

# **HUNGARY**

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

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## **1. Education population and language of instruction**

In 2008 the number of people aged between 0 and 29 was 3 538 257, which is the 35.2% of the total population. 1,532,000 were involved in compulsory education.

The official language of instruction is Hungarian. Officially recognized ethnic and national minorities (e.g. German, Romanian, Slovenian, Serb, Croatian, and Greek) have public minority educational institutions where their own language is used as first or second language of instruction.

## **2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education**

Public education institutions may be established and maintained by the state, local governments, minority local governments (hereinafter public sector schools), legal entities as well as natural persons (as private entrepreneurs). The state provides the maintainer of both public-sector and other institutions of public education with a budget subsidy for the performance of their tasks. The extent of the subsidy shall be determined in the annual Budget Act. Public sector schools may not be committed to any religion or ideology, while non-public-sector schools may operate as educational institutions committed to a religion or ideology.

The predominant majority of children (89%) attend public-sector schools (kindergartens and schools), which are administered by public authorities, primarily the local governments. Compulsory education is free in public-sector schools and also in private schools in case they have a public education agreement with a local government.

Horizontally, administrative responsibilities are shared between the Ministry of Education and Culture and other ministries: primarily the Ministry responsible for the Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Local Governments.

As a result of the establishment of the new government in 2006, responsibility for defining the content of school based vocational education has been transferred to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, while the Ministry of Education and Culture continues to be responsible for the overall management of public and higher education. Vertically, the tasks related to administrative control and management responsibilities are in part decentralized and shared among the central (national) government, the local (county and/or community level) authorities and the respective educational institutions.

The overall control is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Culture, whose authority covers all the issues and activities falling under the Act on Public Education irrespectively of that where the activity takes place, in what kind of institution or who the maintainer of the institution is.

National Public Education Council (*Országos Köznevelési Tanács*) is the minister's professional advisory body – established by the Act on Public Education – which contributes to the preparations of decision-making, forming opinion and makes proposals.

Public Education Policy Council (*Közoktatás-politikai Tanács*) assists the minister responsible for education by preparing decisions, giving opinions and putting up proposals on public education policy. It is entitled to take a stand on issues of public education and policy at national level with the exception of reconciliation of interests related to employment and civil servant status.

The Educational Authority (*Oktatási Hivatal*) was set up in 2006 to merge several public education and higher education government agencies. The Authority operates as a central office, under the control of the Minister of Education and Culture. It participates in the organisation and coordination of control, assessment and evaluation tasks regarding all levels of education. It cooperates in the performance of tasks of authorities specified in the Public Education Act and belonging to the sphere of authority of the minister. It exercises official jurisdiction as a court of common pleas. It participates in organising the national secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi vizsga*) and the passing of judgements on appeals for legal redress. It operates the independent examination board of examinations taken during studies. It cooperates in the tasks related to the National Register of Experts and Examiners. It participates in the tasks related to regional development belonging to the scope of branch governance and the funding related to that. As a national authority it can conduct proceedings for infringement of regulations and also may impose fine.

The Educational Authority also has functions related to the establishment of faculties and courses at higher education institutions, determining the maximum number of pupils to be admitted to individual higher education institutions, authorising the operation of foreign higher education institutions in Hungary and keeping records of the courses they offer, coordination required for EU guidelines on the recognition of qualifications in Hungary as well as the registration of certificates, diplomas and doctoral degrees conferred by higher education institutions. The Hungarian Equivalence and Information Center (HEIC) responsible for the recognition of foreign diplomas, certificates and degrees, is also located within the Authority.

Municipalities undertake tasks related to kindergarten (*óvoda*) and primary public education, and also secondary education. In case the secondary education presents difficulties, the tasks can be transferred to or shared with county/ capital (in Budapest) local governments. Municipalities control the legality of operation and management; make decisions about the establishment; specify the budget; supervise the finances and legal operation and the efficacy of professional work. In the case of state-funded education, municipalities often act as maintainers of the educational institutions. The maintainer appoints the heads of public education institutions and practices the employer's rights over them. Within the local and county governments town clerk exercise the rights of authority.

