# LISTENING

# How well is Czech education system responding to the challenge of change?

**Pre-listening activity**

*Discuss the following points in small groups.*

1. What do you think about Czech education system? Does it need any changes?
2. Compare the quality of primary, secondary and tertiary education.
3. What are major problems at Czech universities?

**Listening activities**

1. Listening for specific information

*You are going to listen to an abridged recording from 2009 named “How well is Czech education system responding to the challenge of change?” Listen to the first part of the recording and mark the following statements true (T) or false (F).*

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1. The required reforms of the Czech education system have been successful.
2. 15-year-old Czech students are quite good at math.
3. The spokesman for the Education Ministry is rather pessimistic when it comes to the students’ language skills development in the future.
4. Memorizing prevails over critical thinking at Czech schools.
5. Listening for detail

*Listen to the second part of the recording and answer the following questions.*

1. What is the consequence of discrepancy between skilled jobs offered and Czech graduates capable of taking them?
2. What steps are to be taken to eliminate this disharmony?
3. Why is the Czech Ministry of Education inspired by the Scandinavian education system?
4. Which two countries stimulate the Czech Ministry most? Why?
5. How much money from the European funds might be pumped into Czech primary schools by 2012?
6. Ordering paragraphs

*The tapescript of the final part of the recording is presented in four jumbled paragraphs. Read them and put them in the correct order. Then check with the recording.*

(1) A foot dragging factor is also the limited vision some parents and pupils have of education as a means to an immediate end rather a long term process aimed at creating useful and rounded individuals. The ministry’s Mr. Bouška says parents and pupils might welcome reform but the priority is still getting a place under the old rules.

( ) All in all, shows promise but could do better seems to sum up the report card for the Czech education system so far.

( ) At university level there are other problems: a lower than average number of students in higher education compared with developed countries and a higher than average drop-out rate for those that get there. This was supposed to have been addressed by a far reaching reform of university education which would have introduced student loans. The reforms here have been debated for around a decade but are still pending.

( ) *“Even though parents and students wish to see the system change in this way, they still see the whole system of education as only the first or second step to manage the entrance exams whether it is to university or to a secondary school. So the whole system of education is seen as a tool for getting somewhere else. So this needs to be changed.”*

**Post-listening activities**

1. Chunks of language

*Match the following expressions. In pairs, discuss their meanings. If necessary, look them up in the previous exercise and guess their meanings from the context.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. spending on education | 1. factor |
| 1. to protest cuts | 1. out of sth |
| 1. a foot dragging | 1. are to be injected into sth |
| 1. to manage | 1. from sth |
| 1. to stand out | 1. entrance exams |
| 1. to take a leaf | 1. has undershot the average |
| 1. the reforms | 1. in the budget |
| 1. there is a higher than average | 1. are still pending |
| 1. to take | 1. drop-out rate |
| 1. European funds | 1. many strides |

1. Language focus: Prepositions

*Read the second part of the recording and fill in the gaps with an appropriate preposition. Then check with the recording.*

In recent years, the Czech Republic has stood (1) \_\_\_\_\_ from other European countries with more skilled jobs being created than graduates to fill them. As a result, pay differentials for Czech graduates are (2) \_\_\_\_\_ the highest in the developed world. But that scenario is set to change with more global competition expected for those jobs and the country looking as never (3) \_\_\_\_\_ for education and skills to be the real creator of wealth.

The Ministry of Education says the country should take a leaf (4) \_\_\_\_\_ of the rich and developed Nordic countries.

*“One of the models we are wishing to follow is the Scandinavian education system, not only because* (5) \_\_\_\_\_  *the quality but also because of the size of the population. These countries, Nordic countries, are similar* (6) \_\_\_\_\_  *size and they have similar problems as well.”*

One of the main inspirations is Finland, which is regularly put (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the top of European education tables. Its government made a conscious decision to invest heavily (8) \_\_\_\_\_ the education and skills of its people in the mid-1990s following a deep economic recession. The Czech ministry expands its geographic trawl for models to include the Netherlands, thanks largely to its success (9) \_\_\_\_\_ educating minorities.

But so far there is a shortfall in the financial means that the Czech state is making available (10) \_\_\_\_\_ its education revolution. Spending (11) \_\_\_\_\_ education has consistently undershot the average spent by developed countries as a proportion of national wealth.

