

The Polish vocational education system from 2012

The main goal of the legislative and organizational changes made in 2011 was to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the vocational training system and to harmonize it with the labor market.

This will be achieved by implementing the following solutions:

modifying the vocational education by division of professions on the qualifications separately confirmed in the educational process;

implementation of the modernized core curriculum in vocational education;

adjust the structure education to a new model of vocational education and training, including:

standardization of education in basic vocational school for the three-year cycle,

consolidation of vocational education and lifelong professional training centers,

enabling adults to acquire professional qualifications in the form of courses, outside the school,

uniform system of examinations of professional competence and open it to the effects of formal, non-formal and informal learning;

the inclusion of schools offering vocational education and training in lifelong learning system.

Now it will be easier to obtain professional training and to supplement the skills and acquire a new profession. The amendment introduced provisions on the acquisition of specific skills required for particular profession. Examinations for qualifications will not be conducted after school, but at different stages of education. After passing an exam a student will obtain a certificate of acquiring this qualification, and after passing all the qualifications required in the profession receive a diploma of the profession.

The new Act provides that the education in technical and basic vocational schools (as it is in general upper secondary schools) will be associated with learning in lower secondary schools - content started in lower secondary schools will be continued in the first classes of upper secondary schools. The technical and vocational basic school students will learn the same issues as general education students in the first year of school. This allows graduates of the reformed vocational schools will be able to continue their education for example in general upper secondary schools for adults from the second class.

The revised law allows to combine vocational schools into professional training centers. In the school system will not exist supplementary general and technical secondary schools. These schools will be progressively phased out, because the recruitment will be stopped.

This Act shall come into force on 1 September 2012.

Due to changes of the Act there have been changed implementing regulations.

Vocational education classification of professions

The new classification defines:

- the professions in which training is carried out in schools,
- the types of upper secondary schools which can provide education in a particular profession (for example: a three-year secondary basic vocational school, four-year secondary technical school and a post-secondary school),
- separate qualifications in professions in which training can be carried out on qualifying professional courses;
- the professions in which isolated skills are not separated (art professions);
- applicants - ministers, who could request on introducing a new profession into the vocational education classification;
- areas of education assigned to particular professions included in vocational education classification.

A new approach to acquiring professional education is to separate qualifications in particular profession, each of which includes specific knowledge and skills. Vocational schools will provide the vocational training based on separate qualifications. Training in individual skills will be conducted on the qualification professional courses and their completion will entitle to accede to the external exam. Confirmation of all qualifications within the profession and a school completion certificate will mean an acquiring of a profession and a diploma. There will also possible to confirm a single qualification in profession.

From 1 September 2012, the vocational education and training for all professions providing in the basic vocational school will last for three years.

In the new structure of upper secondary school graduates of vocational schools will be able to continue their education at upper secondary school for adults starting from the second year and to complement the qualifications in the profession in the form of professional qualification courses.

Classification of professions provide the possibility for acquisition of qualifications by graduates of upper secondary schools, particularly graduates of profiled general secondary schools:

- by post-secondary schools - in professions for which training in this type of school is provided;
- in the form of professional qualification courses - in the form of professional

qualification courses - for separated qualifications in professions for which no provision at post-secondary school is provided;

- in the form of post-secondary schools and vocational qualification courses - in selected professions and qualifications set out in vocational education classification.

A new classification of vocational education includes 200 professions, in which are 251 separated qualifications. The vocational education classification contains:

- 23 professions with the three qualifications,
- 72 professions with two qualifications,
- 98 professions with 1 qualification,
- 7 art professions for which no qualifications are separated.

The classification provides professions in which education is reserved for the disabled students:

- sound production technician, IT technician (*tyfloinformatyk*) - for the blind and visually impaired students;
- massage technician, office work techniques - for the blind and visually impaired students - school education at technical upper secondary school level;
- auxiliary staff in room service - for people with mild intellectual disabilities.

The core curriculum vocational education

The new core curriculum in vocational education will be in force from 1st September 2012.

The new core curriculum set out the knowledge, vocational skills and personal and social skills that the student must obtain in the educational process. According to the idea of an European Qualifications Framework the core curriculum is described as the expected education outcomes.

There were defined descriptions of education process across all professions included in the vocational education classification.

The new core curriculum in vocational education is important also for the development of vocational education for adults, interested in obtaining additional qualifications or changing a job.

At the request of the minister for health, in all occupations for which the this minister is responsible, was introduced a compulsory of learning sign language in the basic level - just as it is in the process of training in the professions related to social welfare.

A vocational lifelong learning outside the school

The regulation defines forms of new types of non-school institutes for vocational longlife learning and the conditions, organization and mode of education in these institutions.

The list of non-school forms of education include:

- courses conducted on the basis of the core curriculum in vocational education: the qualifying professional courses and courses of professional skills, theoretical training for young workers;
- courses in professions included in the classification of professions and specialties for labor market, including those carried out in cooperation with labor offices;
- general competence courses, based on selected part of the curriculum.

The qualifying professional courses can be lead not only by schools providing vocational education and training, but also by centers of lifelong learning, practical training centers and centers of longlife education and professional development. Entitled to lead the courses are also the stakeholders outside the education system - the labor market institutions operating under the Act on employment promotion and labor market, legal and private persons conducting educational activity under the terms of the Act on Freedom of Economic Activity.

The adults will be able to obtain 251 qualifications separated in professions covered by vocational education classification on the qualifying professional courses. Completion of the qualifying course entitles to confirm professional qualifications in the system of external examinations conducted by regional examination commissions. Getting all the qualifications that make up the profession, along with confirmation of an adequate level of education will mean winning the full profession.

The vocational examinations

The main changes resulting from the amendment:

- examination will be conducted for each of the separate qualifications in the profession;
- exams in each separate qualifications will include a practical test. Assessed by the examiner will be the end result - a product, service or documentation, depending on the profession and qualifications;
- students of vocational school will take exams during the course, not – as used to be - at the end of the school;
- for students of qualifying professional courses examinations will be organized after the end of classes;
- examinations will be organized by the regional examination commissions, but will be carried out in schools and in employers' premises;

- the written part of an examination could be carried out on-line;
- after passing the exam candidate will receive a new document - a certificate stating qualification in the profession. The person who gets a certificate testifying to all the separated qualifications in the profession and level of education required for the profession, will receive a diploma certifying competence in particular profession.

As it used to be students with special educational needs could take exams in conditions adapted to their needs (f.a. longer time, supporting teacher). The students with disability get the adopted examination paper (in Braille, larger print).