Public education institutions enjoy a high degree of autonomy in (organising and undertaking) pedagogical work and in practicing the employer's rights over the teaching staff.

### 3. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is considered to be an integral part of the formal school system. For municipalities in Hungary, it is a compulsory task to provide pre-primary education. Children aged 3 to 8 can attend kindergartens (*óvoda*). The average age range of children who attend kindergarten (*óvoda*) is from 3 to 6. Attendance of 8 year-olds is extremely rare although law allows it in special cases. Participation until the age of 5 is optional. One preparatory year is compulsory at the end of which kindergartens provide expert opinion on the school readiness of children. In 2008/09 85% of kindergarten-age children attended kindergartens (*óvoda*). Public-sector kindergartens (*óvoda*) are free: they can only charge a compensation for extra services not included in their basic tasks, e.g. for meals, excursions. Non state kindergartens (*óvoda*) may charge fees.

### 4. Compulsory education

School-based compulsory education comprises the following phases: the final year of pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and the phase of school-based education preparing pupils for obtaining vocational qualifications.

Free and compulsory education starts at the age of 5 and it ends at the age of 18. Vocational education and training can not be commenced before the age of 16 (before 14 in exceptional cases) since pupils have to acquire basic and general knowledge and skills up to that age.

#### (i) Phases

<i>Óvoda/Kindergarten</i> (pre-primary/pre-school education) –just the final year is compulsory (ISCED 0)	Age 5 - 6/7 (in special cases can be 8)
<i>Általános iskola</i> (primary and lower secondary education – single structure) (ISCED 1 + 2)	Age 6/7 - 14 - age 6-8, introductory cycle - age 8-10, rudimentary cycle - age 10-12, foundation cycle - age 12-14, developmental cycle
<i>Gimnázium</i> <sup>(1)</sup> (general lower and upper secondary education) Education is compulsory until the age of 18. (ISCED 3 or 2 + 3)	Age 10/12/14 – 18/19
<i>Szakközépiskola</i> –upper secondary general and post secondary non tertiary vocational education (ISCED 3, 4). ISCED 4 is not compulsory (see point 5 -Post compulsory education). Education is compulsory until the age of 18.	Age 14-18/19 /20
<i>Szakiskola</i> – upper secondary vocational education and training with a two-year general educational phase (ISCED 3) Education is compulsory until the age of 18.	Age 14-16 (general) 16-18/19/20 years (vocational)
<i>Szakiskola</i> <sup>(2)</sup> – remedial-lower secondary general (ISCED 2) and upper secondary vocational education and training (ISCED 3) Education is compulsory until the age of 18.	Age 15/16-18/19/20 (1-2 + 2 /3/4 years)

<sup>(1)</sup> Pupils may be enrolled into *Gimnázium* at three different ages (10, 12, 14) depending on the type of the given institution whether it is 4 or 6 year type. So children are provided with either 8, 6 or 4 years of upper secondary education.

<sup>(2)</sup> The remedial *Szakiskola* consists of a general remedial course of 1-2 years, and a short vocational course of 2 years. These schools mostly admit students who could not finish the primary school (*Általános Iskola*), or have difficulties with the acquisition of basic skills (reading/writing/calculus).

**(ii) Admissions criteria**

Parents may enrol their children to any kindergarten but kindergartens are only obliged to admit children from their catchment area. Children can attend kindergarten from the age of 3 but kindergartens have to admit them only from the age of 5 (except for multiply disadvantaged children, whom they have to admit from the age of 3).

A declaration of school-readiness is required for admission to primary schools. Primary schools are obliged to enrol all pupils whose residence is within the catchment area but parents may seek admission for their children at any institution. If a primary school cannot grant all applications for admission, they decide between the applicants by drawing lots. Students with special educational needs and students whose admission is justified by their special situation may be admitted without a draw after having granted the applications of multiply disadvantaged students for admission.

