

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AT HIGH SCHOOLS



Czech industry employs nearly 40% of the population and generates almost two-fifths of the country's GDP. However two years ago, students at universities in the field of technical science, production and civil construction represented only 15% of the total number of high school students. How to ensure that businesses have enough qualified candidates for a job? Companies believe that the key is the cooperation with the universities and students should attend mandatory vocational internships. Mismatch between high education and requirements of the labour market and in this regard amendment to the Czech Higher Education Act were the topics of the debate in the European House in Prague on April 27, 2015. „Vocational education programs and training in the Czech Republic do not fully

provide the skills required by the market. It is because it largely lacks a system that would correctly identify the needs of the labour market“, opened the discussion Pavlína Žáková of the European Commission Representation in the Czech Republic. Speakers agreed on the need to encourage systematic discussion between universities and employers' representatives at the level of individual schools and businesses to ensure practical training and create a network of graduates, and at the central level to involve employers in the definition of curricula. Universities in the Czech Republic enjoy a great autonomy, though the role of the state should strive to implement the government strategy to the development of higher education via proper financing and fiscal incentives.

MEPs CORNER



“The European Union's targets include support for vocational education, particularly technical education. These funds aim at improving quality of training, better matching requirements of employers and enhancing practical skills. In this regard it is necessary to consider greater involvement of employers in the preparation of educational

programmes and curricula and involvement of teachers in practical and experience based education. I would also like to mention the role of the Erasmus+ programme which provides cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises.”

Michaela Šojdrová,
Vice-Chair of the Committee
on Culture and Education

TTIP NEGOTIATIONS SPEED UP

From 20th to 24th April, the ninth round of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the United States took place in New York, US. The negotiations focused on all of the three main pillars of the agreement, which are market access, regulatory cooperation and rules. The regulatory part of the negotiations dealt with both horizontal cooperation and sectors, with detailed discussions on regulatory cooperation in pharmaceuticals, car sector and medical devices sector, and it is expected that the talks regarding the regulatory part will intensify in the coming months. An important progress has been achieved in energy and raw materials, as the ways how to ensure a fair access of third-parties to transport infrastructure of energy, meaning pipelines and electricity grids, were discussed for the first time since the beginning of the negotiations. It is still not

clear whether there will be a chapter dedicated to energy and raw materials, but this decision can still be made further in the negotiations. The SME chapter of the TTIP was also discussed in New York, showing a clear willingness of both sides to make SMEs benefit from the agreement as much as possible. In addition, just before the beginning of the round, the European Commission published results of its survey among almost 900 European SMEs showing that they will profit greatly from elimination of obstacles in mutual trade. Furthermore, the main negotiators announced that in early autumn, a political stocktaking exercise will take place in order to identify progress in the negotiations and help both sides to focus on elements on TTIP that haven't been decided yet. This adds to the announcement of both the EU and the US that the aim is to intensify the negotiations as much as possible this year.

CEBRE was founded in 2002 by the three most important Czech business organizations - Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations of the Czech Republic with kind support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade via its Trade promotion agency CzechTrade.



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News FLASH

>NEW AGENCY FOR EU FUNDS

Following the EC request to cover civil servants handling EU funding by the Public Service Act, CzechInvest agency will be reformed by the end of 2015 and part of its staff will leave for the new agency set up by the Ministry of Trade and Industry for handling EU funding from 2016.

>CEF PROJECT ON BOARD

Czechs and Poles want to cooperate in area of water economy, air pollution, energy and critical road infrastructure. One of the most important projects in the transport is construction of the Czech road R11 and its interconnection with Polish S3. During 2016, both countries will submit a common project within Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

>CONSUMER RIGHTS' CAMPAIGNS

Vera Jourova, Commissioner for Justice, Consumer and Gender Equality kicked off two campaigns in April in Prague. Campaigns dedicated to consumer rights shall allow consumers to be aware of their rights when buying online and offline or applying for consumer credit.

>FIRST OP ADOPTED

The European Commission adopted the first Czech operational programme end of April. The budget for the business support and innovation programme will be of €8bn.

