

Report of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Hungary to the 2006 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the EU Work Programme on Education and Training

May, 2005

Contents:

1 - Introduction: Correspondence between national education policy developments and the Lisbon Strategy	1
2 - Efficient investment: reforms of the key areas	3
3 - The strategy of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning	8
4 - The reform of higher education	13
5 - Making vocational education and training attractive and improving its quality	18
6 - Strengthening the European dimension in education and training	21

1 - INTRODUCTION: CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND THE LISBON STRATEGY

Hungary has been observing the continuous intensification of international influence on the field of education from the late 90's onwards. The preparation of the various sectors for EU accession in Hungary was closely linked to the process of meeting fundamental national modernisation needs. The 2004 accession of Hungary to the EU granted the opportunity to design the Human Resources Development Operational Programmes (for the period between 2004 and 2006) implemented under the EU Structural Funds in line with the target system mediated by the Lisbon objectives.

During the formulation of sector development strategies the EU's "Detailed work programme on the common objectives of European education and training systems"¹ provided considerable professional input and a broad conceptual framework that promote the shaping of the comprehensive concept of development for the sector. At the same time, as certain segments of the Hungarian education system (e.g. public education) are deeply rooted in tradition, in the long run the strong, positive effects of EU processes will strengthen the need for change as well as accelerate the pace of changes.

The impact exerted by the objectives of the European Union on domestic development can be witnessed in two broad areas. One such area is that of specific processes, where measures engendered by existing national demands gained Community impetus and reinforcement as a result. Eventually, it is exceedingly difficult to dissociate Hungarian processes that are supposedly developing independently from those taking place under the explicit stimulus of the European Union. Obviously, the reason lies in the fact that the EU programme is fairly similar to the goals of national education policy. The comprehensive National Development Plan² drawn up by the Government for the utilisation of European funds articulates several priorities and concrete measures for other sectors as well which directly or indirectly demand the development of education and also assigns resources to these measures.

The other area where EU influence is evident is the scene of strategic planning. The national approaches and terminology comply with those set out in the educational strategic documents drafted by the international knowledge communities (e.g. OECD, EU, ILO, etc.). The Medium-term Strategy for the Development of Public Education has been linked to the EU goals and these objectives constitute vital aspects in the current formulation of the long-term strategy. The strategy for Vocational Education Development and the Lifelong Learning strategy (LLL Strategy) have both been devised and a strategy for the formulation of the Public Education Assessment and Measurement System is currently being mapped out. Implementation-oriented planning plays an increasingly marked, critical role in strategic thinking.

Besides theoretical target setting, the empirical findings of international surveys also profoundly influence national education policy planning. A fine example of this is the PISA survey, the first results of which had a decisive effect on education policy. According to certain authoritative opinions, nothing has ever exerted a stronger influence on the way

¹ 6362/02 Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe.

² The National Development Plan is a strategic framework document for the operational programmes implemented under the EU Structural Funds for 2004-2006.

education was being thought of. Facing the evidence entailed the introduction of measures, such as the legal reinforcement of the foundation phase in public education³, emphasizing the development of key competences or the orientation of the National Development Plan towards education, in particular towards public education. In addition to the PISA results, the "Special Education Needs" findings, another research conducted by the OECD, drew attention to the shortcomings of the education of children with special educational needs, whereas the OECD (Education at a Glance) indicators highlighted the unfavourable ratio of graduates in certain areas of higher education. The latter carried a supremely important message for higher education policy, and considerably affected the conceptual work underlying the preparation of the new act on higher education (act adopted by the Parliament on May 23, 2005; not published as of yet; hereinafter referred to as the "new Act on Higher Education").

With a view to implementing the European Benchmarks, the Ministry of Education has produced status reports with respect to each benchmark. New measures facilitating the achievement of certain benchmarks have also been established, and those current programmes whose continuation and/or extension propel Hungarian values towards the goal indicated by the benchmark have been identified. On the basis of the status reports, Hungary needs to exert considerable efforts with respect to three benchmarks in order to approximate the EU objectives by 2010:

- ✓ reducing the rate of early school leavers;
- ✓ reducing the proportion of those with low level of literacy;
- ✓ increasing the proportion of participants involved in lifelong learning.

Hungary benefited a great deal from the work on the benchmarks as the development of the respective indicators started an intensive professional and methodological discourse. A so-called Group on Indicators has been set up within the Ministry of Education comprising the experts of the ministries concerned, researchers and statisticians of the Central Statistical Office.

The linking of the Lisbon Strategy and the common objectives to the national education policy was theoretically an obvious and natural step while the processes evolving in Hungary revealed several problems and difficulties. For instance, the culture of benchmark- or indicator-based governance is still beginning to take shape in Hungary. The action plans devised in line with the activities and achievements of EU and national working groups dealing with the European Benchmarks and the Detailed Work Programme contain a variety of measures, however, the implementation of these plans must be carried out in an institutional environment where the active contribution of other fields/ministries is also needed, and such a process does not always go without a hitch. As regards the adaptation potential, enhanced flexibility is required, specifically with a view to ensuring that the EU objectives are not interpreted as doctrines, but rather as an opportunity that provides ground for actual developments.

The nature of the European Benchmarks is such that it requires the achievement of major positive changes originating from public education. The established objectives are set for 2010, but they demand changes in education policy that will essentially take a longer period to be realized than 2010. A monitoring system ensuring the follow-up and control of the objectives is still to be worked out for the Hungarian action plans created in the autumn of 2004.

³ Teachers (whose primary task is the development of competences in the foundation phase) may continue teaching for an additional two years (ISCED2 – grades 5 and 6) following the four years of the foundation period (ISCED1), and devote 25-40% of teaching time to the development of skills.

2 - EFFICIENT INVESTMENT: REFORMS OF THE KEY AREAS

2.1 Reforms, investment and efficiency

External and internal efficiency is becoming an increasingly central issue in Hungarian education policy. In the interpretation of the national education policy, the issue of external efficiency refers to how successful new entrants to the labour market after leaving the educational system are, while internal efficiency is expressed by the relation between investment into education and the output of the system (for example student performance). This type of approach/interpretation does not measure efficient investments primarily in terms of the extent of resources invested in the given area, but rather it investigates the best possible use of resources from the point of view of efficiency.

2.1.1 Cost-effectiveness and management

An inherited feature of the Hungarian education system is that available resources are not being utilized at the highest rate of efficiency when compared to the effectiveness of education. This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that while human resource costs in terms of teachers are seemingly high (Education at a Glance, OECD) in the system, the performance of the system in certain fields of public education is lagging far behind the desired level (PISA). The system is characterised by the prevailing scarcity of resources, which becomes most apparent at the level of local governments that maintain schools. There are approximately 2300 local governments maintaining a kind of educational institution in Hungary, most of which are smaller settlements. As a consequence of the above, the reform of the financing mechanism cannot be separated from that of the administration; local and regional public education planning and provision play a decisive role in addressing efficiency problems. As of the summer of 2003, all local governments have to prepare a public education provision plan, one of the aims of which is to promote a more rational and efficient range of educational services. To the same purpose, the development of the micro-regional level is accorded high priority; both the regulatory and the financing mechanism prioritise municipal and inter-institutional co-operations, maintainer associations, and the development of institutional management. The execution of the public education tasks of small settlements is encouraged by the introduction of a normative grant for small settlements; the grant is provided for small settlements in order to assist them in fulfilling their public education obligations stipulated by the Act on Local Governments and the Act on Public Education as well as of related tasks they undertake, provided that they carry out these tasks in the form of an association and not individually. The Ministry of Education is currently working on the formulation of a strategy for the development of public education in micro-regions targeting the improvement of its manner of organizing the fulfilment of duties.