The free choice of upper secondary school (*gimnázium.szakközépiskola, szakiskola*) is laid down in legislation. Nevertheless, upper secondary schools (*gimnázium.szakközépiskola, szakiskola*) may stage an entrance examination or set admission requirements.

The law stipulates the provision of free compulsory education; public-sector schools can only charge a compensation for some extra-curricular activities., Private-sector schools are entitled to charge fees unless they have concluded a public education agreement with a local government.

**(iii) Length of school day/week/year**

The Minister of Education and Culture is entitled – with the limits established by the Act on Public Education – to decide yearly about the organization of the school year. The school starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of September and ends in the middle of June the following year, and it comprises 183 days of teaching. There are three (each approximately one-week long) school breaks, in autumn, winter and spring. There are five working days every week, from Monday to Friday. Lessons usually last 45 minutes. The daily timetable must be based on the statutory average of 45-minute lessons for theory classes, however, the school may organize longer (maximum 60-minute) or shorter lessons, as well. In vocational art education lessons may be longer, up to 90-minutes per lesson. Law stipulates the maximum number of lessons for each grade: 4 lessons a day in grades 1-3, 4.5 lessons a day on average in grades 4-6, 5 lessons a day in grades 7-8, 5.5 lessons a day on average in grades 9-10, 6 lessons a day from grade 11). The school day starts at 8 o'clock and typically ends about 2 p.m. but must not end later than 7 pm or 8 pm in vocational schools.

**(iv) Class size/student grouping**

The regulations define the maximum number of pupils/students per class as 26 (in grades 1-4), 30 (in grades 5-8) and 35 (grades 9-13).

Classes and groups specialized in fields of subjects may be launched by schools in accordance with the local curriculum. Typically there is a generalist class teacher in grades 1-2 and another one in grades 3-4 but it is possible for a class teacher to teach the same class from grade 1 to grade 4. From grade 5 there are subject teachers. Pupils/students usually remain in the same form (class/group) until the end of their studies at a school; however, frequent group divisions are usual in vocational training.

**(v) Curriculum control and content**

The education in pre-primary school (*óvoda*) is performed on the basis of its local programme developed according to the provisions of the National *Óvoda* Core Programme, which is issued by the Government.

A three-level structure constitutes the overall framework for curricular matters in primary and secondary education:

- The National Core Curriculum is a government decree, revised by the government every three years. It specifies the obligatory and common objectives of the educational/teaching work performed in the phase of establishing general knowledge as well as requirements related to knowledge, skills and abilities. It focuses on the acquisition of lifelong learning key competences.
- Optional Framework Curricula, centrally accredited or published by the Minister, based on the National Core Curriculum and serving as a basis for developing Local Curricula. In vocational education there are obligatory professional and exam requirements published by the minister responsible for vocational qualifications and optional central programmes.
- At institutional level, pedagogical programmes including the local curricula are developed by schools in accordance with the stipulations of the National Core Curriculum and are approved by the teaching staff and the maintainer. Schools may also opt to adapt the local curricula of another school or use/adapt one of the Framework Curricula. Secondary schools have to take into account the requirements of the secondary school leaving exam when drafting their local curricula.

Local curricula provide the pool of compulsory and optional study units (subjects, projects, etc.) with respect to the stipulations of the National Core Curriculum.

Teachers have the right (after consulting the team of teachers of the same subject in the school) to choose the content, method, textbooks as well as the aids and tools of teaching in accordance with the educational and pedagogical program.

The Minister for education, having consulted the National Public Education Council, makes a decision whether a textbook may be included on a list of eligible textbooks, provides for publishing this list and also publishes the list of tools and aids obligatory for public education institutions.. The law (Act XXXVII of 2001) stipulates the rules regarding the textbook market. The accreditation and subsidy of textbooks is regulated by a decree. The minister responsible for vocational qualifications, having consulted experts and the Vocational Textbook and School Supply Council, makes a decision on textbooks to be included in vocational textbooks. The list of obligatory vocational education tools and school supplies is included in the exam requirements and is approved by the minister responsible for vocational education and training.

