



## МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ОПЫТ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ / INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION

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### Social and Economic Aspects of the EU's Education Policy

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**Introduction.** The issue of education policy is very topical throughout the entire spectrum of society and undoubtedly throughout the European space. At the same time, this policy must be taken into account in any period of a civilized human history. By investing in education, we invest in the human population and participate in the formation of future generations. This article aims to study and analyse the current state of implementation of innovative approaches to the development of education and EU education policy, to identify the key aspects of the EU Education Policy at the present time. We focus mainly on the analysis of the range of the process of implementation of the Strategy Europe 2020 in this field with the particular impact on incorporation of new approaches into the current education policy system as such in the modern 21st century education system based on determining the tools necessary to implement the key strategies.

**Materials and Methods.** The authors address individual approaches of the EU Member States in the field of the education and education policy, which can be beneficial for later incorporation of improving innovations into national education systems using the traditional methods of empirical analysis as description and classification, induction and deduction, content analysis, comparison and syntheses. The empirical basis of this study includes the results of a secondary analysis of the research data covering the problems of education policies.

**Results.** There is a pragmatic focus on the issue of education in society, which also results, in terms of the macroeconomic indicators, in raising the standard of living of the population. Based on our conclusions, where we identified the real need of in-depth analysis of the situation in the education sector and a strategy to achieve effective change in mainstream educational thinking, policy and practice. We should not only determine where the sector is at present, but also engage as many institutions as possible in the review process, making sure that it is driven by their needs and to set key determinants of the education policies of the individual Member States in order to achieve the EU's objectives in terms of education, competitiveness and social cohesion. The results of the study have practical significance: the mechanisms can be reproduced in the field of defining the instruments of the harmonization in the EU education policy with the competences of the Member States.

**Discussion and Conclusions.** The attention is drawn to the socio-economic context that affects the education policy, and despite the pursuit for a kind of harmonization in the EU, the education policy remains substantially within the competence of the Member States. Our results suggest that the use of integrative mechanisms allows to improve the efficiency of EU education policy and at the same time the Member States education policies. The main directions for further research in this field and questions for discussion and another positive move remain: what are the challenges facing education policies EU and Member States in the context of globalisation, the expansion of the European Union and the imperative of sustainable development.

*Keywords:* education, social and education policy, education principle, EU strategy, literacy

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## Социально-экономические аспекты политики Европейского Союза в области образования

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**Введение.** Вопросы образовательной политики весьма актуальны во всех слоях общества на протяжении всего европейского пространства. В то же время эта политика должна внимательно рассматриваться применительно к каждому периоду истории человеческой цивилизации. Цель статьи – описание анализа современного состояния реализации инновационных подходов в образовательной политике Европейского Союза и определение ключевых аспектов в образовательной сфере.

**Материалы и методы.** Авторы рассматривают индивидуальные подходы государств-членов Европейского Союза в области образования и образовательной политике, используя традиционные методы эмпирического анализа, такие как описание, классификация, индукция и дедукция, контент-анализ, сравнение и синтез. Данное исследование включает результаты вторичного анализа исследовательских данных из области образовательной политики.

**Результаты исследования.** Основываясь на результатах исследований, мы выявили реальную потребность в углубленном анализе ситуации в образовательной сфере и разработке стратегии для достижения позитивных изменений в подходах к осмыслению образовательной политики и практики. Следует принять во внимание, насколько развитие образования зависит от потребностей общества, и определить ключевые факторы, влияющие на политику отдельных государств, входящих в Европейский Союз, с целью повышения качества образования, его конкурентоспособности и социальной сплоченности населения. Авторы обращают внимание на социально-экономический контекст образовательной сферы. Несмотря на стремление к гармонизации стран Европейского Союза, политика в области образования по-прежнему находится в компетенции государства.

**Обсуждение и заключения.** Понимание механизмов формирования образовательной политики будет способствовать согласованию общей стратегии Евросоюза с компетенциями отдельных государств, входящих в него. Использование инструментов интеграции позволяет повысить эффективность образовательной политики Евросоюза в целом и в то же время улучшить качество образования на национальном уровне. Основные направления для дальнейшего исследования в области образовательной политики находятся в сфере глобализации, расширении Европейского Союза и парадигме устойчивого развития.

*Ключевые слова:* образование, социальная и образовательная политика, принцип образования, стратегия Европейского Союза, грамотность

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### Introduction

Educated people enjoy a higher level of confidence among others. Higher education leads not only to an economically successful society but also to a healthier democracy that is based on a feeling of

general confidence as well as on the possibility of influencing what happens within their state. The education is also an effective policy tool. In a society based on democracy, educated people are involved in decision-making processes and are po-



litically engaged. Therefore, the education has a positive connection with the healthy democracy. Legislative anchoring of education policies can be achieved through legal norms where the constitutional law is of the highest importance. Furthermore, there are laws, directives and regulations that focus on this area of the social policy. It is not, however, the rule for each state to have the education constitutionally anchored. So its evaluation has an important place in the education policy, too. This term means the evaluation of various pedagogical phenomena and processes in order to eliminate undesirable phenomena, avoid them in the future and to put forward a proposal for possible changes in the future.