The management of public education and the efficiency of its operation are directly and indirectly influenced by the central modernisation programmes set up at the level of central administration, of which the reform of public administration (content and form of public service), the reform of public service (transformation of the status of public employees) and the strategy for regional development (establishment of regions and micro-regions) are worth being highlighted. A single identification and registration system for education is to be introduced, which will play a major role in planning, in the preparation of decisions, operation and monitoring as it supplies up-to-date information at local, maintainer and central administration levels.

The governing principle of efficient investment is above all connected to instruments such as the use of quality assurance systems in schools and local governments, and the strengthening of measurement and assessment mechanisms. Traditional thinking of Hungarians about the issue of financing parts rather reluctantly from the idea of normative financing. The means of promoting investments should be given stronger emphasis in education policy in the future. The integration of financial incentives is to receive closer attention in the various types of educational development plans.

2.1.2 Promotion of investments, increasing returns and interest

The fact that the logical relationship between costs and returns is a key element is an idea about which the actors of Hungarian education still have a lot to learn from the economic sector. Due to decentralisation, the system has become fragmented, thus it is difficult to control the efficient and concentrated use of resources. Measures encouraging efficient investment are mainly present in the field of vocational education and training and higher education, which are to be linked to a coherent financial incentive system in the future. For instance, it is worth mentioning that an employer may use one third of the statutory vocational training contribution for the training of its own employees. In addition, in the case of participation in accredited adult education and training programmes, an amount equivalent to 30% of the tuition fee may be deducted from personal income tax. The greatest challenge national education policy has to face is the issue of increasing personal interest through the introduction of various learning incentives.

The introduction and mainstreaming of student contracts in vocational education and training play an important role in the convergence of education and economy. The advisory bodies of the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres established with the support of the European Social Fund are made up of the representatives of employers delegated by the relevant regions, and the Centres' new form of operation allows for the pursuance of business activities differing from those financed solely from the state budget.

The foreseeable transformation of the funding mechanism and management of higher education institutions explicitly aims at enabling the institutions to involve non-governmental resources in the framework of PPP (Public Private Partnership) or in a form of a business undertaking supplementing existing subsidies.

2.2 Consistency of European common objectives and national priorities

In Hungary, key areas of reform are identified by the Government Work Programme on the one hand, and the strategy for the Development of Public Education, the strategy for Vocational Education Development (adopted in May, 2005) as well as the Hungarian Universitas Programme approved by the Government and the new Act on Higher Education adopted in May, 2005 pursuant thereto, on the other.

2.2.1 Effectiveness of education and the development of basic competences

Considering the outcomes of domestic and international measurements, Hungarian education policy arrived at the conclusion that the foundational phase of public education and the development of basic competences bring problems to light in certain fields. On the one hand, the reason for this is the shortness of the initial phase of primary education (ISCED1) lasting not more than four years, which does not allow enough time for the acquisition of basic competences, and on the other hand, the further development and deepening of competences

in subsequent grades receive inadequate attention. This is to be remedied by a provision (the 2003 amendment of Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education), which does not change the school structure, but it provides an opportunity for schools to spend 25-40% of teaching time in grades 5 and 6 (ISCED2) with skills development instead of subject matter instruction. Emphasising and focusing on key competences from the perspective of success in the labour market, such as the knowledge of foreign languages, ICT, learning skills, interpersonal skills, is equally essential for the enhancement of the effectiveness of education. The achievement of these goals is facilitated both by amending legislation and by establishing targeted programmes⁴.

2.2.2. Reducing inequalities

One of the priorities of education policy is the reduction of inequalities by levelling out differences between schools and diminishing the impact of the socio-cultural background on learning outcomes. The OECD survey on student performance (PISA) pointed out that the main reason behind the differences in the performance of Hungarian students is basically not the difference between the individuals but rather between schools. The two major factors determining performance are school and family backgrounds, which imply the danger of further intensification of existing inequalities. Consequently, any measure targeting the improvement of success rates of underperforming students in schools can increase the effectiveness of the Hungarian education system. The 2003 amendment of the Act on Public Education attempted to mitigate early selection and segregation by legislative instruments. These instruments primarily included the minimalization of grade repetition in the initial grades (ISCED1), the prescription of the application of narrative evaluation, the extension of pre-school education (ISCED0) provision, the modernisation of the network of vocational schools, the integration and desegregation of Roma and disadvantaged children, and the integration of children with special educational needs.

2.2.3. Quality and quality assessment in education

At the turn of the millennium the question of quality became a focal point of public education policy in Hungary as well. In the past years, the testing of a quality improvement programme aligned with European models and based on self-assessment, self-development and partnership was completed. The experimental stage, which was essentially based on voluntary participation, is now over, a quality improvement system reflecting all EU guidelines and being applicable to all educational institutions, however, has not been put in place. Although the Act on Public Education stipulates that all public education institutions (including nursery schools) should set up their own quality improvement system, and that it should be recorded in a document (quality management programme) approved by the maintainer; it, however, has a negligible impact on the actual operation of the system as of yet. The current task of education policy is the further development of the measurement-assessment system and an institutional quality improvement system, which ensures a supportive environment and concrete assistance for the quality improvement of education and will contribute a great deal to the efficient utilisation of public education expenditure.

2.2.4. The state of the teaching profession

Education policy measures are aimed at the development of the teaching profession and the reform of its training system. The establishment of a standard teacher training programme, the

⁴ The National Development Plan intends to contribute to the creation of the conditions for lifelong learning through the development and dissemination of competence-based teaching-learning programme packages—among others in the field of cross-curricular competences, such as life management, social knowledge and career building—within Measure 3.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

state funding of the in-service training of teachers, the mandatory participation in in-service training every seven years and the single salary increase of teachers at an average of 50% (2003) are the most important measures. The state invests heavily in the operation of the in-service training system, and as its organisation takes place on a market basis, supply is generated by the needs of schools, which essentially contributes to the efficiency of investment. Despite the above measures, the teaching profession is still not attractive enough. To promote the renewal of the profession, further efforts are needed to make initial teacher education react more flexibly to the on-going challenges education has to face.

2.2.5. Applying information and communication technologies

In the past years, education policy identified the improvement of the supply of IT devices as a priority. Currently digital content development is intensifying; the so-called SULINET Digital Knowledge Base⁵ foresees an increase in the active participation of teachers and their level of interest in the application of ICT for educational purposes. An important objective is to extend the use of ICT devices to all fields of education and to ensure that it is integrated into the teaching-learning process as a basic competence.

2.2.6 Infrastructure

With respect to certain indicators, the infrastructure of Hungarian education does not meet the standards required by quality education; the maintenance costs of educational institutions are disproportionately high. Educational equipment is likewise inadequate, a fact highly experienced in the field of such key areas as language teaching and IT. Investment in the development of infrastructure can boost the efficiency of other areas, thus for example the maintenance costs of institutions can be decreased by the technical improvement of buildings; the efficiency of the promotion of the application of language teaching and ICT can be enhanced by adequate supply of equipment.

The Government and the Ministry of Education allocated specific resources from the central budget for the creation of the infrastructure of institutions (e.g. tenders for multipurpose micro-regional associations; tenders opened via Budapest-based and regional (county level) public foundations for public education; support for the purchase of teaching aids and equipment specified in the Act on the Budget).

