



# **National system overview on education systems in Europe**

2011 Edition





# **HUNGARY**

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

In 2010, the total population of Hungary was 10 million, 34 % of which was aged 0-29. There were 1.46 million young people aged 5-18, the ages wherein participation in pre-school or school education is compulsory. In the school year of 2010/11, 338 thousand children participated in pre-school education (kindergartens), 759 thousand in primary and lower secondary education, 662 thousand in upper secondary education and 361 thousand in tertiary education.

The language of instruction is Hungarian, the official language of the country. There are also schools and kindergartens where the language of ethnic and national minorities (e.g. German, Romanian, Slovenian, Serb, Croatian and Greek) is used as the first or second language of instruction.

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

Schools and kindergartens may be established and maintained by the state, local governments, minority local governments (hereinafter public sector schools), legal entities (foundations, churches, etc.) as well as natural persons. The state provides maintainers with a budget subsidy for the performance of their tasks. The extent of the subsidy is determined in the annual Budget Act. Public sector schools can not be committed to any religion or ideology, while non-public-sector schools may operate as educational institutions committed to a religion or ideology and often pursue an alternative curriculum and/or teaching methods.

The predominant majority of children (about 89 %) attend public-sector schools (kindergartens and schools), which are administered by public authorities, primarily the local governments.

The tasks related to administrative control and management responsibilities are shared among the central (national) government, the local (county and/or community level) authorities and the educational institutions.

Overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of National Resources, in charge of all issues and activities falling under the Act on Public Education irrespective of where the activity takes place, in what kind of institution or who the maintainer of the institution is.

The Ministry is responsible for education, culture, social affairs, health care, youth and sport. However, school-based VET and adult training is within the competence of the Ministry for National Economy.

There are several advisory bodies that have to be consulted before adopting regulations or policy, e.g. the National Public Education Council (*Országos Köznevelési Tanács*), the Public Education Policy Council (*Közoktatás-politikai Tanács*) and the National Committee for Minorities (*Országos Kisebbségi Bizottság*).

The Educational Authority (*Oktatási Hivatal*) operates under the control of the Minister responsible for education. It participates in the organisation and coordination of control, assessment and evaluation tasks related to all levels of education. 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 assists in the tasks related to the National Register of Experts and Examiners. It acts as a registration centre for higher education and operates central information systems of the sub-sections of the education system. It participates in the tasks related to regional development belonging to the scope of sectoral governance and the funding related to that. As a national authority it can conduct proceedings for infringement of regulations and may also impose fines. The Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre (HEIC) responsible for the recognition of foreign diplomas, certificates and degrees, is also located within the Authority.

Municipalities undertake tasks related to kindergarten (*óvoda*), primary and secondary education. In case the secondary education presents difficulties, the tasks can be transferred to or shared with county local governments. Municipalities control the legality of operation and management; make decisions about the establishment of an institution; 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 clerks exercise the rights of authority.

Schools and kindergartens 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, especially the final, compulsory pre-school year of it. Most kindergartens (*óvoda*) also provide full day care. Kindergarten education and care is optional from the age of 3 and is compulsory from the age of 5, when children are obliged to participate 4 hours a day in guided activities. Although mandatory primary school entry age is 6 years, children may stay in kindergarten for an extra year, up to age 7, upon parental request or expert recommendation. Children with special education needs may attend kindergarten up to age 8.

Education is provided on the basis of the local programme of the kindergarten developed in accordance with the provisions of the National Kindergarten Core Programme issued by the Government.

Public-sector kindergartens are free of charge; they charge a compensation for extra services not included in their basic tasks, e.g. for meals, excursions and extracurricular activities. Non state kindergartens may charge fees.

## 4. Compulsory education

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

Free and compulsory schooling starts at the age of 6 (but at the age of 8 the latest) and ends at the age of 18. However, it is obligatory to participate in the pre-school activities of kindergarten education from the age of 5. Vocational education and training can be commenced at the age of 14 or 16.

