



COUNTRY STUDY

HUNGARY

Country monitoring report 2016



In the past five years, the rate of early school leavers (ESL) in Hungary remains at the same level of 11.6% that is very close to the EU average. The highest rate of early school leavers is among Roma people – with 57%, compared to 10.3% among the non-Roma group . There are as well some regional disparities, where regions affected the most by poverty have proportionally a higher level of ESL. Students of vocational schools are most likely to drop out compared to those with a general education. Therefore, during the renewal of the VET system in 2015 important measures to prevent early school leaving and improving development of basic competences in VET were introduced. Consequently, a substantial amount of national and EU funds is dedicated to better engage socio-economically vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into education and training. Measures to improve inclusive and integrated education are promoted as of 2015-2016 with the hope of decreasing the risk of early school leaving, especially among the Roma population.



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Promoting access and participation in Lifelong Learning

According to the European Commission, the rate of adult participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Hungary is amongst the lowest in the EU with 7.1%¹ compared to an EU average of 10.7% in 2015. Recently Hungary did not participate in the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills, neither carried out any national surveys on adult literacy therefore it becomes impossible to present data.

At the end of 2014 the government has adopted the *"Strategic framework for the policy of lifelong learning for 2014-2020"*. This strategy as well as Act on adult education and training looks at the relevance of provided education and training to the labour market. The learning provisions aim to support the completion of education, and very strongly support professional education. Yet the group of people undertaking learning are mostly those who are economically active and frequently participate in education and training in the scope of their work. A strategy that supports all forms of learning and for different purposes still needs to be defined, and many important measures such as career guidance and the recognition of prior learning have not been implemented yet.

In addition to this problem, the Hungarian education system faces other challenges with regards to LLL. For example, the early-school leaving rate (ESL) have continuously risen (from 10.5% in 2010 to 11.6% in 2015). One of the possible reasons to explain this, may be the government's decision to reduce the obligatory school age from 18 to 16 in 2012. Furthermore, access to higher education has further narrowed in 2014, with the number of students enrolled in higher educational

¹ In 2014 it was 3%, the current rate of 7,1% results from break in time series.

decreasing by approximately 22% compared to 2010 (while the number of applications actually increased). Finally, the long-standing segregation of Roma pupils has become worse over the past decade.

Our Hungarian member note that it has been demonstrated that pro-integration government policies were effective in decreasing segregation between 2006 and 2008. However, since 2010 the government has not only discontinued these efforts, but it has also purposefully legislated loopholes into the anti-discrimination and anti-segregation legislation and has publicly defended ethnic segregation under specific circumstances.

Vocational Education and Training

Since the new law on Vocational Education and Training (VET) came into force in 2013, Hungary has used the dual model in upper secondary education. Participation of upper secondary students in VET (ISCED level 3) remains well below the EU average, with 26.5% compared to 48.9% in 2013. 70% of students are following work-based learning (the highest rate in the EU). In 2016-2017 a further reform of the VET system is expected.

The Hungarian VET system has its own educational trajectory in line with general education from vocational grammar schools to vocational secondary schools, as well as vocational schools for students with special needs. Most of the educational contents are occupied by vocational subjects while the general education teaching hours were decreased. This narrow educational trajectory restricts a possibility for students to move between various programs, or even to general education schools without taking additional courses. Another difficulty is the preparation to meet the requirements of higher education, as the provision of key competences in the educational contents was reduced.



In this context, it is important to mention, as our Hungarian member underlined, that 63% of Roma students participate in vocational education and training (VET). This group is also the most prone to drop out from school. Following an insufficient level of basic skills resulting in poor quality training courses in some regions and for certain professions, students' chances of succeeding in further learning or in changing jobs in the long term may be limited. Consequently, it impacts transition from education to labour market, this is a cause of concern for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as Roma students, who are over-represented in VET.

Additionally, the government announced to reduce the number of general secondary school places, where pupils study for the *matura*, in November 2014, in order to promote participation in VET. However, this may result in fewer applicants to higher education, and may make the vocational path less attractive to high-performing students. Combined with the increasing admission requirements for higher education, this development could further limit the social mobility of the disadvantaged.

