that sense, ErasmusPro activity might be beneficial

However, there are some schools that in their school curricula have stated that 'students may carry out their work-based training or work placement in the Czech Republic or abroad'. Thanks to the targeted promotion of ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) carried out by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education (Dům zahraniční spolupráce, DSZ) and the ECVET expert team, the implementation of ECVET in individual short-term mobility project is very high (while in 2014, only 43% of approved applications applied ECVET elements; in 2017, it was already 99%).⁽¹⁸⁾

The same emphasis is placed on the implementation of ECVET also in long-term mobility projects. The schools are also aware of the importance of preparing the content of the traineeship in relation to the field of education, as well as the importance of final assessment of students in terms of post-return recognition of verified learning outcomes, which helps to eliminate the difficulties that might be caused by having to test the students after their return.

Except Erasmus+, there are other options for the implementation of mobility, e.g. through grants of various non-profit organizations or foundations. In the past, also the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports announced such call. Regions also launch programmes to promote international internships for secondary technical schools and tertiary professional schools and projects can also be implemented through activities and cooperation of partner cities or within the framework of cross-border cooperation.

Project administration might also impose a certain barrier, both in terms of time and human resources. The position of a project manager is not common in Czech school structure, therefore, in most cases, the projects are administrated by a teacher or a deputy headmaster, who perform this activity on top of their regular workload.

Schools do not consider long-term mobility to be suitable for larger groups of students as their absence may jeopardize the instruction and performance of the remaining students. The students engaging in long-term mobility are given an individual study plan, or another option is to implement a larger part of the mobility over the school holidays.

¹⁸ Mid-Term Evaluation of the Use of ECVET within the Erasmus+ programme. DZS (Centre for International Cooperation in Education). 2017. <https://www.naerasmusplus.cz/file/4069/St%C5%99edn%C4%9Bdob%C3%A9%20h%20odnocen%C3%AD.pdf>; <https://www.naerasmusplus.cz/file/4068/Mid-Term%20Evaluation.pdf>

3.4. Type of contract and status of the student in the company

A Contract on Practical Training (*Contract on the Content, Scope and Conditions of Practical Training*) is concluded between the school and the employer. The requirements of the contract are set out in Section 12 of Decree No. 13/2005 Coll. The contract defines in particular the fields of training and the type of activities that students will carry out in practice, the place, the schedule of practical training, its duration and the date of its start, the provision of tools and instruments, the way of transportation to the workplace, the method of remuneration of students for productive activity, reimbursement arrangements that are demonstrably and necessarily incurring to another natural or legal person solely as a consequence of implementing practical training at their workplace, etc. In April 2016, the MŠMT prepared a methodological recommendation to ensure a uniform procedure for concluding a contract on the content, scope and conditions of practical training with the aim of unifying the procedures for practical training in employers' workplaces and to motivate employers to establish cooperation with schools in the field of practical instruction. ⁽¹⁹⁾ As for a motivation allowance (scholarship), a contractual relationship between the employer and the student, which stipulates the terms and conditions for granting the scholarship, is a prerequisite. In 2015, the MŠMT prepared a *Recommendation* ⁽²⁰⁾ to ensure a uniform procedure including model contracts. There are other options for the headmasters to use upon an agreement with the students and their parents/legal guardians. For example, it is possible to shift part of the mandatory practical work-based training to summer holidays, which enables to meet more easily requirements of employers and, at the same time, to reach the vocational training goals in relevant field – typically in fields such as agriculture or hospitality and tourism, which are also areas where international mobility is often implemented. Given the dates and duration of summer holidays are fixed, Decree No. 16/2005 Coll. requires the headmasters to adequately shorten the school year in case the mandatory practical training is implemented during the summer holidays. This option must be always in line with the National Curricula for the given field.

As a student does not have the status of an employee and remains solely a student of the school, implementation of mobility does not constitute any kind of impediment. And given the practical training is organised in certain periods of time

¹⁹ <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/stredni-vzdelavani/metodicke-doporuceni-k-zabezpeceni-jednotneho-postupu-pri-1>

²⁰ <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/stredni-vzdelavani/doporuceni-k-zabezpeceni-jednotneho-postupu-pri-uzavirani>

during the school year, which are planned jointly by the school and the employer, any kind of problem does not arise even from students' absence in the employer's workplace where the practical training takes place.

A certain impediment might cause the fact that the students are often underage and in the event of mobility implementation, the schools feel that they need to send an accompanying person with them for their safety, which is required not only by the relevant legislation but also by students' parents. In the case of multiple mobility activities implemented simultaneously for a higher number of students, a new obstacle arises as more escorts (teachers) are needed and the headmaster of the school needs to provide substitutions for the absent teachers.