#### Literature Review

The research is based on official documents adopted by the European Union on education and innovation. Increased support for innovative activities and, above all, innovative entrepreneurship has been visible in the European Union since the 1980s. An important milestone reflecting the need to focus attention on the field of science, research and innovation is the Lisbon Strategy. When trying to define current situation in education policy at the European level it is necessary to deal with the results of studies addressing, for example, the process of the implementation of Knowledge Strategy in the EU from the Lisbon Strategy to Europe 2020 addressed by Çolak et al [1] and Cristina et al present in their study the main directions on action regarding the financing of higher education in line with the “Europe 2020” strategy. They also show the priorities, objectives and key actions, respectively the projects to be developed through the “Europe 2020” Strategy<sup>1</sup>, Gajewski highlights innovation policy as a link between research and technological development policy and industrial policy and makes it possible to create conditions conducive to bringing ideas to the market.

It is also closely linked to other EU policies regarding e.g. employment, competitiveness, environment, industry and energy [2]. Hervás Soriano and Mulatero also through the concept of knowledge triangle highlight the importance of jointly fostering research, education and innovation, and of paying due attention to the linkages between them [3]. G. Rappai in his study empirically proved that a successful cohesion policy is essential fulfilling in the growth expectations set for a decade [4] and Volante and Ritzen through examination the influence of prominent international education surveys on education governance within the EU – particularly those administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), outlining the key characteristics of the OECD surveys and the most salient EU findings discussed the contribution of emerging EU governance for the quality of education while looking at the challenges ahead [5], but also with policies supporting innovation or European employment guidelines and development goals, which are addressed by Tvaronavičienė et al, Udrea, or Vagač [6–8]. In particular, lifelong learning, adult education and the need to implement their specificities and policies are dealt with, for example, by Bočáková and Kubičková [9], and Butoracová Šindleryová [10], Formosa discusses the strengths and lacunae in the European Union’s policy on older adult learning, what is in truth deemed as a productive investment on the basis that it not only engenders positive returns of economic growth but also improves the quality of life and social development of older persons [11] and Heyneman agreed with the conclusion that the age cohort attending higher education is higher today than at any time in human history [12]. We must not forget either the sustainable future or the social cohesion for economic growth, which are dealt with, for example, by Calder and Clugston, they focus to the real

<sup>1</sup> Cristina F. I., Elena C. S., Mihaela A. D. The analysis of the European public policy implemented within the higher education system in line with the 2020 Strategy for sustainable growth // Proceedings of the 29th International Business Information Management Association Conference – Education Excellence and Innovation Management through Vision 2020: From Regional Development Sustainability to Global Economic Growth, 2017. Pp. 2294–2303.

need to review the situation in the sector and a strategy to achieve effective change in mainstream educational thinking, policy and practice [13]. We should not only determine where the sector is at present, but also engage as many institutions as possible in the review process, making sure that it is driven by their needs. M. A. and A. Camilleri in their study point out at the interventions in the realms of education which can play a significant role in shaping key performance indicators for laudable social outcomes. It suggests that education leadership may contribute to create a fair, just and equitable society for all. This article discusses how education fosters social cohesion [14]. Mihalik and Klimovsky deal with the specifics of the school decentralization development with the particular impact on local self-government and regional school system [15], Poorova<sup>2</sup> and Průcha [16] also deal with the regional specificities of the Impact of the European Union Educational Policy on the Higher Education Students.

### **Principles of the European education policy**

The education policy of developed countries is based on several generally recognized basic principles. The first is the principle of equal opportunities for education. Everyone has a right to education. Every citizen should have the same opportunity to learn. An education policy based on this principle seeks to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, without exception, in access to education, or to give all citizens of a given state the same opportunity to achieve education. The way in which the citizens themselves will grasp that opportunity only depends on them and the education policy does not concern this. Democratic countries seek to fulfil the principle of equal opportunities by providing and sponsoring a variety of programs to support groups that are disadvantaged

in some way, such as disabled people or national minorities. Within this principle, so-called positive discrimination can be used to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups in the education process. Another example is the possibility of loans, scholarships or the number of vacancies reserved for disadvantaged groups of people.