Mr. Bouška again. *“We need more money. The whole system is slightly underfinanced. It is of course a matter*  (12) \_\_\_\_\_  *big discussion how you define slightly. But it is underfinanced. We are using and implementing new tools. There are European funds to help the education system and that is* (13) \_\_\_\_\_\_ *all three levels, primary, secondary and tertiary.”*

Teachers this week will march on the Ministry of Education headquarters in Prague to protest a planned cut (14) \_\_\_\_\_ the overall education budget next year. In fact, the ministry expects a cut of around 1.2 billion crowns in this year’s budget of around 134 billion crowns to be more than made (15) \_\_\_\_\_ by European funds. For example it hopes for around 4.5 billion crowns of European funds to be injected (16) \_\_\_\_\_ primary schools by 2012.

3. Discussion

In pairs, summarize the problems raised in the recording. Have some of them been solved yet? Would you suggest some ways of dealing with them?

## Speaking

1. Reporting statistical data, comparing and contrasting

The chart below shows the latest statistical data relating to the number of schools, pupils and students, teaching staff, and public expenditure on education in the Czech Republic. Report the trends and compare the expenditure on education with the year 2009 stated at the end of the previous exercise on prepositions. If you need some help with commonly used phrases describing trends, and comparing and contrasting, use Academic Phrasal Bank <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EDUCATION\*)** | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Schools (number) |  |  |  |  |
| Nursery | 4.931 | 5.011 | 5.085 | 5.158 |
| Basic | 4.111 | 4.095 | 4.095 | 4.106 |
| Secondary | 1.393 | 1.347 | 1.331 | 1.310 |
| Conservatoires | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| Higher professional | 180 | 178 | 174 | 174 |
| Universities1) | 69 | 70 | 71 | 69 |
| Children, pupils, and students   at: |  |  |  |  |
| Nursery schools | 342.521 | 354.340 | 363.568 | 367.603 |
| Basic schools | 794.642 | 807.950 | 827.654 | 854.137 |
| Secondary schools | 501.220 | 470.754 | 448.792 | 435.542 |
| Programmes: |  |  |  |  |
| with apprenticeship   certificate2) | 103.685 | 100.558 | 97.491 | 94.759 |
| with A-level examination   (general) | 134.965 | 131.013 | 128.527 | 127.666 |
| with A-level examination   (technical) | 224.035 | 207.052 | 194.326 | 188.319 |
| Conservatoires | 3.557 | 3.655 | 3.690 | 3.752 |
| Higher professional schools | 29.335 | 28.980 | 28.332 | 26.964 |
| Universities1) | 392.109 | 381.029 | 367.906 | 347.339 |
| Programmes: |  |  |  |  |
| Bachelor | 244.003 | 235.483 | 224.676 | 207.643 |
| Master | 126.739 | 124.467 | 121.810 | 118.431 |
| Doctoral | 25.647 | 24.796 | 24.724 | 24.267 |
| Teachers3) and lecturers at: |  |  |  |  |
| Nursery schools | 26.780,6 | 27.739,2 | 28.583,0 | 29.283,4 |
| Basic schools | 57.814,8 | 57.668,9 | 58.269,1 | 59.128,7 |
| Secondary schools | 43.875,8 | 41.788,8 | 40.214,1 | 39.070,1 |
| Conservatoires | 1.120,7 | 1.126,6 | 1.157,9 | 1.063,4 |
| Higher professional schools | 1.890,7 | 1.876,0 | 1.782,5 | 1.742,5 |
| Public universities |  |  |  |  |
| Professors and readers | 5.317,9 | 5.005,2 | 4.931,6 | 4.999,5 |
| Other teaching staff | 11.101,0 | 10.444,1 | 10.094,4 | 10.073,2 |
| Public expenditure on education  (CZK mil.; current prices) | 173.722 | 171.370 | 172.805 | 178.713 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| \*) Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; includes all types   and forms of education. | | | | |
| 1) Excludes state universities. |  |  |  |  |
| 2) Includes shortened one-year courses. | |  |  |  |
| 3) Full-time equivalent. |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | | | | |

Source: Czech Statistical Office (2015)

[https://www.czso.cz](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/home)

1. Discussion in small groups

* Imagine that you were in the shoes of the Minister of Education and the budget was increased generously. Where would you invest the money? What changes would you introduce?
* Do you think that paying tuition fees at universities would improve the quality of education? If yes, in what way?
* If you had the power to change something in the education in the ACR, what would it be?

## Writing

Take part in an online discussion on education in the Czech Republic. Post a message to the forum on suggestions how to improve education in the Czech Republic (150-250 words). Try to use as many collocations from exercise C 1 as possible.