

# Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

## VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

### HUNGARY

#### School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 5 and 18. It begins during the last year of pre-primary education and covers primary and lower secondary education for a duration of 8 years, organised as a single structure (*általános iskola*), as well as upper secondary (*gimnázium, szakközépiskola, szakiskola*) for 4 years. There are, however, possibilities to continue studies after the 4th year of primary school either in an alternative or a structured general upper secondary educational institution (*gimnázium*) (with 6 to 8 years). Education and teaching begins in the seventh year for the six-year *gimnázium*, and in the fifth year for the eight-year *gimnázium*, with both finishing in year 12. All schools until the age of 16 offer general education; pupils can choose vocational options only after they reach the age of 16.

#### LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the national policy related to vocational guidance education and career choice is to reduce the failure and drop-out rates in schools as well as to decrease and prevent unemployment. Career choice education is an integral part of the educational process and has the objective of making pupils aware of the fact that lifelong learning is essential for their employability.

The obligation to provide some vocational guidance in compulsory education is directed by the following laws:

- the Amendment in 2003 of Act LXXIX of 1993 on public education; § 34 prescribes the creation of professional educational services, among them guidance for further study and career choices;
- act LXXVI of 1993 on vocational education and training; § 1 and 29 explain each pupil's right to receive professional guidance. The same act explains each adult's right to receive professional guidance if a career modification occurs during the adult's professional life.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour share the responsibility for establishing vocational guidance education and vocational guidance services. The first is responsible for the establishment of services aimed at pupils, students and adults in the education system. Their role is to facilitate the transition between school and the professional world as well as career choices. The second makes services available to facilitate the integration of or return to the labour market for people seeking employment or training and for socially disadvantaged groups.

The National Council for Vocational Guidance gathers representatives of the public authorities and other stakeholders as well as key partners of the service offer.

The National Council for Vocational Guidance began its function in 1961 under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour. In 1969, it developed the network of teachers which would be responsible for career guidance in their respective schools. These teachers worked semi-independently, being responsible for career guidance. Meanwhile, the network also created career guidance centres in every county of Hungary to help pupils – mostly at the end of primary and secondary school – to find the most adequate professions or jobs for themselves. Nowadays, these institutions for vocational guidance have practically disappeared in Hungary. They have been replaced by two types of vocational guidance institute:

- Labour Centres, whose network covers the whole country, deal with career and vocational guidance duties in the case of adults (mostly unemployed or unqualified persons); under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour;
- Educational Centres, whose network covers the whole country, deal with pupils under age 18; under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The management of these programmes is the duty of the National Union of Career Guidance, and the National Centre of Career Information provides the necessary information. (The latter is located in Szeged.)

## **VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM**

Vocational guidance education is part of the National Core Curriculum at all levels of education (primary included) as a cross-cutting approach called 'learning about daily life and practical skills'. The objectives of this approach are to allow pupils to self-evaluate skills and become familiarised with the professional world and to impart knowledge to them about the different professional areas. All teachers at all levels of education have the role of preparing pupils for their future career choices.

In all types of educational institution, a separate subject called 'career counselling' exists for pupils aged 13-14. It is taught in the framework of the cross-cutting approach 'learning about daily life and practical skills'. The objective of this subject is to facilitate pupils' future school and career choices. Pupils receive assistance in formulating and defining their individual interests, in establishing their career objectives and in planning their educational pathways.

In upper secondary education, courses are offered which consist of presentations of different trades and careers, aimed at helping pupils to take decisions in terms of their choice of future educational pathways and careers. In vocational secondary schools (*szakközépiskola*) in years 8 and 9, there are programmes for professional orientation before beginning vocational training. In *szakiskola* (vocational training school), this type of education takes the shape of a programme of 8 lessons per week. In the other types of upper secondary school, activities are less formal, i.e. the teachers responsible for the class decide which topics come into question in the lectures, the extent to which the school psychologist is involved, or on the role of the parents' association.

## **Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum**

Traineeships are part of the upper secondary vocational education programme (from the 9th year of compulsory education). The number of hours devoted to theory and practice is divided approximately equally. Traineeships are not included in the general education curricula.

## **OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES**

### **Contacts with the professional world**

Visits to companies and with employers, and experience on the labour market are organised by upper secondary schools.

Developing and maintaining direct contacts with the world of work is a practice which exists in vocational schools, but which cannot be fulfilled easily in general secondary schools.

### **Guidance services at school**

In addition to vocational guidance education offered to pupils in the framework of the curriculum, lessons (one hour per week) consisting of individualised counselling aimed at helping pupils to take decisions regarding their choice of educational pathway and training as well as their careers are generally provided by a teacher/counsellor or the teacher responsible for the class (*osztályfőnök*).