The second principle of education policy is the principle of lifelong learning. This principle perceives the education as a complex gathering of all educational subjects. The lifelong learning should provide people with the opportunity to be educated at all stages of their life, and also provide a concord between the possibilities of a human-being and his interests. The lifelong learning is therefore a continuous, never-ending process. This idea of lifelong learning grew in intensity in the early 1970s due to the economic and political changes as well as the changes in technology and engineering in general. There is a predominant opinion that raising the standard of living can be achieved through education, and so the need for more highly skilled people is growing. An important role in lifelong learning plays a proactive approach and an individual's own motivation.

The third principle materializes in individualization and differentiation. This principle is based on the assumption that individuals who are being educated require an individual approach. The individuals have different knowledge, abilities and skills. Not everyone has the same options and it is also necessary to respect them. The needs of the educated can thus be fulfilled by offering individual approach. Natural differentiation arises, for example, between generations<sup>3</sup>.

The fourth principle is internationalization. The level of education is usually related both to democracy and economic development of the country. An important part of the economy in developed countries stems

<sup>2</sup> *Poorová E.* The impact of the European Union educational policy on the assessment of higher education students in Slovakia // Sprachkompetenz in der Wissenschaft = Language Competence in the Science : Sammelband wissenschaftlicher Arbeiten / book of scientific articles ; Trnava University, Faculty of Health and Social Work, 2015. - 1 CD-ROM (192 p.). Pp. 154–162.

<sup>3</sup> Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020 [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://www.vzdelavani2020.cz> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).



out from the international relations and trade. For a trouble-free functioning of such models, there is a need for partners on both sides to understand and know each other as well as to respect mutual needs. Therefore, supranational institutions (for example, the EU) are launching various education support programmes. These programmes allow for study abroad, while students can obtain a grant for a stay abroad and, thanks to the credit recognition system, they do not have to worry about the fact that their foreign study will not be counted.

The last principle is a principle of differentiation of educational activities. The differentiation here means that not only the state should have the duty and the ability to provide the education. In addition to the state, other subjects should be involved in education area and offer opportunities for the education. Those examples include private schools, whether primary or high, or churches [9; 17].

The above-mentioned principles are among the most important ones in the education policy. Democratic countries place great emphasis on education, the education takes an irreplaceable place in every citizen's life, and it is therefore in the highest interest of the states to produce a quality education policy that is, of course, the result of a broad consensus among the general public.

The EU policy on education and training is based on the cooperation between the Member States. The EU should contribute to the development of the first-rate education and training by promoting cooperation between the Member States. The Member States remain responsible for the content of teaching and the organization of the education and training system as well as their cultural and linguistic diversity [2; 18].

On the basis of the Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000, the EU Member States' ministers of education and training adopt-

ed, in the first half of 2002, the education and training strategic guidelines, together with the targets for the European Union. These should make the EU the most advanced knowledge economy in the world. This approach was called the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. As the programme was approaching its end, the ministers of education of all the EU countries adopted, during the Czech Presidency, a follow-up document called the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training. In addition to a vision for the development of the education in Europe by 2020, it outlines four strategic objectives that correspond to a comprehensive focus on lifelong learning:

- implement lifelong learning and mobility;
- improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training;
- promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- improve creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all the levels of education and training<sup>4</sup>.

The Europe 2020 Strategic Framework also defines the so-called European benchmarks. These are the target values for the average results of all the EU countries in the common priority areas to be achieved by 2020<sup>5</sup> [19], namely:

- by 2020, at least 15 % of adults should be involved in different forms of lifelong learning;
- by 2020, the proportion of 15-year-olds having reading, math and science problems should make no more than 15 %;
- by 2020, the proportion of people aged between 30 and 34 with completed tertiary education should be at least 40 %;
- by 2020, the share of early school-leavers should be less than 10 %;
- in 2020, at least 95 % of the children aged between 4 and the age of the

<sup>4</sup> Lisabonská strategie [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <https://www.euroskop.cz/8742/sekce/lisabonska-strategie> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth [Электронный ресурс] // Communication from the Commission, COM (2010) 2020, Brussels, 3. 2010. URL: <http://www.buildup.eu/en/practices/publications/europe-2020-strategy-smart-sustainable-and-inclusive-growth-communication> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).



commencement of the compulsory school attendance should participate in early childhood education<sup>6</sup>.

### Materials and Methods

In our research where we compare and address individual approaches of the EU Member States in the field of both the education and education policy, which can be beneficial for later incorporation of improving innovations into national education systems, with using the traditional methods of empirical analysis as description and classification, semantic interpretation of data, content analysis, comparison and syntheses of the empirical basis of this study which includes the results of a secondary analysis of the research data covering the problems of education policies.

### Measuring the level of education

Education means the ability to use acquired knowledge and experience in practice. However, it is clear that education is not only a question of one science (pedagogy), but it is related to other disciplines, so it is a multidisciplinary topic. The education is thus associated with demography, sociology and economics. It is therefore not easy to measure the level of the education. In the next part of this chapter, we will gradually introduce possible ways of evaluating the level of education starting from a simple principle and ending with a sophisticated qualitative method.