#### (vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Children aged between 6 and 8 can start the first grade. Pupils can continue their studies in the next year (grade) if they fulfil the requirements determined in local curricula. The teaching staff may grant exemption from fulfilling these criteria. The performance and progress of pupils are regularly evaluated by teachers throughout the school year on the basis of principles set in the local curriculum. Pupils are generally assessed based upon the traditional numeric grading (scale 1-5). It is to be expressed in a written statement whether the pupil has done excellently, well or satisfactorily or needs coaching in the middle or at the end of the academic year in grades 1-3 and at the middle of the academic year in grade 4. In the first three grades pupils cannot be forced to repeat a year. If a pupil is assessed as one who needs coaching, the school also has to involve the parents of the pupil in the evaluation and reveal the factors impeding progress and has to put up a proposal as regards the necessary measures to cease them. In grade four and above pupils may be made to repeat a year.

The pedagogical programme of schools may stipulate to use descriptive assessment or other grading instead of using marks (scale 1-5) at mid-term, at the end of the school year and during the year.

At the end of upper secondary courses in *Gimnázium* and *Szakközépiskola* students sit for the national secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi vizsga*), which is a prerequisite for admission to higher education. It is a state examination, which has to be held nationally according to uniform central examination requirements. The central examination requirements have to be specified on the basis of the examinations code. Schools may supplement the central examination requirements with local examination requirements as prescribed by their local curriculum (in accordance with the examinations code). From 2005 the exam can be taken at two levels (standard and advanced levels). The advanced level of the national secondary school leaving examination offers the possibility of getting extra scores for entrance into HEIs.

The examination is organised by the schools, and in case of the advanced level exam the Educational Authority (*Oktatási Hivatal*). At the end of vocational studies students are required to take a vocational examination (*szakmai vizsga*) and get vocational qualification.

## 5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

Post-compulsory education is organised as a rather complex and multilayered structure. Vocational and secondary vocational schools offer programmes with and without the requirement of the national secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi vizsga*), and accredited post-secondary vocational programmes. The same institution offers training to pupils who are subject to compulsory education and who do not attend compulsory education any longer. Meanwhile, the same training programme can be attended in the framework of both mainstream and non-mainstream education, as well. Post-compulsory education is provided both by the public and the for-profit sector and is regulated by Act LXXVI of 1993 on Vocational Education and Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education. Responsibility for vocational education and training and adult education lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

Adult education institutions may apply for accreditation with the aim of ensuring to carry out adult education activities in higher quality to the benefit of the participants of the training courses and other stakeholders.

### (i) Types of education

The two main types are school-based (mainstream) adult education and non-mainstream education. On the lower level of school-based adult education youth or adults without any qualifications can obtain one, while on secondary and higher levels adults have the opportunity to continue their studies in vocational or general evening or correspondence courses. Non-mainstream education may be general or focused on vocational or foreign language skills. It also includes training programmes organised for the unemployed (both fresh graduates and adults) as well as professional further training for employees.

Institutions of vocational education/training and adult education:

- Secondary vocational schools (*szakközépiskola*),
- vocational schools (*szakiskola*) including special and skill-development vocational schools,
- higher education institutions,
- state-operated institutes of adult education,
- organisations offering non-mainstream vocational training specified in the Adult Education Act,
- central training facilities

**(ii) Admissions criteria**

Vocational training inside the school system starts with advancing, admitting or receipt of the person into the vocational training course after completing the two-year. The practical training of students studying in vocational training classes at the economic entity is provided on the basis of the written student contract concluded for the purpose of such practical training between the student and the economic entity. A student contract may be concluded by a student who is at least sixteen years of age, and who furthermore fulfils the professional prerequisites and health conditions necessary for obtaining the professional qualification.

**(iii) Curriculum control and content**

The minister responsible for vocational qualifications provides for designing the textbooks and other teaching aids of the vocational subjects and modules,

The vocational qualifications recognised by the state are included in the National Qualifications Register, which specifies the vocational qualifications groups, the maximum duration of training required for each vocational qualification (number of vocational grades in school-based education, maximum number of lessons in case of non-mainstream education) and the year of registration.