For several years, maintainers have had a wide range of tender opportunities to improve the technical condition of buildings, which provide discrete resources (e.g. targeted support; funds for regional development; "Investment in the School of the 21st Century" which is a long-term preferential loan option) for investments made by educational and training institutions (renovation and modernisation of buildings). PHARE programmes facilitated the implementation of the accessibility of public education institutions as well as the IT development and the realization of the associated infrastructural investments in primary schools (ISCED1 and 2).

The realisation of the reforms is facilitated by the EU via the assistance granted by the Structural Funds. Within the Human Resources Operational Programme, there are several measures to support the modernisation of the public education system, the development of vocational education and training as well as that of higher education. In the framework of the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) institutions and their maintainers have been

⁵ The *Sulinet Digital Knowledge Base* (SDKB) is an electronic database of teaching materials and a framework for content management covering areas of education across several school grades and providing an extensive range of digital teaching materials and re-usable components of teaching materials for teachers and students. The teaching materials stored in SDKB can be used for either individual learning or cooperative learning in groups. The database can be accessed at sdt.sulinet.hu.

provided with the opportunity to develop essential infrastructure (see also Chapter 4). Such a measure is the "Development of the infrastructure of pre-school (ISCED0) and primary education institutions (ISCED1 and 2)", which allocates resources to the renovation and modernisation of buildings.

2.3 Monitoring and assessment of education policy

The follow-up and assessment of education policy measures have not yet been generally accepted as a common practice in education policy. As regards the field of public education, a major tool of education policy planning and implementation is the publication under the title: "Report on Hungarian Public Education" published triennially by the National Institute of Public Education. The conclusions of national test results and investigations are also suitable for the monitoring of current developments. The database of the National Public Education Evaluation and Examination Centre makes a number of analyses possible that focus on the impact of the specific measures. Moreover, there is a statistical signalling system in public education, and the Ministry of Education commissions targeted policy analyses from time to time.

Despite all the above, there is no comprehensive monitoring system which would take all details into account. Certain projects, especially if required by the financier, are being followed-up and evaluated, but similarly to the case of indicator-based governance, the country is still in the process of learning its culture and technique. National action plans targeting the implementation of the European Benchmarks impose solely one requirement, namely that the specific policy departments (inside the ministry) are to report on the processes and effects of policy measures from time to time.

The monitoring of the efficiency of investments that support reforms and are focusing on key areas has not been fully developed yet. The present statistical data collection system does not allow for determining the efficiency of investment and the effectiveness of measures as it lacks essential data, such as student performance, data concerning drop-out rates, the number of lessons actually held by teachers, data on the expenditure of institutions, data on graduate employment, etc., thus the comparison of costs with results is not yet feasible.

3 - THE STRATEGY OF COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING

3.1 The conceptual framework and the strategy for LLL

The concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) became a recurrent term of public discourse about education from the second half of the 90s onwards. We encounter various attempts to define the concept in professional documents and articles, however, its common interpretation or established definition - pointing beyond the professional discourse on education - still needs to be developed.

In the past couple of years, attempts were made in the policy field of several sectors to define what lifelong learning means in the respective context and how its expansion could be supported. These definitions have mainly evolved on the basis of tactical and sector-oriented aspects. Extensive thinking about the concept itself and about its integrative and cross-sector policy shaping role has only recently started. The strategy for lifelong learning drawn up in 2004, which is currently being discussed and awaiting social consultation and the approval of the Government, serves the purpose - among others - of ensuring that Hungary fulfils the requirements posited in the field of lifelong learning as defined by the Lisbon process, and making sure that lifelong learning is interpreted and articulated in professional terms as a strategy and established as a system in full operation by 2006.

The Hungarian strategy for lifelong learning - in accordance with the European concept of LLL - focuses on the concept of knowledge and a broader interpretation of learning, the development of individual competences. The Hungarian LLL strategy is basically intended to apply for the period ending in 2013, similarly to the support term of the EU Structural Funds, nonetheless it comprises several goals whose implementation is envisaged for 2010 in conformity with the Lisbon Strategy.

In its structure as well as in its content, the strategy reflects an approach according to which during the planning of the development of educational and training activities, one has to abandon the sector-based perspective linked to the existing institutional systems, and think in terms of government responses to social and economic problems as a whole. The programme for the development of lifelong learning and the construction of its system can only be successful if the programme is fully integrated into the overall programme which is to further the improvement of Hungarian society and economy. To this end, in terms of its nature, the strategy does not build on the content and structural model of sector-oriented strategies in the traditional sense; rather, it is grounded in a new approach. The strategy aims at constituting a consensus-based ground for the action programmes and action plans of a variety of sectors, which serve a system-like manner of development.

The most significant preliminaries of the strategy that are elaborated in documents are: besides the strategic documents on adult education, public education, vocational education and training prepared in the past years in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the National Development Plan drafted for the deployment of the resources received from the Structural Funds.

3.2 Priorities of the LLL Strategy

With respect to the areas deemed similarly important in EU documents, the Hungarian LLL Strategy identifies seven key areas of development along the five priorities where intervention is desirable. In essence, the strategy for lifelong learning has been devised in a language and conceptual framework identical to those of European education policy documents. Although the material corresponds to EU processes (Lisbon, Copenhagen) in a number of ways, it was

drawn up independently. Primarily it was the EU documents that facilitated the learning processes that produced the domestic intellectual capacity necessary for the formulation of the strategy.

Priorities:

1. Enhancing the equal opportunity promoting role of education and training
2. Strengthening the links between education, training and the economy
3. Application of new governance methods, political procedures
4. Improvement of the efficiency of education and training systems, increasing its overall national resources
5. Quality improvement of education and training

Key areas of development:

1. Development of basic skills and key competences in public education
2. A wide and rich variety of vocational, higher and adult educational services
3. Continuous broadening of learning opportunities (ICT, on-site training, informal learning)
4. Career guidance, counselling and monitoring
5. Recognition of informal and non-formal learning
6. Support for disadvantaged groups and vulnerable groups on the labour market (prevention of drop-outs, opportunities for involvement in LLL)
7. Adaptation of a new teaching-learning culture (new teacher roles, quality culture)

Development of basic skills and key competences

The Hungarian comprehensive content development reforms (developments relating to the new National Core Curriculum of 2003, content developments currently taking place under the Development Programme for Vocational Schools or in adult education) and system-level innovations are launched with a view to establishing competence-based education. The most substantial competence-based content development is being implemented under sub-programme 3.1 of the Human Resources Development Programme supported by the European Social Fund. Here, at the level of pre-school, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 0, 1 and 2) the aim is to draft programmes directed at the development of the basic skills and key competences (reading, writing, counting), social competences, general ICT skills and career building competences; meanwhile at the secondary level (ISCED 3) the setting up of programmes for the tools of developing basic skills, foreign language communication skills, knowledge of ICT and career building competences that can be utilised in the labour market. The continued process of improvement of the secondary school-leaving examination took several years in Hungary. The requirements of the secondary school-leaving examination were reviewed and altered in 2003 together with the framework curricula, which resulted in the narrowing of their scope and a stronger focus on competence development. The requirements were specified for each examination subject at two levels, whereas from 2005 the secondary school-leaving examination at the level prescribed by the given higher education institution replaces the practice of entrance examinations. The written tasks of the examination are all drawn up centrally in a uniform manner, both the standard and the advanced level examination results are evaluated according to a uniform assessment guide. Considering the above, the secondary school-leaving examination promotes the pursuance of further studies of students (as it replaces the entrance examination to higher education), and also facilitates the evaluation of the system (due to its standardisation student performances can be compared).