One of the central issues in social systems across Europe is the ageing of the population. While currently individuals aged 65 or more represent 8 % of total world population, researches indicate that by 2050 they will have 18 % representation [18].

As the simplest way of evaluating the education, a degree of literacy comes forward, although we know that this is a major simplification and according to our definition the education in its entirety is not evaluated properly in this term. Nevertheless, this view will provide us with a starting point for other assessment methods [13; 14].

Literacy is usually understood as the ability of people to read and write. It is not just a mere distinction between individual letters, but the ability to read and write longer texts, and mainly to understand them. This is a traditional approach. Previously, a man was considered literate once he could read and write.

Consistently with the development and diffusion of education, that skill of literacy was considered to be self-evident in the developed countries, and the word “literacy” itself acquired, together with various additional names, a number of new meanings, too. Nowadays, there are, for example, functional literacy, computer and technical literacy, literal and social literacy as well as economic, health, consumer, visual, financial, etc. ones. These connections are used wherever it is necessary to be brief, but it is necessary to emphasize the fact that it is not enough to know only the terms from a given area but mainly to understand their substance and the context and also how to use them in life. It is no wonder, therefore, that the literacy has also penetrated into the field of education.

Reading literacy is the ability to understand the written text, to think about it as well as to use it on order to achieve one’s own goals, to develop own knowledge and potential, and to participate actively in the society.

Numerical literacy (sometimes called also numeracy) is the ability of an individual both to get to know and understand the role played by mathematics in the world, to make well-grounded judgments, and to penetrate into mathematics to meet his or her vital needs as a creative, interested and thoughtful citizen. Nature literacy is the ability to use science knowledge, to ask questions, and to draw conclusions from these facts that lead to the understanding of the world of nature and helping to make decisions about it and about the changes caused by human activity.

Financial literacy is a set of knowledge, skills, and values of a citizen that are necessary for him in order to financially secure himself and his family in today’s society and

<sup>6</sup> Strategie Evropa 2020 [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/evropske-zalezitosti/evropske-politiky/strategie-evropa-2020/strategie-evropa-2020-78695> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).



actively stand out in the market of financial products and services. A financially literate citizen focuses on money and pricing issues and is able to responsibly manage a personal or family budget, including the management of financial assets and financial liabilities in view of the changing life situation.

Computer literacy (sometimes digital) is a set of competencies that an individual needs to be able to decide how, when and why to use available information and communication technologies, and then use them effectively to deal with different learning situations and everyday reality.

The literacy reflects only a basic idea of the level of education in the world. This view reveals, in particular, the problem of the developing world. That fact was recognized by multinational organizations as they set out appropriate programs and declarations to improve the situation in developing countries. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme aims at eliminating the major challenges of the developing world defined in the eight basic objectives. By signing the Millennium Declaration in September 2000,

all the then 189 United Nations members plus Switzerland and the Vatican promised to work together to reach them by 2015. One out of the eight goals mentioned is to ensure by 2015 that children in the world, girls and boys, can complete elementary school. This goal has not been fully fulfilled. The share of globally enrolled children in schools has risen from 83 % in 2000 to 91 % in 2015. In absolute numbers this means that the total number of non-attending children has dropped from 100 million in 2000 to 57 million children, almost by half<sup>7</sup>. There is also a need to take into account the differences at the level of tertiary education as far as fields of science and degrees are concerned, where some states prefer engineering titles above those that come from the human and social sciences as shown in Figure 1.

In the OECD countries, on average, every sixth (17 %) younger adult (25–34) does not complete a high school. Between 30–40 % of young adults in Brazil, Colombia, Portugal, Saudi Arabia and Spain and over 50 % of young adults in China, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey

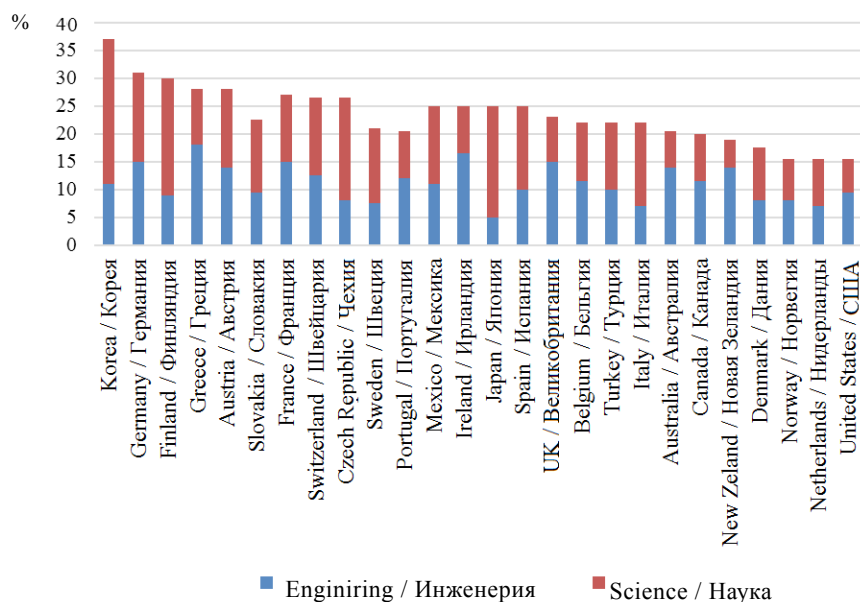


Fig. 1. Distribution academic in selected countries in 2010<sup>8</sup>

Р и с. 1. Распределение ученых званий по сферам в отдельных странах в 2010 г.

<sup>7</sup> The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2015/English2015.pdf> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).

<sup>8</sup> State of the Nation 2008 [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/eng/00032.html> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).

do not have a secondary education. By contrast, the Czech Republic is among the best within the OECD countries, as 95 % of people aged 25–34 years complete their secondary education. Another important indicator of a multiple sociological research is the mobility of students in the tertiary education, in other words, where college students are studying. It is therefore monitored what proportion of students in a given country is studying abroad. In 2013, more than 4 million students were studying their tertiary programs outside their home country. Australia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are the countries with the highest proportion of foreign students in the total number of students in the tertiary programs. The Czech Republic with 9 % share takes the average of the OECD countries. According to the Europe 2020 Strategy, 40 % of the Union's population should have completed their tertiary education<sup>9</sup> [19]. The individual sub-strategies under the 2020 Strategy show Figure 2.

The acquired education (or, for example, length of the education) is the most commonly used aggregate indicator of the human capital. This is because of its easy accessibility, as most social surveys collect data on formal qualifications. An integral part of social policy is not just the education area but also the employment issue. It is clear that the higher the level of education achieved, the better the chance for better employment in the labour market. This assumption support and predetermine mainly labour law standards. Even in the modern conception of the economy, the labour law has the right to protect human dignity as the highest value. This concept takes the precedence over the “economic indicators” and other values, because fundamental human rights and human dignity are values of greater importance<sup>10</sup>.

In the European Union, there are also directives prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of the gender. Moreover, those directives represent a basis on which the development of anti-discrimination Community legislation (also after 2000) has also been built for other areas. Sometimes they are known under the term discriminatory reasons<sup>11</sup>.

### Results

Educational systems of Central Europe and Scandinavia

The public sector of the Central European states finances education in different ways. For example, by covering the costs of educational institutions or by direct supports of students and their families through scholarships and public loans. It also provides public subsidies for educational activities for private companies and non-profit organizations. In the Czech Republic, this makes a share of 4, 2 % of GDP, 4, 4 % of GDP in Slovakia, 4, 5 % of GDP in Poland, and 4, 1 % of GDP in Hungary. Those shares rank the mentioned countries rather on the bottom among the countries of the Union. More advanced countries invest usually much more in the education<sup>12</sup>.

Ministries of Education support studying within the framework of, for example, the Erasmus programs, but this is particularly the case of only the state universities. To finance private schools, the EU funds are used only. The EU policy considers that gradually, the V4 national share of financing foreign stays should increase.

The Ministries of the Interior of all the Central European countries are involved in projects and grant programs for education, especially in smaller municipalities. Among those, we can include the Business Support Apprenticeship Programme, which is directed to the area of engineering and construction.