Validation of NFIL

Hungary does not have a national strategy when it comes to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) based on uniform principles and procedures. Making it difficult to identify a clear model of validation in Hungary. Although some elements of validation can be found in the legal arrangements in VET, higher education and in the adult training sector, these elements are without any declaration of explicit policy goals. Generally, the term 'validation' and the procedure of recognition are not widely known.

In the adult training sector a prior learning assessment scheme has been included in the *Adult Education Acts*

(2001, 2013) since 2001, although not widely used. The scheme has been introduced in order to customise the training provision but in practice it is very small-scaled and limited due to the contradictory interests of different stakeholders, and the lack of an adequate measurement and assessment system.

One of the main obstacles to validation development is the 'congestion symptom'. The introduction of the learning outcomes approach is an indispensable condition to elaborate NQF and validation procedures, and remains a challenge. This approach is fairly new to Hungarian education sectors which makes it more difficult to build on. The other problem is the lack of clear overall policy goals of application. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to identify actors bearing responsibility for validation development at the level of the Hungarian government. In addition, the lack of financial resources at institutional level is also a significant obstacle.²

With the adoption of the "*Strategic framework for the policy of Lifelong Learning for 2014-2020*" at the end of 2014 set the foundation for further development of human development operational program where a reference to the Council Recommendation from 2012 on validation of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning is being mentioned with regards to the development of the Hungarian system for recognition. Some minor developments are taking place, although the lack of coordination between different actors and stakeholders makes it difficult to progress with development of universal validation arrangements. Thus, so far, solely the sectoral approach dominates attempts of validation developments in Hungary that are led separately by different sectors.

Lastly, the Hungarian government is currently not taking any steps towards the development of validation arrangements targeting migrants and

² European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014.



refugees.

Early-school Leaving

In the past five years, the rate of early school leavers (ESL) in Hungary remains at the same level of 11.6% that is very close to the EU average. The highest rate of early school leavers is among Roma people – with 57%, compared to 10.3% among the non-Roma group.³ There are as well some regional disparities, where regions affected the most by poverty have proportionally a higher level of ESL. Students of vocational schools are most likely to drop out compared to those with a general education. Therefore, during the renewal of the VET system in 2015 important measures to prevent early school leaving and improving development of basic competences in VET were introduced. Consequently, a substantial amount of national and EU funds is dedicated to better engage socio-economically vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into education and training. Measures to improve inclusive and integrated education are promoted as of 2015-2016 with the hope of decreasing the risk of early school leaving, especially among the Roma population.

In addition, Hungary tightened the rules on child support and linked the attendance of school from children to financial support for families to combat ESL. In case children do not attend school, their families will not receive financial aids.

According to a Cedefop report, the Hungarian education system has become exceedingly selective and polarised. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to attend vocational schools, which are not able to give the students the extra support they need, thus leading to high drop-out rates (and hence perpetuating inequalities in society).⁴

³ https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-hu_en.pdf

⁴ Cedefop, ReferNet Hungary, Vocational education and training in Europe http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/2011_CR_HU.pdf.

NEETs

The rate of NEETs in Hungary has continuously increased over the last years and reached a level of 19.9% in 2015. The rate is especially high amongst Roma students⁵ who are more disadvantaged and likely to drop out from the educational system.

Hungary submitted a Youth Guarantee implementation plan in December 2013, an updated version of which was then provided in April 2014. However, the plan will not be fully operational as of 2018, and will cover training provision for NEETs. Currently the system is challenged with structural problems related to the outreach towards NEETs and getting them to register, as well as insufficient capacity of employment services to scale up.