Career guidance and counselling

The thought of lifelong career guidance and career counselling is relatively new in the country. Career guidance and counselling activities disappeared after the change of regime, a shortcoming to which education policy documents and analyses regularly draw attention. The employment sector has set up its own network especially for the provision of services for unemployed young people, and currently pursues modernisation projects drawing on certain smaller-scale Internet applications. There are local initiatives in education launched with the purpose of reforming available services; pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes continue, however, professional and operational cooperation mechanisms between these events and institutions need further enhancement. The action plans to be drawn up for the implementation of the strategy for Lifelong Learning may augment the chance for continued cooperation between the ministries. The new Act on Higher Education adopted in May 2005 ensures the framework for the institutional establishment of a system for education and career counselling.

Recognition of informal and non-formal learning

The promotion of non-formal and informal learning, the measurement, preliminary recognition and validation of its output in Hungary has not yet appeared on the agenda, apart from a few researches, local efforts and references to that end in strategic documents. Some legal background for validation of such knowledge already exists, since Section 17 of Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education permits that "the adult applying for the training may request the preliminary assessment of his/her knowledge level, which request shall be evaluated and considered by the institution engaged in adult education." Conversely, the effective Act on higher education or vocational education has no reference to the recognition and validation of knowledge acquired through informal and non-formal learning. The implementation of the prospective action plan for the strategy for Vocational Education Development and the LLL strategy could constitute a substantial move in the development of this issue.

Involvement of disadvantaged groups in the process of lifelong learning

The Government has launched a number of targeted assistance grants and programmes for promoting the involvement of disadvantaged people and those with low-level qualifications into learning. This goal is also furthered by the funds allocated from the Labour Market Fund for the training of the unemployed, the normative support in adult education provided for those with low-level qualifications and with special needs, support for training purposes financed from the National Public Foundation for Employment and the Structural Funds, one of the components of the Development Programme for Vocational Training Schools, or the various forms of normative support and targeted programmes in the field of public education. Priority target groups of education policy are groups with multiple disadvantages. From year to year, new support programmes are introduced, which are targeted to better the educational opportunities of the disadvantaged, e.g.: mandatory nursery school (ISCED0) placement of children with multiple disadvantages (in case of low-level qualification of parents and eligibility for child protection benefits) over the age of 3, free meals and supply of textbooks; the detailed legislative regulation of the principle of equal treatment and the sanctioning of its violation; restrictions of the criteria for achieving private student status (no set school timetable, but obligation of continuous assessment); extension of the foundation phase in public education to grade 6 (ISCED2); additional normative support awarded to provide for the introduction of skills development and preparation for integration; and the Arany János Student Residence Programme aiming to assist disadvantaged students in their efforts to obtain a secondary school-leaving certificate. The drafting and the dissemination of the Integrated Educational Framework and the building of the National Educational Integration

Network is a significant achievement. For students classified as having special educational needs an additional normative support is awarded for their re-integration into mainstream (normal curricular) education for a period of two years, whereas the *Utolsó padból* (From the back desk to the front) programme aims at the short-term mitigation and, by its long-term actions, the elimination of the school segregation of disadvantaged children unduly classified as having a minor mental disability. The “*tanoda*” (informal place of learning) method has been included in the Act on Public Education, which promotes good school performance and further education of disadvantaged students. Pursuant to Government Resolution 1021 of 2004, an antidiscrimination signalling system will be created in order to reduce school discrimination. Under Measure 2.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme within the National Development Plan, a total of HUF 7.7 billion is available for the promotion of equal opportunities for disadvantaged students in education. For the training of professionals involved in the education of disadvantaged students and the formulation of programmes related to inclusive education, an amount of HUF 3.5 billion is allocated within the framework of a central programme, while support for the adaptation and introduction of education programmes facilitating inclusive education in specific institutions is granted through a tender scheme for which an allocation of 4.2 billion HUF is available. The beneficiaries of the trainings and services foreseen within the central programme component are education institutions participating in the tender component as well as their professional and social environments. Among others extra-curricular programmes encouraging the successful school performance of students with multiple disadvantages, projects resulting in the mitigation of school segregation, various institution development programmes will be supported.

Within the Development Programme for Vocational Training Schools the component envisaging the vocational training of those who have not completed primary education, and programme 2.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme under the National Development Plan targeting the mainstreaming of disadvantaged students are eligible for support under the tender component. A range of surveys, such as the PISA surveys, and sociological studies also reveal that social and output differences are on the increase instead of decreasing, and that these are determined to a much greater degree by the family background and the geographical location than in most European countries, both in more developed and equally developed countries.

The participation of older workers and those becoming marginalised on the labour market in lifelong learning is negligible. Programmes aiming at their inclusion are small-scale, mainly local or experimental. This is one of the gaps of lifelong learning, though the Hungarian demographic situation—decreasing population, where there is a growing proportion of those coming from marginalised families, a continuously decreasing birth-rate—would necessitate the augmentation of the labour market activity of middle-aged and older workers.

Participation in adult learning as per group varies to a great extent. In the case of those in long-term employment participation is generally low, while unemployed people are reached by a number of programmes. It is therefore an imperative to strongly support non-conventional forms and opportunities of learning. The presently launched *Szülőszuli* (School for Parents) programme is one example, whose goal is the enhancement of cooperation between adult education and public education, under which parents are granted access to the infrastructure of schools and they can attend courses organised specifically for them in the school. This programme was awarded EUR 5 million from the Norwegian Fund⁶ in 2004.

⁶ Norway has established the "Norwegian Fund" for the 10 acceding countries by bilateral agreements as a supplement to the EEA financing mechanism. The funds collectively referred to as the EEA financing

Teaching as a profession and as a vocation

The need for the reformation of the teaching profession emerged as a focal point of the discourse on education not so much in the context of lifelong learning, but as a result of the paradigm shifts that have taken place in education, the realization of unified teacher training, and that of a multi-cycle training system within the framework of the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, or as the problem of the over-employment of teachers in the education system.

Steps made so far to reform initial teacher training include the decree-level regulation of teacher training requirements as regards pedagogy, psychology, methodology and internship, whereby these requirements were unified both for college and university level teacher training programmes; the increasing of the training period of primary school teachers (ISCED1), and the extension of primary school teacher (ISCED1) competences (ISCED2, in grades 5-6). The Bologna process will substantially re-map the structure of initial teacher education and training; the former dual (college and university) structure of teacher education (ISCED2 and 3) will become unified at university level. The Teacher Training Sub-committee under the auspices of the National Bologna Council is in charge of the preparation of the training structure including all levels of teacher training in compliance with a two-cycle training structure. The sub-committee will submit the draft reform in the summer of 2005. The special provisions of the new Act on Higher Education reinstate the educational, sectoral and institutional tasks of teacher training.

ICT and an open learning environment

The importance of the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education is demonstrated by the fact that the resources directed to this area have been significantly increased. On top of the investment in the development of the IT culture of teachers, such as the in-service training of tens of thousands of teachers, content digitalisation is another area that experienced a tremendous step forward. The introduction of the Sulinet Digital Knowledge Base and the associated digital contents and teaching materials, as well as the use of eLearning frameworks are what make the "digital" paradigm shifts in education necessary. The goals of ICT investments include the realisation of an open learning environment and the development of the basic skills necessitated by the learning culture of the future, and the improvement of access to lifelong learning in general.