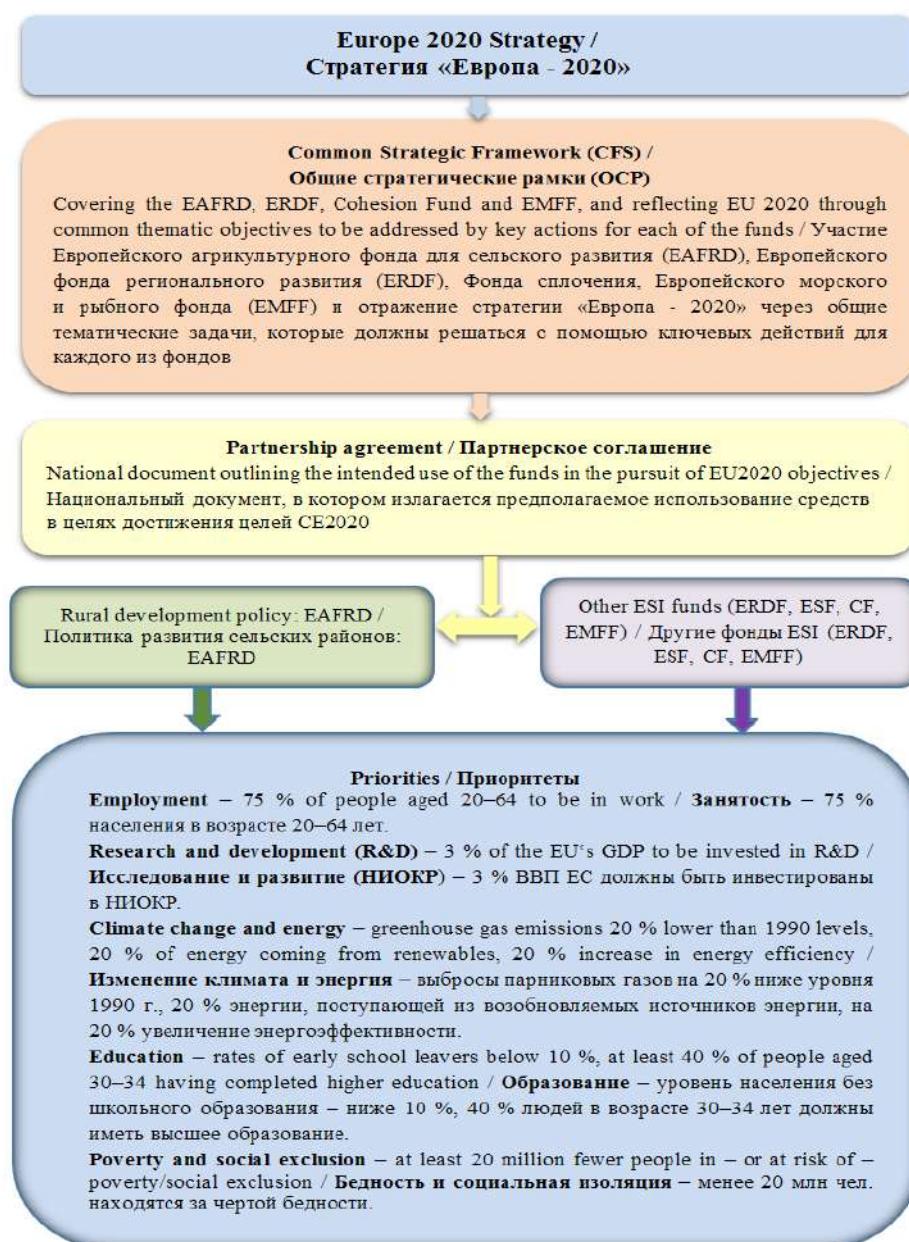
<sup>9</sup> European Commission. Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

<sup>10</sup> Barinková M., Žofčinová V. Pracovné pomery učiteľov vysokých škôl (Návrat k problému) // *Justičná revue*. r. 67. č. 11. Pp. 1255–1269.

<sup>11</sup> Social security law in the Czech Republic and the European Union / I. Chvátalová [et al.]. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 2012. s. 256.

<sup>12</sup> Eurostat ukazuje rozdíly ve vzdělávání [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <http://www.dvmonitor.cz/aktuality/275-eurostat-ukazuje-rozdily-ve-vzdelavani> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).





F i g. 2. Priorities of Europe 2020 Strategy  
Р и с. 2. Приоритеты стратегии «Европа – 2020»<sup>13</sup>

Under the framework of study abroad, outside Europe, there are also organizations that award grants, mostly under the reasoning of deteriorated financial situation. Another option supported by states in the

context of education is a benefit scholarship. Some options to support education are managed by the European Social Fund, such as the Impact Project in the Czech Republic. The project is, likewise in other

<sup>13</sup> Policy Framework [Электронный ресурс]. URL: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/policy-framework\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/policy-framework_en) (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).

Central European countries, organized within the framework of the Education for Competitiveness Operational Program. This project is focused on studying languages at the university level. Its uniqueness lies in the introduction of the latest tools and approaches<sup>14</sup>.

The aid plays a role in the entire system of the Northern European region and mainly in the education systems. It is emphasized that every student has equal opportunities. There is a sophisticated system to support students at each level of education and counts on the various obstacles and life situations that students have to deal with. In order to have a better and more direct access to the education, there are a number of subsidies and support systems<sup>15</sup>.

Among the subsidies for preschool and elementary education we can name: textbooks, meals, transport. As the education support can also be called the approach to the students with special needs where the teacher develops an individual plan so as to help the respective student in the education to the extent possible. If their handicap is of a larger nature, there are special schools and even those students are encouraged to participate in regular education.