On the other hand, accompanying persons fulfil an important monitoring role, which undoubtedly contributes to the quality assurance of the work-based training and its post-return evaluation. Even in relation to future planning, the accompanying persons initiative can eventually enhance the beneficial impact of practical training on the whole school.

However, the need for accompanying persons constitutes a real barrier in relation to long-term mobility. Only a partial solution to this situation would be a parallel implementation of short-term and long-term work placements in the same destination and thus possibly reducing the number of accompanying persons required.

3.5. Remuneration

In the Czech Republic, students of secondary technical schools and students of tertiary professional schools are entitled to remuneration for the so-called productive activity (an activity that brings income or economic gain) ⁽²¹⁾, which they carry out in line with the school curricula. The minimum monthly remuneration for productive activity for a fixed weekly working time of 40 hours is 30% of the minimum wage. The remuneration is provided by the school or the company, depending on who benefits from the productive activity of students and students. The amount of remuneration also depends on the extent and quality of productive activity and on the total of weekly working hours. Since 1 January 2014, the income of students and students from practical work-based training and work placement is exempt from income tax.

Students can also be awarded scholarships for excellent study results and scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or motivation allowance from the cooperating company. Motivation allowance provided by the

⁽²¹⁾ §122 of the School Act.

company can be in the form of a scholarship for excellent study results, a financial contribution to fund the school meals, travel expenses, accommodation in school accommodation facilities or a contribution for the acquisition of personal protective equipment and other work aids. Upon the conclusion of a contract and granting the motivation allowance, some employers require that students commit to become employees of the relevant company for certain period as soon as they finalise their vocational training. However, scholarships are included in the total family income and have an impact on the calculation of social benefits if the family applies for them.

In case the remuneration for productive activity is paid to a student by the employer, it is likely that it would not be paid out during long-term mobility abroad as there would be no factual productive activity carried out for the benefit of the domestic employer. It may be a factor negatively affecting students' motivation to participate in mobility. The payment of granted scholarships would probably not be affected by the work placement abroad, however, its disbursement can be arranged upon a mutual agreement. However, due to the low number of long-term mobility, there is not enough experience and input available to assess this issue.

3.6. Provisions of occupational health, safety and social insurance

Both the School Act together with the related Decree No. 13/2005 (limiting the duration of vocational training to 6 hours a day in the first year, or the number of students who can be simultaneously guided by an instructor at a workplace) and labour law (Labour Code) apply to students who complete practical training at the workplace of cooperating employers. The Labour Code, commonly applying to regular workers, is in the case of students used in its section covering the entire area of occupational safety and health (OSH) or restrictions on minors' work. Paragraph 391 of the Labour Code stipulates that the employer is responsible for the damages caused to a student during their practical training at the workplace and, vice versa, the student is responsible for the damage they might cause to the employer. As a matter of rule, such events are usually covered by the school's insurance policy.

The health insurance is paid by the state for the students, even during the last summer holidays after leaving school. However, students must be in a continuous preparation for a future profession, except for distance studies, and distance or combined studies, where the student may already be employed. Each insured person has a duty to report any changes in their status that applies also to students or their parents/guardians doing it for them. Students who are not employed and

have no income, do not pay social security, they are not obliged to pay it even when they go for traineeships or work placements abroad.

When a graduate has no connection to school anymore, it might be difficult to get from them the documents needed to process financial side of the traineeship. There is also a risk of non-participation and the related difficulty of securing a substitute participant. When a graduate has no legal relationship with the school (except for the signed Participation Agreement) and the traineeship stretches beyond the end of their last summer holidays, it is necessary to address the payment of the health insurance. Graduates' short-term stays abroad do not change anything in terms of health insurance obligations. The situation is different if they stay abroad continuously for more than 6 months. Then the insured person has the option to sign out of the Czech health insurance system by submitting a written declaration. Health insurance premiums for this person are then paid neither by the state, nor the employer or by the insured individual self. Upon their return from abroad, they must submit a proof of the concluded health insurance abroad and its duration. If they fail to submit such a document, they must pay back the insurance premium as if it had not been cancelled.

In case of graduates engaging in long-term mobility within the first year after their graduation and who are already in employment, it is necessary to tackle the social insurance and labour relations of each individual.

3.7. Use of validation

During the practical training, which is carried out at employers' workplaces, the students are evaluated by instructors, who, with some exceptions, are not employees of the schools and do not have pedagogical qualification. Under current legislation, only teachers (e.g. teachers of vocational training) are entitled to carry out students' evaluation. As for international mobility, the schools, which apply ECVET principles, fully recognise the evaluated and recorded learning outcomes of their students and do not test them again upon the return from the traineeship abroad. That places higher demands on the final evaluation of students as well as on the preparation of quality traineeship content, which needs to be in line with the field of education.