As for active measures to support youth some of them have been launched even before the introduction of the Youth Guarantee, which are expected to be boosted by the new programme aiming at the involvement of long term young jobseekers into specialised measures. A legal modification that took place at the beginning of 2015 introduced Youth Guarantee tools for personalisation based on needs such as education, training, wage subsidies, labour market subsidies, traineeships, support for taking part in mobility or self-employment subsidies. Two fully fledged programs were launched in 2016 – a Youth Entrepreneurship Programme and a Traineeship Programme to enhance youth to gain work experience.⁶

Citizenship education

Civic education is part of the official education curriculum in one out of ten overarching topics ('Humans and society') and social and civic

⁵ Study by the Fundamental Rights Agency based on self-declaration of current main activity of respondents, shows that 37 % of Roma aged 16-24 were neither in employment, education or training. Poverty and Employment: The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States. Roma Survey - Data in Focus, 2014.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/nrp2016_hungary_en.pdf



competencies are listed among the nine competencies the curricula is supposed to develop. The curriculum includes: Rights and responsibilities in Hungary and the European Union democratic principles; Political institutions, the role of media and the public sphere; Minorities as well as electoral systems. However, there are no up-to-date assessments of the quality or impact of civic education and an independent assessment has notably criticised that the curriculum achieves little with regards to fighting discrimination, social exclusion, and negative stereotypes of the Roma population.

In 2015 the Paris Declaration was launched to stimulate the promoting of citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education. In Hungary there was up till then no related policy developments to influence educational curricula to transmit these values, as per government to a certain extent they were already included in the curricula developed in past.

Council recommendations

"The average performance of Hungarian students in basic skills was below the EU average in the 2012 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the proportion of low-achievers increased between 2009 and 2012. The influence of the socioeconomic background and school location on educational performance is among the strongest in the Union. The selectivity of the education system deepens performance gaps among students in different school types and these gaps widen over time. The lack of equal access to quality mainstream education is particularly acute for Roma. With the exception of early childhood education, where there has been significant improvement in recent years, gaps remain wide between completion rates of Roma and non-Roma on all other educational levels, i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary education. Early school leaving remains high among Roma. Hungary has introduced a number of measures that aim to

address low-achievement more effectively. However, important details on the implementation of these measures are not available, making it difficult to assess their potential impact. A systemic approach to promoting inclusive mainstream education has yet to be developed. The announced implementation plan for the early school leaving strategy has yet to be published. The transition between different forms and stages of education remains difficult and the implementation of recent reforms in vocational education should be targeted at facilitating transitions."

"With this regard Council has recommended Hungary in 2016 to facilitate the transition from the public works scheme to the primary labour market and reinforce other active labour market policies. Improve the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits. Take measures to improve educational outcomes and to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups, in particular Roma, in inclusive mainstream education."

[Source: EUR-Lex, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2016.299.01.0049.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2016:299:TOC]



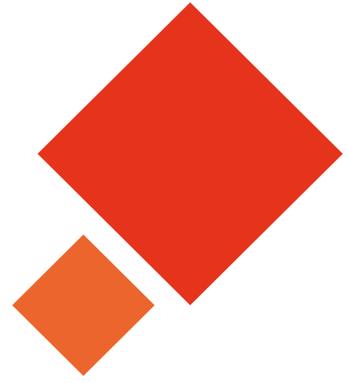
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As part of the Lifelong Learning Watch SOLIDAR Foundation has developed 12 country studies in 2016 covering the status in different Member States when it comes to; Promoting access and participation in Lifelong Learning, Vocational Education and Training, Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (NFIL), Early-school Leaving, NEETs and Citizenship education in reference to 2016 Council's country-specific recommendations.

The SOLIDAR Foundation is the cooperation platform of SOLIDAR; a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR brings together 60 member organisations based in 25 EU member states and in 6 candidate countries. We work together in Social Affairs, International Cooperation and Lifelong Learning. The Building Learning Societies pillar includes 23 members, covering 18 EU member states.

SOLIDAR Foundation engages through member and partner organisations citizens in EU decision making processes, empowers people through lifelong learning and VET, and voices their concerns to the EU institutions by carrying out active lobbying, project management and coordination, policy monitoring, research and awareness-raising.



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