3.3 The narrow cross-section of LLL system building

At present, the legal environment already permits the dynamic extension of lifelong learning; nevertheless, it does not explicitly promote it. There are relatively few rewarding mechanisms and mechanisms for the promotion of participation in learning, in particular for the disadvantaged social groups excluded from LLL.

For the building of the system of lifelong learning influential governmental, interdepartmental bodies or bodies independent from ministries who operate in the field of LLL are yet to be set up with a well-established scope of responsibilities and adequate resources for development and operation.

Inter-ministerial cooperation and in many cases cooperation between internal departments within the same ministry are in need of essential improvement. In many key areas - career guidance, the measurement, assessment, recognition and validation of informal and non-

mechanism intends to contribute to the mitigation of economic and social inequalities within the EEA by providing supports for investment and development projects.

formal learning outcomes - the specific education policy measures are still waiting to be introduced. These are typical areas, where a number of ministries are concerned; therefore, further enhancement of cooperation is needed.

Certain areas—such as social partnership or the integration of disadvantaged groups into the LLL process—characteristically call for the improvement of cooperation. The participation of key actors in the processes is formally ensured; still the substantial influence of partnerships is disproportionate compared to that of public administration. The consultative bodies of social partners, who represent various interests have been established, and at times these operate under diverse structures (e.g. at county or regional level, 3-lateral or 5-lateral), but in a stable manner.

The involvement of the non-governmental sphere and the operation of social partnerships formally exist and have taken an institutional form at certain points, even so, besides former achievements additional efforts are required within the educational sector. The majority of economy-related sectors is not yet adequately active in the promotion of lifelong learning, and has not yet declared its potential role in this area. Some scattered efforts have been made to activate the economy, e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

In the future, endeavours should aim at the construction of a mechanism that represents interests independently from the specific ministries. In order to improve the effectiveness of LLL processes, in addition to extensive central development or even at the expense thereof, the promotion of innovative processes should receive more attention and funds. The most promising breakthrough areas in the system as a whole—and in public education in particular—are the design and the implementation of the assessment system, whereas in vocational education and training a more liberal entry and an ever stricter exit. An additional key factor would be the launching of real processes relating to the measurement and recognition of knowledge acquired earlier, which could be indicative to the broad public and could re-orientate the course of adult education. With respect to adults, especially disadvantaged people, in the future the ratio of training programmes that are not merely training programmes, but complex programmes addressing issues of assisted employment, social situation and the overall personality of those concerned should be increased in place of the currently prevailing one-component programmes that are dominated by the interests of training institutions.

4 - THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education in accordance with the Government Programme for 2002-2006 and having regard to the accession to the European Union, has proposed a comprehensive development programme for higher education. On the basis of the Hungarian Universitas Programme, the Government - taking into account the current reforms in higher education - ensures the cooperation between higher education and its environment by the introduction of a new legislation. Parliament adopted the new Act on Higher Education on May 23, 2005.

The major objectives set out by the Hungarian Universitas Programme include the improvement of the flexibility and adaptability of the system of higher education, in relation thereto and according to the Bologna Declaration the establishment of the multi-cycle training structure making management efficient, the broadening of the management autonomy of institutions, making the involvement of private capital attractive, strengthening the right of

higher education institutions to self-governance, ownership, management autonomy and entrepreneurship, and the creation of the necessary relevant conditions.

4.1. Major changes motivating the reform of the structure and content of higher education

The extensive development rooted in the increased significance of higher education resulted in the emergence of mass education in higher education. In order to ensure the compatibility of production and services - within the framework of lifelong learning - it became necessary to reform the range of training opportunities and educational services provided by higher education, to transform the training structure, and to ensure the quality improvement of training content and methods and tools of knowledge transfer.

Accession to the European Union, as well as the Bologna Declaration identified the enhancement of the attractiveness of the educational market and active participation in the creation of the European Higher Education Area as the priority objectives of higher education for the sake of the economic development of the European Community. Pursuant to the principle of the free movement of labour force, it is necessary to provide for the framework of the mobility of teachers, researchers and students thereby facilitating international cooperation and innovation in higher education.

It became evident that the operational and management practice of institutions is in conflict with both the tasks deriving from the size of the institutions and the social and economic expectations, while the requirement of efficient and economical operation poses a new challenge for institutions. The greater national and international cooperation, the tasks to be performed in regional development and the connection to international higher education networks demand professional competence in academic and management tasks, the adequate definition of institutional and managerial duties, powers and responsibilities, and the transformation of the structure and management of higher education institutions.

The transformation of the socio-economic environment under market conditions necessitates the operation of an open and competitive higher education that responds quickly and flexibly to changes and to the demands of market participants equally in the field of training, research and management. To achieve this, besides transparency and predictability that safeguard the security of the subsidization of higher education, the prevalence of the aspects of performance recognition, in management the prevalence of client needs and market sensitivity, as well as the strengthening of ownership responsibility guarantees and the conditions of an output-driven regulatory and operative framework should be established. Furthermore, institutions should be granted the opportunity to utilise tools that meet market requirements and to benefit from the advantages offered by the educational market's programme for lifelong learning, as well as from the infrastructural and intellectual capacity of their own institutions in their undertakings.

Higher education institutions operating as regional and urban intellectual centres where the number of participating students and range of services has considerably changed, require: services that shape and assist students' way of life; a regulation of incentive initiatives targeting social assistance provided on the basis of need, catering for the needs of the gifted and talented and rewarding high performance, whereby also providing for the reinforcement of related rights and commitments; the extension of mobility; and the creation of a framework ensuring the reception of foreign students arriving from abroad.

4.2. Key elements of the legislative regulation

The basic principle underlying the Act is that it regulates in a sector-neutral manner. It opens up many possibilities for the establishment of higher education institutions, and at the same time it necessarily lays down those rights and commitments that higher education institutions enjoy or take on irrespective of the actual maintainer. The proposal grants the same licences to all maintainers, thereby permitting the establishment of the institution, the definition of its tasks and the making of decisions relating to its operation.

The emergence of maintainers other than the state called for the separation of state functions with respect to the decisions on the establishment and operation of higher education institutions depending on whether these are exercised on the basis of public authority functions or as part of the maintainer's function. In order to increase the competitiveness of higher education institutions, institutions are obliged to set up their own governing bodies, whose task is institutional management and strategic planning.

Public authority functions have been separated. The Minister of Education exercises state authority through the publication of legislation and the control of adherence thereto. Maintainers of higher education institutions and higher education institutions make their decisions subject to legislation. As part of sector management, the operation of quality assurance, higher education information and career monitoring systems as well as the institution of the ministerial commissioner for educational rights and the educational intermediary service appear as new organisational tasks. The regulation of data recording and the development of the career monitoring system are new elements in the operation of higher education institutions. The handling and recording of student and teacher data is carried out in the higher education institution, which is supplemented by central data collection. The records of the National Information Centre for Higher Education, and other data relating to the performance of activities and operation, will be handled - in cooperation with higher education institutions - by a registration centre whose establishment is envisaged in the near future.

The Act defines the training structure of higher education, the three cycles (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programmes) in the multi-cycle training system in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, moreover, it connects post-secondary vocational training programmes (ISCED5B) and college and university post-graduate specialisation programmes (ISCED5A) to these three training programmes. The advantage of the integration of post-secondary vocational training programmes⁷ is that a part of the credits obtained in the course of these programmes (up to 60 credits) can be validated in the training programme that grants a Bachelor's degree. The provision of a framework of catering for the gifted and its support is also an important element of the Act.