The list of available trades, the duration of courses, the required prior training and aptitude tests are centrally regulated and set in the Examination Requirements for Vocational Qualifications. There are 21 trade groups in vocational training.

**(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications**

The 1993 Act on Vocational Training provides uniform regulation concerning the examination requirements. Examinations take place in institutions entitled to stage vocational examinations. The minister responsible for vocational qualifications nominates the president of the Vocational Examination Board and makes recommendations on the vocational examination regulations, ensures the formulation of the general provisions for regulations and delivery of examination, provides for the preparation of the required exam questions, evaluation guides and other documents of the (written, oral, practical or interactive) exam tasks.

A certificate of vocational qualification may be granted to pupils who, at the vocational examination, fulfilled all requirements defined in the vocational and exam requirements. Partial qualifications may be obtained by fulfilling at the vocational examination the examination parts connected to the professional skills module(s) defined in the professional examination requirements. Having the certificate, students can enter the labour market, those who have secondary school leaving examination certificate can continue their studies in higher education programmes. Students can take the secondary school leaving examination at szakközépiskola and gimnázium.

**6. Higher education**

Based on the comprehensive national higher education reform programme ('Hungarian Universitas Programme') a new higher education Act was adopted by the Parliament in December 2005. It entered into force in the 2006/07 Academic Year, and in accordance with the principles of the Bologna process, it provides a national scale establishment of the three cycle study structure (BA, MA, PhD). The full implementation of the new training structure is in progress. The new multi cycle system offers education at Bachelor level that lasts 6-8 semesters (ISCED 5A), which can be followed by Master level course(s) (ISCED 5A) for another 2-4 semesters. The third cycle provides

doctoral training (ISCED 6). Besides multi cycle courses, there are a few fields of education at university level where education and training remained long cycle (they last 10-12 semesters, ISCED 5A). The new higher education Act also endeavours to strengthen the financial autonomy of the institutions, enhance their R+D+I capacities, support mobility of the teaching staff and of the students, promote the inclusion of the Hungarian higher education institutions into the European Higher Education and Research Area and bring closer higher education to the world of labour.

### (i) Structure

In Hungary, higher education institutions can be state-owned or run by legal entities determined by the law. Non state higher education institutions can ask the official recognition of the state. There are two types of tertiary institutions: non-university institution (*főiskola*) and universities (*egyetem*). Previously, non-university institutions were not entitled to grant degrees equivalent to those granted by universities. At present, both types of institutions may launch courses in all of the three cycles, but universities have to offer Masters courses in at least two fields of training and PhD courses in at least one study field in order to qualify as a university.

Two-year advanced vocational programmes (*felsőfokú szakképzés* at ISCED level 5B) and professional higher education training programmes (*szakirányú továbbképzés* at ISCED level 5A) can also be launched by tertiary institutions.

### (ii) Access

The precondition for admission to higher institutions is the successful passing of the secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi vizsga*), which also functions as an entrance exam (at standard and advanced level).

Most higher education programmes have specific admission requirements set by institutions jointly or by themselves that vary depending on the subject or type of course. (E.g. In the case of application for admission to bachelor course, the higher education institutions providing courses in the relevant field of training, jointly decide in which examination subjects the applicants are required to pass the advanced-level (*emelt szintű érettségi vizsga*). The tertiary institution determines admission on the basis of the grades obtained at the secondary school leaving examination and the secondary school performance of pupils.

The prerequisite of admission to a Masters degree course is holding a Bachelor degree, while the admission criterion to doctoral courses (*doktori képzés*) is holding Master degree. HEIs offer professional higher education training programmes (*szakirányú továbbképzés*) for graduates (either at a Bachelor or Master programme).

Tertiary institutions – irrespective of state owned or not – offer state funded and fee-paying places for applicants. The number of state funded places is determined by the government each year. Rules concerning fees are set out in the regulations of higher education institutions in accordance with the regulations stipulated by government decrees. The maximum number of students which can be accepted at any institution is determined by the Educational Authority. Applicants are free to decide among institutions depending on their priorities and are entitled to submitting an unlimited number of application forms.