The students receive an evaluation record, Europass Mobility, or a corporate certificate – i.e. an official document transparently describing what they have learned during the traineeship. For instance, as part of increasing the impact of mobility, the students present learnt skills to their classmates and teachers. Both validation and recognition are fully in the competence of the school and the teachers to whom the recognition of validated learning outcomes relates to, should

be provided relevant information. Moreover, the teachers are increasingly involved in the preparation of the traineeship content, which helps to increase their willingness to recognize learning outcomes of their students without additional testing and eliminating thus further enhancement of the educational path.

An obstacle to long-term mobility could arise from the need to carry out an additional evaluation of students in other subjects (mainly general subjects or vocational theory) and areas other than those covered by the traineeship.

CHAPTER 4.

Lessons learnt from existing policies, initiatives, projects of apprentices' mobility

There is not yet enough material for evaluation, given the first more systematic and monitored activity promoting long-term mobility was the previously mentioned 2018 call for Erasmus+ programme and many of the supported mobility activities from this call have not been finalised so far.

4.1. Erasmus+ and ErasmusPro Mobility 2014-2018

In the Czech Republic, international mobility is still perceived by the schools as something prestigious and attractive, but certainly not as a common activity available to all their students.

Since the 2018 call, the sending partners may send the students of secondary technical and tertiary professional schools for long-term mobility (ranging from 3 to 12 months) also by means of ErasmusPro activity. An important role in promoting mobility and its benefits is played by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education (DZS, Dům zahraniční spolupráce), which is an organization established and directly managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and at the same time, it exercises the role of the National Agency for the Erasmus+ programme.

The schools have been able to implement long-term mobility in the framework of projects already since the very beginning of the Erasmus+ programme. Since the 2018 call, long-term mobility was further fostered by ErasmusPro activity, which is evidenced by the increase in mobility for 2018. Within the 2018 call, a total of 52 projects were approved comprising 194 of students ⁽²²⁾ long-term mobilities. Within the 2019 call, it was already 59 projects with 230 approved students' long-term mobilities. Thus, long-term mobility makes up for approximately 5% of the total number of student mobility in the Czech Republic. The most frequent duration of a mobility activity within the ErasmusPro project was 3 months. Until the end of November 2019 165 mobilities (137 of these were upper secondary students, 28 students of tertiary professional schools) of the call 2018 and 13 mobilities (12

⁽²²⁾ The National Agency for the Erasmus+ programme does not make the difference between secondary and tertiary professional level and the applicant is very often one institution offering both study programmes.

were students of upper secondary students and one student of tertiary professional school) of the call 2019 have been implemented.

The following tables show the total number of mobilities implemented for each Erasmus+ call and the number of long-term mobilities of students implemented as of June 2019. Mobility activities implemented under the 2017 and 2018 calls have not been completed yet and the final number of overall as well as long-term mobility activities for those years will eventually be higher.

Table 1. **Number of implemented mobilities in 2014-2018 – Total**

Call Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total	Average duration (days)	Median
Number of students' mobilities	2 996	2 918	3 053	3 645	2 738	15 350	19	15

Source: Mobility Tool, data as of 12.6.2019

Table 2. **Number of implemented long-term mobilities in 2014-2018**

Call Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total	Average duration (days)	Median
Number of long-term mobilities	14	2	8	16	107	147	115	96

Source: Mobility Tool, data as of 12.6.2019

The most popular receiving countries for long-term mobility were Germany and the United Kingdom (both 31 mobilities, i.e. 21.1%), followed by Spain (17 mobilities, i.e. 11.6%), Italy (16 mobilities, i.e. 10.9%) and Ireland (15 mobilities, i.e. 10.2%).⁽²³⁾

In the framework of short-term mobilities, the students most often headed for the United Kingdom (3 079 mobilities, i.e. 20.1% of all short-term mobilities), Germany (2 018 mobilities, i.e. 13.1%) and Italy (1 778 mobilities, i.e. 11.6%), Slovakia (1 633 mobilities, i.e. 10.6%) and Ireland (1 439 mobilities, i.e. 9.4%).⁽²⁴⁾

In terms of fields of education, the mobilities most often covered the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction (7) – 3 934 mobilities, i.e. 25.6%,

⁽²³⁾ Source: Mobility Tool, data as of 12.6.2019.

⁽²⁴⁾ Source: Mobility Tool, data as of 12.6.2019.

services (10) – 2 942 mobilities, i.e. 19.2% and business, administration and law (4) – 2 942 mobilities, i.e. 17.1%.