Another novelty introduced by the Act is that students admitted to one of the training programmes in the three-cycle system - except for PhD programmes - are eligible for state-financed training for twelve semesters. A new element of financing is that for the sake of value conservation, the amount of the normative grants is determined in relation to the national average monthly salary effective two years before the given year. The Act promotes student mobility, the participation in full- or part-time training abroad: students may apply for

⁷ Currently, post-secondary vocational programmes (ISCED 5B) may be launched by secondary and higher education institutions in Hungary. These programmes award a vocational qualification (certificate), but not an academic qualification (diploma).

a loan for their studies abroad, and scholarships may be spent on covering the tuition costs of studies abroad.

Another new component is the admission to higher education on the basis of the secondary school-leaving examination replacing the entrance examination formerly organised by the higher education institutions themselves. The regulation of the differentiated admission system by training cycles (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programmes) as well as in post-secondary vocational education and specialised further education is effected in connection with the establishment of student status, with a view to ensuring that those who achieve the best national results in an identical system of requirements defined for secondary education are the ones that take state-financed places. In line with European practice, the application of the legal provisions on equal treatment and the legislative regulation of the balanced participation of women, support granted for the disadvantaged and legislative regulation of the provision of conditions that take disabled persons' needs into account also emerge as novel elements.

The quality protection and improvement of training is facilitated to the same degree by the regulation of differentiated training, specialised college activity and the prioritised system of the tasks as well as the institutional system of catering for the gifted.

The Act deems the education of young researchers a fundamental task of higher education, as well as the solidification of the relationship between education and the European Higher Education and Research Area, the support for gifted students, the education of new generations for replacement purposes, economic-technological advancement and the development of research. The awarding of the "research-university" status represents a new perspective and the recognition of quality. The accreditation of institutions and programmes has been performed by the Hungarian Accreditation Board since 1993, along with the contribution of independent experts. The Board is an active member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), and not only participates in the drafting of the European accreditation and quality assurance standards, but applies those in its practice. The Act lays special emphasis on the development of the internal quality improvement system which guarantees the application of uniform reporting requirements for institutions.

The Act provides for the creation of a risk cover fund for the facilitation of the investments of higher education institutions based on the association of several institutions, meanwhile institutions' contributions to the fund may be used to subscribe to government bonds. With the involvement of private capital (Public Private Partnership), the Ministry of Education is planning to spend approximately HUF 175 billion on the development and construction of infrastructure, residence halls, dormitories, educational buildings and other infrastructure between 2004 and 2008.

As another new element, the Act stipulates the strengthening of the relationship between regional development boards and those higher education institutions that establish innovation strategy for research and development.

4.3. Major education policy measures, problems experienced, expected obstacles

The measures under the National Development Plan, which are implemented with the support of the EU Structural Funds serve the facilitation of the development of the structure, content and infrastructure of higher education (e.g. regional knowledge centres of higher education, development of the infrastructure of institutions, enhancement of the range of services of higher and vocational education institutions, ensuring accessibility for disabled persons, etc.)

Disadvantaged students are fairly underrepresented in higher education, even though the state assists them by granting them support to facilitate their entry and providing the mentor programme, and they are accorded priority when applying for dormitory placements. In the spring of 2005, the Government adopted the *Útravaló* (~Provisions for the Future) programme, which promotes the observance of equal opportunities for disadvantaged young people by giving them scholarships for special programmes that assist them in obtaining among others a secondary school-leaving certificate, adequate mathematical literacy and skills in science, thereby improving their chance to enter higher education.

Pursuant to the new Act on Higher Education, as from September 1, 2006 student loans may be used in a differentiated manner, loans may be applied for studies abroad and the part-time training of students abroad will also be eligible for support.

A mandatory credit system was introduced in 2003, which is based on the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). As from the autumn of 2005, the issuance of the Diploma Supplement is obligatory in Hungarian and following the entry into force of the adopted Act on Higher Education, also in English. Institutions are provided with both the application of the credit system and the IT background for the issuance of Diploma Supplements. Finally, the National Europass Centre was established in the spring of 2005.

In accordance with the principles of the two-cycle training system, under a government decree higher education institutions launched or will launch two initial training programmes in 2004 and 35 initial training programmes in 2005 in the first cycle. The complete adaptation of the system will be realised from 2006 onwards. Until now the Hungarian Accreditation Board has accredited 83 of the 102 initial training programmes. The governing bodies of state-financed higher education institutions will be set up before November 2005. The new institutional management shall transform its organisation and operation by September 2006.

The special provisions of the Act on Higher Education on teacher training reinforce the sectoral authority of the Minister of Education as regards teacher training, institutional content development, the role of institutions providing teacher training programmes in educational research, the raising of the training level in teacher training and the framework of the uninterrupted six-month internship.

With the 50% increase in 2003 of the salary of public employees working in higher education, and thus the immense improvement of the wage position of higher educational employees, the separation of researcher and teacher status, and as a result of the saturation of other popular domestic economic sectors, expectedly, the popularity of the teaching/research profession will also rise. Furthermore, the new Act offers an opportunity and legal safeguards for the recognition of educational and research achievements by defining the frame for the planning of resources, the principles for the commitments of the employer with respect to the use of resources and as part thereof, the minimum rate of extra income per employee and public employee.

5 - MAKING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING ATTRACTIVE AND IMPROVING ITS QUALITY

By the beginning of the Lisbon process, Hungary had already gone through the process of content and structure modernisation in vocational education after the change of regime, the process in question primarily being implemented with the support of several international programmes. In planning national education policy measures, the highest level of sector management continuously considers international recommendations on the modernisation of vocational education and training. In the meantime, at the level of local institution management and operation this tendency is less than characteristic.

5.1. Major education policy measures in the light of the Copenhagen process

The impact of the Copenhagen process on the national vocational education policy is evident in that it diverted attention to the importance of a common European vocational education policy and clarified EU priorities. Hungarian policy-making reacted with some minor delay with respect to certain issues concerning policy priorities set in Copenhagen. The postponing of specific education policy measures can partly be explained by the fact, that the political leadership committed itself to central development, including development financed from the Structural Funds, for the period between the change of government in 2002 and the year of 2006, thus there were no free resources left for the implementation of any further initiatives. Trends in the development of vocational education and training starting from 2002 conform to the points of the Copenhagen document targeting sector-oriented development in several areas (e.g. the establishment of 21 tri-lateral committees on trade groups in 2002, which are responsible for the orientation and drafting of sector-based, professional developments as per trade groups.).

In the spring of 2005, an overall education policy response emerged to face the challenges of the Copenhagen process. The strategy for Vocational Education Development first legitimised at governmental level after 1996, touches upon all points of the policy issues, and indicates the respective measures and deadlines. The measures envisaged for 2005-2006 of the strategy for Vocational Education Development (for the period ending in 2013) have been adopted, the implementation of the short-term measures has been started and the preparation and detailed elaboration of the measures necessary from 2007 onwards are currently on the way.

The work on the introduction of the EUROPASS system started soon afterwards. In the autumn of 2004, the Ministry of Education designated the Hungarian National EUROPASS Centre—the tasks of which are performed by the National Office for Admission to Higher Education—and other institutions responsible for the tasks relating to certain documents, which held intensive consultations and did preliminary works before the adoption of the resolution. The EUROPASS Training document, seen as the predecessor of the EUROPASS-Mobility document, was made available by the national agency for those doing internships abroad after the accession in 2004. The explanation for immediate measures is that these material tools offer concrete benefits and opportunities for Hungarian citizens, or residents of Hungary.