There are also subsidies for high school and college students, such as eating concessions. Quite often, teachers provide studying materials and sometimes various sports activities are fostered. Also counselling is provided to students at each level of education. As a support for education we can also name the existence of special classes or schools that count on the increased demands of students for education. University students may, for example, request a non-refundable allowance for study and housing or for a repayable loan.

Unlike the Scandinavian educational system, the Central European one is much more centrally managed, for example, the nature of elementary schools is clearly given by the school law, including the con-

tent of curriculum. In the Northern European system, only the basic objectives and outlines of curriculum content are centrally determined, but local authorities or training committees have a keynote in programming the content. Teachers are then given a fair amount of freedom in choosing a form of teaching. Even salaries are paid by local authorities in Northern European countries. In our country this is a matter of the state.

In Finland and Sweden, the basic education is generally not divided into two blocks. There is no classification system during the first two years of the elementary education in the Nordic countries. The grading comes only from the third year and is completely different from the way of grading in the Visegrad Group countries. In Finland, there is a seven-point scale of 4–10, where the grading rather resembles the allocation of points. It is possible that there is a psychological effect when the pupil is not so stressed. There is also an emphasis on the pupil's autonomy and his incitement to responsibility. I am of the opinion that it is one of the fundamental weaknesses and reasons of the lower level of quality of Czech schools. In the Central European region, the same principle is being enforced, but how much it works in practice is perhaps a different issue.

There is no significant difference between dividing the both states in terms of the upper secondary schools. In both regions, the completion of vocational training may be achieved by final exams, which do open the window of entering university campus. Therefore, if students are eager for further education after completing their specialization, they are allowed to do so provided they meet the conditions for the next level of education.

In addition, the Scandinavian states have a functioning system of local authorities where municipalities themselves are the founders of schools and are also responsible for them. Even though it is the

<sup>14</sup> *Brdek M., Vychová H.* Evropská vzdělávací politika. Programy, principy a cíle. 2004. Praha Aspi publishing. Pp. 40–72.

<sup>15</sup> Autoevaluace školy v zahraničí. Pohled do evaluačních systémů ve vybraných zemích / D. Vrabcová, L. Procházková, K. Rýdl (eds.). URL: [http://www.nuov.cz/uploads/AE/publikace/Autoevaluace\\_skoly\\_v\\_zahranici.pdf](http://www.nuov.cz/uploads/AE/publikace/Autoevaluace_skoly_v_zahranici.pdf) (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).



responsibility of local level authorities, the differences between schools are almost over, they are absolutely minimal. The decentralization is therefore a functional mechanism for the states in the region. Local authorities are best able to assess the needs of the local population. So if confidence and powers are properly set up, it can be a very effective mechanism, as shows the case in Scandinavia.

There is also a clear distinction within the nature of nations, which can be regarded as a mere stereotype, but it can be a part of historical development, too. The V4 countries, unlike Scandinavian ones, have a very young democratic history. It is possible that the time of the totalitarian regimes has left the consequences for civil society setting, and if so, it may take several generations to make any changes. By a systematic democratization and appropriate policy changes, this path could be faster. Another important factor is political orientation as the Northern European countries place a tremendous emphasis on social policy. However, a transparent approach of the entire policy is absolutely essential so that the whole society can have an overview of the changes and really participate in them.

Greater awareness and transparency for society creates general transparency. If everything is transparent, if it works as it should, no political scandals arise, and the society then gains confidence in its own system, and may even like to provide more funds for general well-being. It's however essential that the society has a reason to trust. The main part of this process is via education, when its aim is to raise awareness and to make the society self-educated. Citizens look for the necessary information themselves. The process of learning and education is never completed in itself, and it is always necessary to adapt the education policies to the needs of the population. However, this self-training mechanism can greatly support the learning process. When referring to possible changes in civil society, Finland and Sweden stay in contrast to the so-called watchdog state concept.

In the first place, they no longer carry the burden of the previous governments, and in this specific case, the invisible hand of the market works and corrects the development. The state plays the role of a mere recruiter, and the citizens participate in the running of the country once in the electoral period by its electoral right<sup>16</sup>.

The fundamental difference and positivism is evident in the Scandinavian implementation of the educational policy, where, regardless of which ruling party is in power, the previously set principle of one direction is taken, as the direction is based on scientific statistical data and their evaluation. There are no major changes in Central European education policy. The education policy is somehow important, but there are higher priorities. The trend of changing policies in each government period, which has been in the last few years usually shorter than the formally set period, is noticeable. More focus on the interactive way of teaching could help to enhance the educational system. In schools, rather a classical and formal model is being implemented, consisting more of the substance which is being studied and then tested. In the Scandinavian countries, the average number of people who have completed their tertiary education is by 10 % higher compared to the Central European countries, as shown in Figure 3.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The development of education is the investment with the highest rate of return. In the global context of competition, only those countries can be successful that are acceding to education as an investment of extraordinary importance. The process of education can satisfy societal needs and, from the economic point of view, denotes the competitiveness of the country, and can not be underestimated. Development in Europe defines an effort to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is aimed at developing a knowledge-based economy, leading to modifications of economic paradigms, resulting in a gradual reduction in

<sup>16</sup> URL: <http://www.valach.info/obcanska-spolocnost> (дата обращения: 02.02.2018).