EU BUSINESS WANTS TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH LATIN AMERICA



EU – Latin America cooperation started during the first bi-regional Summit in Rio de Janeiro already in 1999. Since then, bi-regional summits are held once per 2 years. Next summit will be held on 10th–11th June 2015 in Brussels. These two regions have common history, values, culture and economy. Apart from that, the EU is one of the most important partners and the biggest investor (32 billion EUR per year) in Latin American

countries. 26 out of 32 Latin American countries already profit from preferential agreements with the EU. Egmont Institute in cooperation with IRELAC hosted a preparatory seminar for the CELAC – EU Summit of Heads of States and Governments on 14th April 2015. Participants of the seminar were discussing future cooperation and topics that should be raised during the upcoming summit. Almost all the participants appreciated

good relations and progress in the cooperation. Exchange of experience is perceived as the best way to address new challenges as sustainable growth or climate change and the upcoming summit is a great possibility to strengthen the cooperation even more. However, a new approach in cooperation should be taken. Cooperation should be held on many different platforms as summits, seminars, bilateral dialogues, sectoral dialogues and conferences. Also private sector should be more involved in discussions and negotiations. Not all the stakeholders are satisfied with the level of progress in mutual relations. According to Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, the progress in cooperation is slow and insufficient. From the business point of view, the EU is concentrating too much on cooperation with partners in Asia while not giving the same amount of attention to Latin America. He pointed out that there are huge opportunities for investments and development in that region and proposed better promotion of the EU in Latin American countries and creation of better connections between the European and Latin American business community. The first chance to address some of these issues will be on the upcoming summit in June. Jiri Hansl, Director of International affairs at the Czech Chamber of Commerce, is participating at the June summit and deems that the relationship with Latin America should reflect more the EU point of view rather than weaken it. He says: “Based on our previous experience and feedback from Czech business community the biggest accent should be put on a business support in form of B2B meetings and other company contact events as being the most efficient instrument for creating business contacts and transferring each other’s approach to business cooperation”.

EESC CORNER: EUROPEAN AND CZECH GLASS INDUSTRY AND EUROPEAN POLICIES



transition to a low-carbon, energy-efficient and circular economy. Targeted initiatives - such as targets and robust measures to reduce energy consumption in buildings as well as the rapid development of an EU energy window labelling, support to R&D, improved glass collection and recycling and a policy-based return to economic growth in key sectors (e.g. building, automotive and renewables) - must take place. An industrial policy for the European glass sector must reinforce the competitiveness of the European based manufacturers: by ensuring a level playing field with competitors from outside Europe with regards to the cumulative costs generated by implementing Europe’s environmental legislation; by providing better regulation and a predictable regulatory environment; by addressing the high cost of energy in the upcoming Energy Union. Coordination and harmonisation of European policies are essential (energy, climate, research, trade, environment, competition, employment, etc.). The revision of the EU ETS post 2020 must be based on robust evidence and take into account the sector’s limited room for further reduction of its GHG emissions. The EU ETS must guarantee that glass installations receive the full amount of free allowances they need according to the benchmark and real production levels.



Josef Zbořil,
Member of Group I – Employers

The EESC adopted opinion on the glass industry and threats which should be avoided by adjusting policies of the EU if we seriously care of this traditional European industry. The economic downturn has had a serious impact on the glass industry and resulted in the reduction of capacity and production and significant job losses. In order to safeguard jobs and establish a proper investment climate for Europe’s glass industry it is essential to address major challenges through a European industrial policy for the glass industry seeking balance between the three pillars of sustainability: the economic, the social and the environmental. The EU must use all the tools at its disposal to revitalise demand and tap into the potential of glass products for supporting the

CEBRE CALENDAR:

- 11th – 13th May – Czech business mission to Belgium (Brussels, Antwerp)
- 15th May – CEBRE debate with MEPs on TTIP (Prague)
- 21st May – CEBRE debate on Country Specific Recommendations (Prague)
- 2nd June – CEBRE debate on Social standards in transport (Brussels)

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