### (iii) Qualifications

Students upon successful completion of their cycle of studies and accumulating the necessary quantity of credits are awarded respectively BA (Bachelor), MA (Master) diploma. As to the PhD, and DLA (Doctor of Liberal Arts) diploma, after completion of the doctorate course, the PhD or DLA



degree shall be taken in the course of a separate procedure of degree award. Those who have not attended the doctorate course but have prepared individually, may also apply for the degree award procedure.

ISCED 5B advanced vocational programmes (*felsőfokú szakképzés*) lead to a professional certificate (*szakmai bizonyítvány*), which is not a degree like the ones granted after accomplishing Bachelor or Masters degree courses. Professional higher education training programmes (*szakirányú továbbképzés*) do not lead to another degree; a diploma is awarded on completion.

## 7. Special needs

The Public Education Act differentiates between children/pupils with special educational needs entitled to special care and children/pupils struggling with adaptive, learning or behavioural difficulties entitled to developmental education. It is a rehabilitation committee of experts that decides at the request of the educational counselling service whether a child has special educational needs or struggles with adaptive, learning or behavioural difficulties.

In terms of pedagogy, special educational need (disability) is defined as any non-normal development caused by a serious disturbance of the intellect, vision, hearing, movement, speech organs or emotional life. Children/pupils with special educational needs have the right to receive pedagogical, therapeutic education or conductive education service corresponding to their condition within the scope of special care after their legitimate claim has been established.

The National Core Curriculum specifies the principles of curricular requirements of school-based education provided for pupils with special educational needs. The local educational programmes of kindergartens include specific developmental activities for reducing the disadvantages of children with special educational needs, while the local curricula of schools include development programmes suited to the type and extent of disability. The local curriculum and the vocational programme may allow more than one academic year for the fulfilment of the requirements of a grade.

When drafting their local curriculum / educational programme, kindergartens and schools providing education for children/pupils with special educational needs also take into account the “Guide to the Kindergarten Education of Children with Special Educational Needs” and the “Guide to the School Education of Children with Special Educational Needs”.

Education for children/pupils with special educational needs may take place in therapeutic educational institutions, conductive education institutions as well as kindergarten groups or school classes with differentiated curriculum or inclusively, in the same kindergarten group and school class as their non-SEN peers. In the 2008/09 school year 5,000 children with special educational needs were provided kindergarten education (71% of them in inclusive settings). With regard to the entire public education, about 55% of SEN children/pupils were educated inclusively, while 45% of them in special classes or groups.

Integrated therapeutic or conductive therapeutic methodological institutions may be established with the aim of assisting the inclusive education of SEN children.

Vocational schools may also operate as special vocational schools or skill developmental special vocational schools for the purposes of the teaching and education of pupils with special educational needs.

Public sector educational institutions and local governments provide free-of-charge speech therapy and dyslexia prophylaxis sessions as well as two hours coaching per day for children with special educational needs.

## 8. Teachers

Following the implementation of the Bologna process as of the academic year 2006/07, teacher training has been reorganised. According to the provisions of the relevant law, with the exception of primary school (ISCED 1) and pre-school teachers, ISCED 2 and three teachers' qualification can be acquired solely in the context of master's studies following a single procedure valid for all fields of studies.

Becoming a teacher (*tanár*) requires an MA degree, which lasts half a year longer than most other master degree programmes because a one-semester-long teaching practice of 30 credit points is an integral part of the training. Primary school and kindergartens teachers (*óvoda*), in order to obtain their diploma shall accomplish the first three year cycle of studies (BA level). For kindergarden teachers the bachelor studies last three years and take 180 credits, for primary school teachers it lasts for four years and takes 240 credits. Participation in in-service training at least every seven years has been made mandatory.