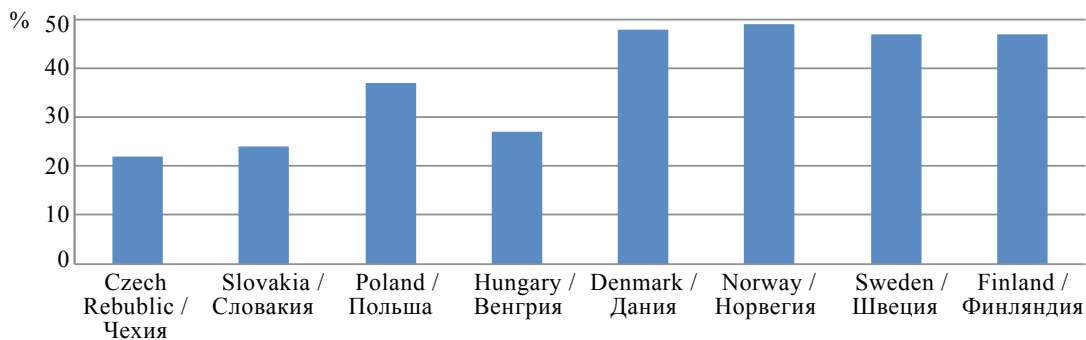


Fig. 3. The number of university educated people in 2017\*

Р и с. 3. Численность населения с высшим образованием в 2017 г.

\* Source: own elaboration / Источник: собственная разработка

the importance of the productive sector, but also increasing dependence on social security will become more and more dependent on knowledge-based industries increasing the requirements of these sectors for employees with higher education.

The Scandinavian educational model understands the education as a product of the market that can be bought and it is important to support the existence of private schools, because in today's society the labour market operates on the principle of the distribution of one's abilities, the precondition of which is the education. This idea is interesting and has a chance for success, but only with a proper setting. The setup is meant in the sense that it perceives a human factor as a subject that has a wide range of variables, for example, just in terms of cultural differences. Such perception can also to avoid enormous differences in the society. So the state can function only as a "silent partner" when we consider the human nature and its innate competition. The competition is rooted in the human nature and could make it a functional mechanism if, as mentioned above, the setting was right. In view of the geographical location and regarding the fact that part of their national territories are behind the polar circle, it is worth mentioning. It means that some cultural differences are possible within one country, and because there are a lot of ethnic groups, it is the case. There is a strong

auto evaluation deployed where the results of the evaluation are effectively used for further innovations and the system has the possibility of getting feedback and thus works better if the changes are based on the results of the research. The evaluation is possible through a dense evaluation information network that receives clear reviews. The policy makers then have a clear basis for the change that needs to be made. This principle works theoretically in some schools as well. However, given the generally lower ability to use modern technology, it is becoming less efficient. For example the Finish system whose core pillars are quality, efficiency, equality, justice and internationalization. In addition, the State ensures that every pupil has the right to equal education, regardless of the financial situation of the parents, after leaving compulsory education. Support for students plays a key role. This means removing obstacles to learning – physical, attitudinal or pedagogical, timely interventions, support and well-being. Finnish education policy is built on the principles of lifelong learning and free education, which, moreover, is seen as a key to the competitiveness and well-being of society.

The Central European educational system is more centralized. The countries themselves are very heterogeneous in demographic terms. It is therefore necessary to look at the needs of individual pupils more closely and with greater toler-





ance, using the right mechanisms. It turns out that compared with the Central European governments, that also the governments of the Baltic States have better understood the need and profitability of investing in education. As a result, we can claim that Estonia got ahead of Hungary in terms of the performance of their economies [8]. An important characteristic and specificity of the Hungarian education system is the high degree of decentralization. In its education policy, the country places a major emphasis on the right to freedom of choice in education, to create a free supply of educational opportunities, to enable citizens, parents and communities to participate in the management of education-related issues, to introduce an objective state funding system for

the educational sphere and to decentralize decision- education. As a result of decentralization, there is a close co-operation between all stakeholders, which stimulates them to find consensual solutions.

In Central Europe the top authorities themselves form the education policy that includes prescribed procedures and is more specific than the Finnish one. It is therefore difficult to determine functional mechanisms for all. There is a distinction between levels of knowledge among schools in that educational system. On the other way round, in Scandinavia this competence is precisely within local competent authorities, which are responsible for policies and have greater competence and responsibility.

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