The first incentives and programmes of quality assurance appeared in the Hungarian education system before the Copenhagen Declaration (see Chapter 2), but the necessity of the general requirements of quality assurance conforming to the European framework arose only in the context of the 2005 vocational education strategy. The system of in-service teacher training based on normative support and a mandatory quota for in-service training had evolved before 2002. With respect to both issues, it should be noted that the Development

Programme for Vocational Training Schools (DPVTS) between 2003 and 2006, which targeted the quality improvement of lower vocational education and training, primarily draws on the tools of in-service teacher training and quality assurance.

Among the specific Copenhagen issues career guidance and counselling has been on the agenda in Hungary for a decade, but the counselling system which disappeared in the early 90's has not yet been restored. The lack of this system is obvious. Under the DPVTS intensive development is currently taking place for those in the greatest need, but they are only targeting certain types of vocational training institutions. Within the field of career guidance and counselling besides the strategy for Vocational Education Development it is the strategy for Lifelong Learning that schedules new steps. (See Chapter 3)

The development and introduction of a modular system of vocational qualifications are prerequisites of the recognition and validation of formerly acquired knowledge in Hungary. Currently the development of the system of new training modules, partial and full vocational qualifications established on the basis of trade group analysis, the creation of the competence-based vocational training structure, the development of the system of documentation for vocational qualifications, the setting up of a system for the assessment and validation of competence-based vocational education and formerly acquired knowledge (through formal, informal and non-formal learning), as well as the drawing up of methods for the measurement of preliminary knowledge, which provide a basis for the system-level introduction of the validation of preliminary knowledge, are being implemented with the support of the European Social Fund.

The consideration of the initiatives aimed at the needs of the socially disadvantaged and those with learning difficulties or with low-level qualifications is not clear. The educational expansion gaining impetus in the early 90's, which was primarily characteristic of upper secondary education and higher education, has now reached this group. This is supported by a survey conducted in 1992 and 2004 on the Roma population, according to which only every second or third Roma entered upper secondary education in the early 90's, whereas as estimated, today at least two thirds do. This is a tremendous change within such a short period; however, the labour-market integration of young Romani is still in a fragile state. Several measures, developments and legislative acts targeted the improvement of the disadvantaged groups. One of the greatest development programmes of the present Government, the Development Programme for Vocational Training Schools - which entirely aims at raising the quality of training of apprentices formerly neglected and posited at the lowest level in the hierarchy of upper-secondary education - has a concrete element which targets the vocational education of those not having completed basic education (ISCED1-2). Several financial normative allocations - at times with a double quota - allow for the increased targeting of the groups with the worst outcomes. At the same time, primarily in settlements lacking resources, the amount of the extra normative allocation for the education of children with special educational needs encourages the classification of the children of those with less assertive potential as children with special educational needs, and thus their segregated education.

The Government intends to provide further possibilities for those groups that are lagging mostly behind in school performance and have the lowest-levels of qualification, by the amendments of legislation. On the labour market significant resources are allocated to the training of those with low-level qualifications.

The number of young people excluded both from education and the labour market are nearly in the hundreds of thousands. There are no other receptive systems only initiatives on an ad hoc basis, at times of high professional quality or projects supported by specific programmes.

The schools and training programmes of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy were constantly in a position of disadvantage and still are compared to the schools of the middle class.

The Government desires to promote vocational education in its rhetoric, and this is the ultimate goal of the Development Programme for Vocational Training Schools, however, it is a sheer fact that vocational education and training is constantly losing out in terms of popularity—at the lower educational levels permanently, while at post-secondary level since the expansion of higher education permitted those with medium-level performance to be admitted to colleges, and which is still favoured instead of participation in a vocational training programme. At least 70% of each age group is studying in an upper-secondary education institution in Hungary, from where, on the basis of their attainments, they could be admitted to the most excellent universities, there are no legislative obstacles preventing them to do so. In the selective Hungarian education system, on the other hand, there are huge differences between secondary schools - be it a general secondary school or a vocational secondary school -, when it comes to offering chances for their students to enter higher education.

The in-service training of teachers in vocational education and training has its regulated opportunities and infrastructure; however, in this field no prioritised actions have been affected except for the fairly significant in-service teacher training activity that is associated with the greater development programmes. The provision of a teaching staff of an appropriate quality is hindered to a greater extent by the public employee status than by in-service teacher training, which does not allow for the payment of competitive market wages. Therefore, the presence of excellent vocational teachers and instructors in the system is not sufficient.

5.2. Problems, obstacles

Vocational education and training does not respond adequately to market needs. The interests of teachers and students in vocational education and training are more easily asserted than those of the employers. The most important measures, which could result in the better representation of economic interests—as expected by ministries and the chamber—are linked to the expansion of the system of student contracts. This is a lasting process, not without contradiction though, which was launched by a regulation that raised the interest of families, the school and undertakings in the practical application of student contracts. There are several institutions for the representation of economic demands that comprise employers and employees. Apart from national and regional committees, such committees are the committees on groups of profession who are responsible for content modernisation, but both parties will be represented also in the advisory boards of the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres (RIVTC). The delegates arriving from the world of work do not always know the demands of the economy entirely; thereby their representational efficiency becomes lower.

The near future of vocational education and training is considerably influenced by two substantial investments. One is the presently starting modularisation of vocational qualifications and the system of documentation. The other is the construction of the system of Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres (RIVTC), which aims at eliminating the fragmentation of vocational education and training. In Hungary, only within the school system there are more than a thousand locations providing vocational training, which is unfavourable both from the point of view of efficiency and that of quality. The development of the system of the RIVTCs envisages the total reform of the institutional structure, the

concentration of resources and capacities, the strengthening of the regional scope and stronger ties with the labour market. In order to overcome the problems of vocational education and training the strategy for Vocational Education Development (adopted in May, 2005) targets the transformation of the institutional and financial system as well.

The functioning of the statistical information system is not yet adequate, its development is on the agenda as the renewal of the system by 2008 is one of the comprehensive measures of the strategy. Familiarity with unique solutions and good practices at a European-level is rather uneven. The central administration and management of vocational education and training is fragmented, and the flow of information does not function with the required efficiency (the system of indicators is not adequate; the statistical data collection system is not stable and does not provide a satisfactory basis for decision-making). Furthermore, the sector does not have an interdisciplinary intellectual think-tank, which would host knowledge on education, labour market and society at a time, and where problems and the foreseen measures could be interpreted in a broader context.

6 - STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 Promoting mobility

During the fall of 2004, the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the relevant EU recommendations, launched the development of the unified education mobility programme. Hungarian–Hungarian mobility is a definitive element of Hungary’s education policy: the dedicated support of the Hungarian speaking citizens living in neighbouring countries. For the demographic changes, the number of persons entering higher education will presumably decrease, and this will urge higher education institutions to seek students from other countries. On the long run, Hungarian higher education intends to be attractive for students from other EU member states and non-EU European countries, as well as from the Far East (e.g. China). In Hungary, the coordination of the majority of mobility programmes in public education, vocational and higher education is ensured by the TEMPUS Public Foundation. Mobility grounded on bilateral agreements is coordinated by the Hungarian Scholarship Board. Reliable information concerning mobility financed on an individual basis or by foundations is not available. There were approximately 9000 Hungarian speaking students among the about 13000 students from other countries studying in Hungary. The creation of the National EuroPass Centre guarantees further opportunities for mobility and at the same time unifies the former subdivisions.