Those holding the following qualifications may be employed as teachers in the various phases of public education:

- kindergarten educator or conductive therapist and kindergarten educator with a BA degree at kindergartens (and those with a school-leaving and qualifying certificate obtained at a kindergarten teacher secondary vocational school in the previous system),
- general teacher, physical education teacher, conductive therapist and conductive therapist-general teacher in the first four years of primary school,
- teacher with specialised teaching qualifications in accordance with the subject or the field of learning as well as those listed in the previous points in education not divided into subjects in years five and six of primary school,
- teacher with specialised teaching qualifications in accordance with the subject in years seven and eight,
- teacher with specialised teaching qualifications on a university level in accordance with the subject from the year nine onwards at secondary schools and teacher with qualifications in accordance with the subject in case of the subject of arts, physical education and technical-practical activity,
- teacher with teaching or tertiary qualifications in accordance with the special field of the training as specified in the career orientation and vocational foundation education in case of those teaching vocational theoretical subjects or vocational preparatory knowledge as well as knowledge of career orientation and vocational foundation at secondary vocational schools and vocational schools,
- those holding language teaching qualifications or qualifications and special qualifications for teaching a foreign language and the literature of the foreign language may be employed to teach that foreign language in every type of school.

Teaching and educating work in public education institutions can only be undertaken in a civil servant or employee.

In the 2008/09 academic year, the number of full-time teachers in public education was 153,000 i.e. nearly 4,000 less than in the previous year.

## 9. Current reforms and priorities

### I. Introduction

Educational policy is considered to be a priority field. Education and vocational training is seen as an essential tool for economic development, enhanced economic and social cohesion and well-being of the individual. The concept of life long learning constitutes the basic pillar of the Government education and training policies. The Hungarian Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy and a road map assuring its implementation were adopted by the Government in October 2005. Basic concept and main objectives of the Hungarian LLL strategy are built upon the European LLL paradigm. In this context of the LLL strategy the Government has been taking a series of comprehensive and innovative measures (enhance equity, improve access to quality education, modernise the context and structure of education). The New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013) – largely supported by the EU structural funds – provides the basic policy and financial framework for the implementation of the reform programme. Biannual Action Plans approved by the government constitute the timeframe of implementation.

### II. Planning stages of reform and initiatives

The explicit objective of the Government is the deepening, completing and consolidating of the reform process launched in 2003/04 and afterwards with the adoption of mid-term sectoral development strategies. In accordance with the New Development Plan (2007-2013) and the Lisbon Strategy in the coming years the broad modernisation and renovation of the education and training system will be accomplished under the triple banner of 'Quality, Access, and Efficiency'.

#### **Development of key competences and national qualification framework**

The National Core Curriculum makes emphasis on the acquisition of key competences from early childhood and throughout the whole teaching process. Accordingly, special care has been given to early childhood education. As of 2007/2008 pre-school education shall be gradually extended to settlements where so far no kindergartens have existed. Competence based education already introduced on an experimental basis in a number of schools is being gradually extended to all types and levels of school type education. The delivery of basic key competences (literacy and numeracy) has been strengthened by the extension of the first 4-year learning period to the first six grades. With this end in view, appropriate pedagogical tools and methodologies have been being developed and implemented, coupled with the necessary training, retraining and in-service-training of teachers.

Also, the development and the full-scale establishment of a single quality management and assessment system in school based education and training that enable the comparative evaluation of the performance of pupils, teachers and educational institutions on an equal footing is in progress. In vocational training curricular developments enabling the wide scale implementation of the new modular National Register of Qualifications and the further extension of the network of the Integrated Regional Vocational Training Centres shall constitute the core of the reforms of the sector.

A powerful tool for the implementation of life long learning strategies will be the development of a comprehensive Hungarian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which started in 2008. The NQF, while fully respecting the competence of existing sub-sectoral recognition authorities will establish a single system of qualifications for different levels and forms of qualifications, including qualifications based on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The NQF will also

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assure that the Hungarian system be related to the European Qualifications Framework by early 2013.