### (i) Phases

| Phases                           | Institutional framework  | Age (From-to)  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Pre-primary</b>               | <i>Óvoda/kindergarten</i><br>pre-primary/pre-school education and care (compulsory from age 5)<br>ISCED 0  | Age 5-6/7 (in special cases can be 8)  |
| <b>Primary</b>                   | <i>Általános iskola</i><br>single structure – primary and lower secondary education  | Age 6/7-14<br>– age 6-8, introductory cycle<br>– age 8-10, rudimentary cycle |
| <b>Lower secondary</b>           | ISCED 1 + 2  | – age 10-12, foundation cycle<br>– age 12-14, developmental cycle            |
| <b>Upper Secondary</b>           | <i>Gimnázium</i> <sup>(1)</sup><br>(general lower and upper secondary education)<br>(ISCED 3 or 2 + 3)   | Age 10/12/14-<br>Age 14-18/19  |
|                                  | <i>Szakközépiskola</i><br>upper secondary general and post secondary non tertiary vocational education (ISCED 3, 4).<br>ISCED 4 is not compulsory (see point 5 – Post compulsory education).<br>Education is compulsory until the age of 18. | Age 14-18/19/20  |
|                                  | <i>Szakiskola</i><br>upper secondary vocational education and training with a two-year general educational phase (ISCED 3)<br>Education is compulsory until the age of 18.   | Age 14-16 (general) (14/5)16-18/19/20 years (vocational)                     |
| <b>Lower and upper secondary</b> | <i>Szakiskola</i> <sup>(2)</sup><br>Remedial-lower secondary general (ISCED 2) and upper secondary vocational education and training (ISCED 3)<br>Education is compulsory until the age of 18.   | Age 15/16-18/19/20 (1-2 + 2 /3/4 years)                                      |

### (ii) Admissions criteria

Parents may enrol their children to any kindergarten but kindergartens are only obliged to admit children from their official catchment area. Children can attend a kindergarten from the age of 3 but

<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-, 6- or 8-grade type.

<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 single structure school (*Általános Iskola*), or have difficulties with the acquisition of basic skills (reading/writing/calculus).

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 school. 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. Students may apply for admission to several upper secondary schools. In each school district, there is at least one secondary school that guarantees admission for every student who lives in the district and has completed basic education. Upper secondary schools that have more applicants than study places may select students on the basis of the mid-term and end-of-year marks of the student, the results of nationally organized secondary entrance examinations and an additional oral examination. The written entrance examination tests to secondary education are developed and organised centrally by the Educational Authority.

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 the local government.

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

The minister responsible for education is entitled – within the limits established by the Act on Public Education – to decide yearly about the organization of the school year. Teaching starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of September and ends in the middle of June the following year. It comprises 183 days of teaching in 2011/12. 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 are 45 minutes. 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 typically starts at 8 o'clock and ends about 2 p.m.

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

The Public Education Act defines the maximum number of pupils/students per class as 26 in grades 1-4, 30 in grades 5-8 and 35 grades 9-13. The maximum number of children in kindergarten groups is 25. The Act also defines the average number of pupils in classes.

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 usually remain in the same form (in class and group) in their schools until the end of their studies.

#### (v) Curriculum control and content

Education in kindergarten (*óvoda*) is performed on the basis of the local programme of the kindergarten developed according to the provisions of the National *Óvoda* Core Programme, which is issued by the Government.

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

- The National Core Curriculum is a government decree. It specifies the obligatory and common objectives of the educational/teaching work performed in the general (non-vocational) phase of education. It focuses on the acquisition of lifelong learning key competences. In addition, in vocational education there is a Central programme of vocational subjects issued in accordance with the Act on Vocational Education.
- Framework Curricula, centrally accredited or published by the Minister, based on the National Core Curriculum and serving as a basis for developing Local Curricula.
- 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. Secondary schools have to take into account the requirements of the secondary school leaving exam when drafting their local curricula.