Since the semi-independent teachers responsible for career guidance ceased to operate in all schools, the role of teachers responsible for classes has increased. The teacher must recognise pupils who have problems in choosing their future school or jobs so that they receive help from the adequate experts. It is also up to the teacher to provide the necessary information on job expectations and possibilities. They must know about the services which help with decision-making, for example the '*Let's start together*' computer program package, or take pupils to visit exhibitions which are organised regularly by the Labour Centres. In all types of secondary school in particular, it is very important to teach the subject 'Entrepreneurial knowledge' which already has its own curriculum for all levels of education.

Other types of educational and vocational guidance are made available according to the type of education. For example, some years ago in vocational schools, a very important vocational development programme (*Szakiskolai Fejlesztési Program*) was launched. Activities and other mechanisms developed in the framework of this programme (such as a curriculum based on skills, manuals and multimedia aids, an ongoing training programme for teachers, conferences, etc.), are aimed at improving the quality of career counselling and, in the end, at allowing pupils to obtain much more general knowledge and to make well-informed and reasoned career choices. They are freely accessible to anyone who is interested.

### **Guidance services outside school**

The county educational institutes (*megyei pedagógiai intézet*) and pedagogical professional services (*pedagógiai szakszolgálatok*) (under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture) exist in each district. The counsellors who work there offer pupils diagnostics of

their talents, abilities, skills and intellectual orientations, as well as advice on educational pathways and the choice of school. In certain cases, these services are aimed at young people with difficulties related to school, integration or behaviour, or at those who are particularly gifted.

In addition to the Labour Centre network (there are 20 Labour Centres with 173 local sub-offices), there are 9 regional retraining centres (*Regionális Átképző Központok*) under the direction of the public employment service (*Állami Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat – ÁFSZ*). Their local branches also offer vocational guidance services mainly to unemployed persons.

They both aim to provide training programmes for adults (sometimes also for disabled people) to gain adequate and useful qualifications on the labour market, in the framework of adult education. Young people who have dropped out of school or who are above the compulsory school-attendance age, may also make use of these services. These centres also conduct surveys called *prior learning assessment and recognition*, which are also obligatory in the case of adults, according to the Act LXXVI of 1993 on Vocational education and training (29.§.) The educational methods used in these programmes are differentiated and individualised according to the personality of students, and the programmes are organised as training modules.

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF**

The requirements in terms of qualifications for guidance practitioners are regulated only for teachers responsible for guidance as well as for public employment service counsellors.

A guidance training programme for teachers is offered by several higher education institutions specialised in teacher training and by one university.

Until recently, very little information and knowledge on career guidance could be obtained by teachers during their studies at universities and colleges. Now there are compulsory courses – mostly in colleges – dealing directly with these topics, and it is also possible to get acquainted with them through further education and training programmes. (In-service training is organised mostly by educational services.) Psychologists who work in the field of vocational guidance are trained at university in the area of work psychology.

The qualifications of counsellors in the employment sector are defined by law and include a higher education diploma in the area of vocational guidance and career counselling, social education, etc., according to the type of post.

The counsellors may participate in ongoing specialised training and other activities allowing them to improve their qualifications.

## **COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

Examples of best practices in terms of cooperation between different stakeholders (local authorities, employers, schools, etc.) consisting in organising joint events exist sporadically at local level.

Some pilot projects covering a small number of schools were launched in the past few years.

The examples of best practices were developed mostly through the support of international European Union programmes (i.e. Leonardo da Vinci projects) organised by the Tempus Public Foundation and with the help of the National Employment Foundation. As a result of these programmes, a number of schools have created a consortium in cooperation with international stakeholders, e.g. developing new qualifications in Szombathely at BAU-EXTRA training school, or realising study visits abroad, mostly in the framework of school partnerships, etc.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The network of organisations providing career counselling information (*Foglalkozási Információs Tanácsadó, FIT szervezetek és bázisok*) run by the employment centres, has developed and made various modern tools available to help with career choices (databases, software, etc.).

The website of the National Centre for Vocational Guidance Resources (*Nemzeti Pályainformációs Központ – [www.npk.hu](http://www.npk.hu)*) provides information on the bodies involved in educational and vocational guidance as well as on the education system, the labour market, employment opportunities, etc. Requests may be made by telephone or by email.

Websites (such as [www.epalya.hu](http://www.epalya.hu), [www.palyainfo.hu](http://www.palyainfo.hu)) provide information and databases on training and the labour market, career planning assistance programmes, etc.

### Internet references

National Centre for Vocational Guidance Resources: [www.npk.hu](http://www.npk.hu)

Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour: <http://www.szmm.gov.hu/>

Ministry of Education and Culture: <http://www.okm.gov.hu/>

Tempus Public Foundation: <http://www.tpf.hu/pages/forum>

Publications in *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*: <http://www.ofi.hu>

### Sources

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