### **Guidance and links with labour market**

A fundamental prerequisite for the improvement of the quality of education is bringing education closer to the world of labour. In the course of the 2007-2013 programming period gradual development and full scale implementation of a career guidance and orientation system will facilitate a smoother transition from school to the world of labour, and provide both schools and employment services with vital information. The implementation will be linked to the networks that are being operated at local/regional level by the public employment services (PES) The programme, launched in 2004, on the establishment of the integrated regional vocational training centres, will be continued and further developed. In higher education a national digital network is being established for the systematic collection, sorting out and the processing of a vast pool of data, which can constitute the pillar of a nationwide database. This may enable the tracking of jobs and facilitating the integration into the labour market of all new university or college graduates. Higher education institutions are granted free access to this extensive database.

In the same context, the reform supports the enhancement of the role of the higher education sector in the dissemination of knowledge. In the referred programming period, the R+D+I capacities of institutions will be strengthened and stable working relations and cooperation will be promoted between industries and universities through the establishment of clusters and centres of excellences, and through the increase in the number and proportion of students in science, mathematics and engineering.

Also, higher education institutions will be encouraged to take a more vigorous part in adult education, particularly in introducing diverse forms of non-formal learning with particular focus on meeting regional needs. The recognition of prior learning knowledge will be greatly encouraged through the establishment of validation centres.

### **Access and equity**

The primary goal of the Hungarian education policy is to reduce the selective mechanisms of education, reduce discrimination (especially against Roma pupils), promote equity and ensure equal access. As a continuation of previous measures, these will also be achieved in the forthcoming period through the implementation of a series of financial and legal measures and programmes to ensure equal access and combat all forms of segregation whether open or latent. In order to improve the kindergarten participation of multiply disadvantaged children, kindergartens with an integration programme for these children from the age of 3 are eligible to a supplementary grant. Multiply disadvantaged families are also eligible to financial support if their children regularly attend kindergarten. Special attention is paid to ensuring integrated education for multiply disadvantaged pupils by providing a supplementary grant to schools and teachers teaching pupils in an inclusive/integrated setting and pedagogic system. Another – and quite powerful – measure of funding policy, aiming at eliminating segregation, stipulates that local governments applying for EU grants for improving public education are only eligible to support if they have assessed the institutions they run in terms of ensuring equal opportunity and prepare an action plan for tackling any segregation problems or insufficient equity. (There are also grants available for remedying the deficiencies.)

In addition to the above measures, special pedagogical programmes and tools as well as teacher training and in-service-training programmes will be developed in favour of inclusive education and training.

Combating school failure and early school leaving will remain a policy. It will include a number of measures of pedagogical and methodological character with the main objective of preventing early school leaving offering the chance to catch up for those who are lagging behind. Measure will include the development and implementation of various preventive measures, meanwhile, different forms of second chance schemes will facilitate the reintegration of young people who left school without any qualification.

### **Efficiency**

There are central programmes encouraging local governments to merge (integrate) schools, with a view to negative demographic trends and the significant decrease in the school-age population, involving several dozens of public schools that operate in regions and small villages with steadily declining population (and consequently children) and where the individual financial maintenance of the institutions is not only inefficient but cannot ensure the delivery of quality education either. Several schools appoint a 'leader' school.

### **Infrastructure and Equipment**

The provision of better quality of education and training requires the development of the institutions' physical infrastructure. In order to achieve a better quality in education and training infrastructure development is necessary. In this respect priority is to bring support to the communities and villages which – due to their remote geographic location and economic and social backwardness – are short of the financial means necessary for the maintenance of a decent level of school infrastructure and are embattled with lack of resources. A further consideration in the extension of support for infrastructure development, mostly through the introduction of art technologies is the encouragement of all public education institutions to implement innovative pedagogy facilitating the acquisition of key competencies.

In the course of the 2007-2013 programming period infrastructure development will involve also the renovation and remodelling of hundreds of obsolete and broken down school buildings, the establishment of pre-school educational buildings in settlements where there is a total lack of such services. In school-based vocational training the network of the regional integrated training centres will be further disseminated. This will ensure at a regional level a fair quality of vocational training in line with local labour market needs.

Unrevised English

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)