In case of long-term mobilities the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction (7) ranked first again with 41 mobilities (i.e. 27.9%), followed by agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary (8) with 30 mobilities (i.e. 20.4%) and services (10) ranked third with 24 mobilities (i.e. 16.3%). ⁽²⁵⁾

The National Agency for Erasmus+ Programme promotes the benefits of long-term mobility through, for instance, good practice examples at the grant beneficiaries' meetings. So far, it has not received any official feedback from the beneficiaries reporting obstacles to the preparation, organization or implementation of long-term mobility. No targeted research has yet been carried out and the mobilities following the first ErasmusPro call in 2018 have not been finalised yet. The feedback from the project implementers will be only gradually collected.

4.2. Feedback from schools and companies

Unofficial feedback from the long-term mobility implementers implies that the ratio between the administration, time and personnel demands in relation to the final result, which is the traineeship for a student or a smaller group of students, is perceived as not particularly advantageous. Short-term mobility activities are viewed as much more cost-effective.

Addressed school representatives with some experience in long-term mobility agreed that it is easier to send recent graduates of secondary schools or the students of tertiary professional schools. For they are more mature, independent and have a clearer vision and more realistic expectations of the activity. On the other hand, the schools also confirmed that sending graduates implies lesser impact on the school and thus such a traineeship might become a mere statistical item. Particularly so, if these graduates do not plan for a long-term cooperation with the schools after their return, for example as teachers or in another way. It may also be rather challenging to secure the promotion of the traineeship after the return of the participants, including the participants' engagement in the follow-up promotional activities and events organized by the schools.

Companies do not bear direct responsibility for education and therefore do not address the issue of student mobility. Several VET schools founded and owned by larger enterprises implement mobility activities to their branches or headquarters abroad, however, according to available information, it is only short-term mobility.

²⁵ Source: Mobility Tool, data as of 12.6.2019.

To companies is the option of long-term mobility relatively new. Nevertheless, there are indications that most enterprises would welcome for 'their students to engage in mobility.

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusions

International mobility is not a common part of IVET programmes, it is rather viewed as an attractive bonus that the schools can offer to their students.

At both systemic and regional levels, the schools are encouraged to draw grants to implement mobility, as they are not able to finance these activities from their allocated budgets. Given the fact that the grant scheme is a form of competition with an uncertain outcome, there is no guarantee that the schools will receive funding also in the coming years and thus be able to secure continuity of their international traineeships. Therefore, the school curricula do not include mobility for all students as the schools are obliged to fulfil everything stated there.

Language barrier might be another obstacle to international mobility of students in the Czech Republic, particularly in programmes concluded with vocational certificate.

The current situation on the Czech labour market, when, due to full employment, there is a relatively good chance for the graduates to find a job, does not really motivate VET students or even adult candidates to engage in international mobility. Currently, long-term mobility of IVET students or graduates does not rank high on the employers' lists of priorities. However, especially larger companies show a theoretical interest in it as they recognise its benefits for their students, such as improved language skills, enhanced vocational skills and working habits. Due to the primary set-up of the system, the mobility of secondary school students is perceived as an issue to be addressed by the schools, not by the companies. Although, more comprehensive data (surveys, etc.) are not available.

Despite long-term mobility being widely promoted, the schools still prefer short-term mobility, which allows them to send higher number of students abroad. As for long-term mobility, feedback on possible barriers has not yet been provided by the project implementers. Interviews with schools, however, imply that the main barrier is a decline in quality of general education, which is rather problematic particularly in case of the fields with Maturita exam. For the time being, long-term mobility appears to be more appropriate for recent graduates or students of tertiary professional schools.

List of abbreviations

MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
ČR	The Czech Republic, Česká republika
ECVET	Evropský systém kreditů pro odborné vzdělávání a přípravu, European credit system for vocational education and training
DiS	Specialist with a diploma, diplomovaný specialista
DZS	Dům zahraniční spolupráce, The Centre for International Cooperation in Education
ECDL	European Certification of Digital Literacy (European Computer Driving Licence), Evropský koncept (počítačové) adigitální gramotnosti
EU	European Union, Evropská unie
ISCED	Mezinárodní norma pro klasifikaci vzdělávání, International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial vocational education and training, Počáteční odborné vzdělávání a příprava, International Standard Classification of Education
MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MV	Ministerstvo vnitra, Ministry of Interior
NACE	Klasifikace ekonomických činností, Statistical Classification of Economic Activities
NÚV	Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků, National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers
NVF	Národní vzdělávací fond, National Training Fund
OSH	Bezpečnost a ochrana zdraví při práci (BOZP), occupational safety and health
RVP	Rámcový vzdělávací program, Framework Educational Programme- National Curricula
SČMSD	Svaz českých a moravských spotřebních družstev, Union of Czech and Moravian Consumer Co-operatives
ŠVP	Školní vzdělávací program, School Educational Programme – School Curricula
VET	odborné vzdělávání a příprava, vocational education and training,

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