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 programme of the school.

The Minister responsible for education, having consulted the National Public Education Council, makes a decision whether a textbook may be included on the official list of 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 used as 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 start the first grade of primary school at the age of 6 to 8. It is to be expressed in a written assessment whether students have done excellently, well or satisfactorily or need coaching in the middle and at the end of grade one and in the middle of grade two. From the end of grade two, pupils may be assessed based upon the traditional numeric grading (scale 1-5). However, the pedagogical programme of the school may prescribe a different assessment system from grade two. Schools are obliged to include in the pedagogical program how the alternative way of assessment can be converted into numeric grading. The performance and progress of pupils are regularly evaluated by teachers throughout the school year. In the first grade pupils can not fail. At the end of grade two and above pupils may be made to repeat a year.

At the end of upper secondary education in *Gimnázium* and *Szakközépiskola* pupils 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. Schools may supplement the central examination

requirements with local examination requirements as prescribed by their local curriculum (in accordance with the examinations code). Since 2005, it has been a two-tier exam (standard and advanced levels). The standard level examination is administered in the school of the student; while at the advanced level exam the tests are evaluated by external examiners and the oral examinations are administered and evaluated by external subject committees. The advanced level examination gives the opportunity of getting extra scores for entrance into HEIs.

At the end of vocational studies students are required to take a vocational examination to obtain a vocational qualification.

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

Since the end of compulsory education coincides with the end of upper secondary studies at the age of 18, post compulsory education in Hungary primarily involves 1-2 year long (vocational) programmes at post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4). Post-compulsory education is regulated by Act LXXVI of 1993 on Vocational Education and Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education.

### (i) Types of education/institutions

Post-secondary programmes are offered by vocational secondary schools (*szakközépiskola*) in grades 13 and above, for students who passed the upper secondary school leaving examination in grade 12, typically at the age of 18. These *szakközépiskola* offer general and pre-vocational upper secondary education in grades 9-12; grade 12 finishes with a secondary school leaving examination, after which students can stay at the same school for post-secondary programmes (or enter the labour market or enrol to tertiary education) ending in a vocational qualification.

There are a few *szakközépiskola* that only have vocational grades (grade 13 and above) and admit students who have accomplished upper secondary education.

### (ii) Admissions criteria

Admission is conditional on completing upper secondary education. Students may come from a general secondary school (*gimnázium*) or a vocational secondary school (*szakközépiskola*). In case of some occupations, there may be additional health and/or aptitude requirements. Schools may stage an entrance examination but it is not common. It is the school head that decides on the admission of individual students.

In school-based adult training, it is the institution offering the training that decides on admission.

### (iii) Curriculum control and content

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.

There are two important central tools for curriculum control. 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 also Central Programmes (national curricula) for vocational programmes developed in accordance with Examination Requirements.

The local curricula for vocational programmes are developed by schools in accordance with the Examination Requirements and the Central Programmes.

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

The performance and progress of students are regularly evaluated by teachers throughout the school year. Students receive a mid-term and end-of-year progress report in each grade. This is usually an assessment of progress on a 5-point scale, where 5 is the highest mark, 2 is the pass mark and 1 is fail. However, the pedagogical programme of the school may prescribe a different assessment system.

If the programme lasts more than one year, progression to the second year is conditional on fulfilling study requirements by the end of the school year (i.e. obtaining at least a pass mark in each subject). Relevant prior learning obtained in the pre-vocational phase may be recognised, which may reduce the length of a programme.

At the end of vocational studies students are required to take a vocational examination in order to obtain a vocational qualification. A certificate of vocational qualification may be granted to pupils who, at the vocational examination, fulfilled all requirements defined in the Examination 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.

