

Introduction

Under Section 174 (15) of Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act) as amended, the Czech School Inspectorate is submitting the Annual Report encompassing summarised data on the situation in education and the educational system gathered through inspections carried out in the school year 2007/2008.

Inspections were implemented in compliance with the Plan of Principal Tasks of Inspection Activities in the School Year 2007/2008 approved by the Minister of Education, Youth, and Sports. For the first time, the Annual Report also contains information about the progress of reform of the educational system achieved in regard to specifically selected aspects of the development of the regional educational system.

The strategic objectives of the inspections stemmed from the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic (White Paper 2001) and from the strategic goals of the 2007 Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and the Development of the Educational System in the Czech Republic. The inspection system of the Czech Republic has completed another stage of its transformation and new inspection procedures have made use of significant results of national and international educational research.

Activities of the Czech School Inspectorate (CSI) are coordinated with the aims and the course of reform of the regional educational system while respecting the European context. Inspections were held with regard to the introduction of school education programmes (SEP) within pre-school education, to gradual implementation of school education programmes within basic education (first to sixth grades of basic schools, and first grades of eight-year secondary general schools known as gymnasium) and also with respect to the preparatory period of developing educational programmes for secondary schools.

The basis of an information, evaluation and control system of education has recently been built up by the Czech School Inspectorate by using state-of-the art information and communication technologies. However, coordination of some external information, evaluation and control systems, which are currently being implemented within the Ministry and its subordinate agencies, and the absence of certain elements in these systems, although they were recommended by the White Paper, remain a problem. Due to the fact that reform of school-leaving examinations (*maturita*) was postponed and the project relating to output evaluation which is to be done at the critical points of the student's educational path has not yet been completed, CSI has not been able to compare results of external international surveys and results of national surveys of the education of children, pupils and students at the level of individual schools. The Czech School Inspectorate has made all publicly available inspection reports since 2000 accessible (altogether there are 20 thousand reports) and in the last year about 1,000 users per month accessed and were registered on the CSI web-sites.

Inspection findings are predominantly based on outcomes of self-evaluation of schools, inspection analyses of school documents, on-the-spot inspections, observations of students and teachers in classes and standardised interviews with pedagogical staff.

As a result of cooperation agreements considerable progress has been achieved as regards coordination of the CSI inspection systems with other external systems for implementing checks. The Czech School Inspectorate organised 327 coordinated inspections, which accounts for 55% of all inspections conducted on the basis of the Plan of Inspections in the School Year 2007/2008. Such inspections covered the following areas: occupational safety and *Health* (OSH), meals provided in school canteens and fire protection in school buildings. By joint action and through exchange of information the administrative burden of