The new Act on Higher Education lays special emphasis on the promotion of the mobility of higher education students. The Act will allow Hungarian citizens to obtain student loans in Hungary for their studies in the European Economic Area accredited by their sending institutions, and the Ministry of Education may award them scholarships—via competition—for their education in other countries.

In order to boost the number of incoming foreign students to Hungary, the Ministry intends to enhance the range of degree programmes in foreign languages and also to raise support available for foreign students studying in Hungary. In 2004, the Ministry of Education established the Campus Hungary association, with the participation of more than 40 higher education institutions, which aims at the promotion of Hungarian higher education in other

countries, the attraction of students from non-EU countries and the development of courses complying with this objective.

The mobility in public education is a lot more complex process, and - besides the EU community programmes - there are a number of foreign organisations specialised in long-term student exchange programmes. The number of participants involved in individual programmes or programmes coordinated by other organisations has not been mapped out so far.

In the field of vocational education and training, the most important programme promoting mobility is the Community-based Leonardo da Vinci Programme, in which the role of Hungary is permanently growing since its national start-up in 1997, with the exception of year 2002. The reputation of the programme is also on the increase, and besides the organisations applying on a regular basis, there are new applicants, too. The Development Programme for Vocational Training Schools of the Ministry of Education is also definitive, and in the framework of the two components of this programme hundreds of teachers are able to visit European countries to familiarize with the systems of education and training and - under the foreign language thematic project - to participate in subject-specific language training. Upon the initiative of the National Leonardo Office operated by the Tempus Public Foundation, the National Vocational Education and Training Council – responsible for reconciliation and consulting tasks – and the Minister of Education appropriated HUF 160 million in 2005 to support the internship opportunities of students from vocational schools in other countries. In the case of accepted applications by students from schools taking part in the development programme, the initiative will support the student's internship in another country.

In 2004, Hungary was the first of the Member States to conduct a survey on the beneficiaries. Moreover, the Hungarian participants of the Leonardo "Quality in Mobility Award" in Oslo did well in each category in 2005.

In addition to the Community programmes, there are two major programmes promoting mobility directly or indirectly in Hungary. The first is the regional initiative CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies), which involved non-EU members when it was launched in 1993, aiming at the facilitation of the cooperation between the higher education institutions of the Central European region by implementing student and teacher exchange programmes. Hungary has been one of the leading participants of the CEEPUS Programme from the very beginning. In November 2003, it was for the third time that Hungary was the award winner of the international CEEPUS Ministers' Prize of Excellence. The other initiative promoting mobility is the World-Language Programme⁸ of the Ministry of Education, which promotes mobility indirectly via fostering language learning and comprises explicitly mobility components as well. As far as the changes in language teaching are concerned, it is important to mention the introduction of the so-called 0 grade (ISCED3) which - with the help of state support - permits secondary schools to teach a foreign language before grade 9 for one school year in an increased number of weekly hours, alongside with classes in general subjects (see also Chapter 2). Beside CEEPUS and the World-Language Programmes, the Visegrad Fund Czech–Hungarian–Polish–Slovak cooperation is region-specific as well, and - just like the CEEPUS programme - it facilitates the cooperation of the four participant countries in the field of education, culture and sciences.

⁸ The Ministry of Education launched the World-Language Programme in 2003 to increase the quality and efficiency of foreign language education, the key objective of which is the enhancement of foreign language literacy. A critical component of the complex programme is the tender package, which allows for, among others, the in-service training of teachers, the implementation of educational projects, the production of teaching aids, the support of those disadvantaged in the field of foreign language learning and the improvement of computerised language teaching. The programme involves all levels of education, thus higher education as well.

The most important of the measures introduced in order to encourage virtual mobility is Hungary's Sulinet Programme – in operation since 1996 –, which is to promote the ICT investments and the cultural development of schools and aims at providing public education institutions with Internet access and computer labs, as well as at establishing a digital curricular database (Sulinet Digital Knowledge Base, SDKB).

Although there are no legal barriers limiting the mobility of the participants of education, it is desirable to overcome the administrative barriers of entering and exiting Hungary and to make legal regulations more flexible. It is also an imperative to develop teachers' and students' foreign language competence, to modernize the administrative background, to upgrade the infrastructure and to improve the accessibility of any information concerning mobility, including foreign languages. The most significant barrier of the mobility of teachers is the lack of appropriate foreign language skills and adequate incentives (the lack of the recognition of experience gained in other countries); this likewise obstructs the expansion of the mobility of teachers. As far as teachers coming to Hungary are concerned, the most significant issue is the mobility of Hungarian teachers from the neighbouring countries: more than 1200 of them visited Hungary in 2004. In addition, there are also guest teacher programmes and affiliated courses that are organised and financed by the Ministry of Education's Department for Hungarian Minorities Abroad.

6.2. Confirming the European dimension of education

Hungary's National Core Curriculum puts forward the complexity (cultural, content-wise, skill- and competence-related elements) of the concept of the European dimension. The new National Core Curriculum issued in 2003 (Government Decree 243 of 2003 (XII. 17.)) prescribes neither detailed requirements, nor teaching material, it focuses on tasks for development. On the basis of fundamental principles and objectives, the regulation incorporates the European dimension into education at the levels of curricular, subject matter and cross-curricular development. The levels of curricular and subject matter development embed the transfer of knowledge concerning Europe and the development of skills related to European consciousness in the traditional structure of school subjects. There are several subjects (Geography, History, Modern Languages, Arts, and Natural Sciences) that currently deal with the issue of Europe. The cross-curricular (interdisciplinary) level considers the contextualisation of any knowledge regarding Europe, and teacher–student cooperation is to be the most essential objective of curricular development. It also develops skills related to European consciousness, and can create the continuity and coherence of the knowledge on Europe. Subjects can be interconnected in different ways: by a curriculum developing technique rooted in the cooperation of teachers of different school subjects, formulating along key concepts and evolving around central issues. The most important cross-curricular subjects – i.e. environment, political life, migration, culture, and civilisation – are based on curricular nodes. On the one hand, these nodes are already available in the currently used curricula and subject programmes, broken down into specific subjects. On the other hand, most content elements can fit into History, Geography, and Social Science classes, as well as into Natural Sciences, Literature, Languages, Arts and Religious education. This is how the above cross-curricular approach to the European dimension fits traditional frameworks.

In the past years, marked attention was directed towards the question of language teaching. The introduction of both the World-Language Programme and the 0 grade (ISCED3) is in line with the European objectives targeting the improvement of foreign language learning. The most important programme in the field of ICT is the Sulinet programme. Besides, almost all

secondary education institutions offer at least basic information services on the European Union.

In the field of vocational education and training, foreign language learning has also gained importance along with the teaching of computer skills, which are key competences essential for individual success in life. The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) is being obtained by more and more people in Hungary. Secondary school students are eligible for the reimbursement of the fee of a successful foreign language examination and the ECDL exam.

In the field of higher education, it is the task of European Study Centres (ESC) to ensure the introduction of EU-related modules both in graduate education and in-service training. Presently, 17 higher education institutions have a European Study Centre already in operation. Apart from teaching, the tasks of the Centres include the training of professionals; their in-service training, the carrying out of research and networking activities, while one of their prioritised target groups is students in initial teacher education. In most cases the courses are optional. Practising teachers can take part in in-service training programmes. The Teacher In-service Training and Accreditation Centre currently runs 16 accredited EU integration in-service training programmes advertised on its homepage.