## 6. Higher education

The Higher Education Act currently in force was adopted in December 2005, and, in accordance with the principles of the Bologna process, it introduced the three cycle study structure (BA/BSc, MA/MSc, PhD/DLA). The new multi cycle system offers education at Bachelor level that lasts 6-8 semesters (ISCED 5A, 180-240 ECTS credits), which can be followed by Master level course(s) (ISCED 5A, 60-120 ECTS credits) for another 2-4 semesters. The third cycle provides doctoral training (ISCED 6). Besides multi cycle programmes, there are also a few programmes in some fields of education which remained undivided (10-12 semesters, 300-360 ECTS credits, ISCED 5A), for instance legal and medical studies.

#### (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 institutions/colleges (*főiskola*) and universities (*egyetem*). Previously, colleges used to offer college degrees, while universities used to offer college and university degrees. Today both types of institutions may launch courses in all of the three cycles, but they have to offer Master courses in at least two fields of study and PhD courses in at least one study field in order to be recognised as a university.

Two-year advanced vocational programmes (*felsőfokú szakképzés*, ISCED 5B, 120 ECTS credits) can be launched by both higher education institutions and upper secondary schools, while post-graduate specialisation programmes (*szakirányú továbbképzés* at ISCED level 5A) are launched by higher education institutions for those who are already graduates.

#### (ii) Access

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

Applicants to Bachelor programmes are ranked according to their scores calculated on the basis of secondary school performance (year-end and term-end marks) and the results of the secondary school leaving exam. Some higher education programmes have additional admission requirements (i.e. passing the advanced level secondary school leaving exam, medical examination, aptitude tests).

The prerequisite of admission to a Master degree course is holding a Bachelor degree, while the minimal admission criterion to doctoral courses (*doktori képzés*) is holding a Masters degree.

Tertiary institutions – irrespective of being state owned or not – offer state funded and fee-paying places for applicants. The number of state funded places for each cycle and study field is determined by the government each year. The amount of fees is determined by higher education institutions in accordance with regulations stipulated by government decrees.

### (iii) Qualifications

Students, upon successful completion of a Bachelor or Master degree course and accumulating the necessary quantity of credits, are awarded a BA/BSc (Bachelor) or MA/MSc (Master) degree respectively. As to the PhD and DLA (Doctor of Liberal Arts) diploma, after completion of the doctorate course, the PhD or DLA degree is taken. Students may also apply for the PhD degree award procedure after individual preparation, without having accomplished a doctoral course.

ISCED 5B advanced vocational programmes (*felsőfokú szakképzés*) are organized by higher education institutions or upper secondary schools. Advanced vocational programmes organized by higher education institutions do not provide a higher education degree but 30-60 of their ECTS credits are transferred and recognised for further higher education studies, in relevant Bachelor programmes.

Post-graduate specialisation 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. These committees either recommend pupils to be placed into specialized classes/institutions or propose integrated/inclusive education for students. According to the Act on equal opportunities the parents of students with special educational needs have the right to choose the institution and have a say in the decision-making about where their children are placed. As of the school year of 2008/09, the Act on Public Education obliges parents to take advantage of specialized pedagogical care on the initiative of the teachers.

The number of children and pupils affected decreased by almost 3300 by academic year 2008/09 due to the modifications introduced in the criteria of the definition of target groups; this is a decrease from 1.58 to 1.41 % of all children and pupils participating in pre-school, primary school or secondary school education.

Education for children/pupils with special educational needs may take place in therapeutic educational institutions, conductive education institutions as well as nursery groups or school

classes with differentiated curriculum, or inclusively, in the same nursery group and school class as their non-SEN peers. In the 2008/09 school year, 5 000 children with special educational needs were provided nursery 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.

## 8. Teachers

There are kindergarten teachers (*óvodapedagógus*) in pre-primary education, mostly generalist teachers (*tanító*) in primary education and subject teachers in lower and upper secondary education (*tanár*). A BA programme in infant and early childhood education (*csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő*) was launched in 2009, which is an important step ahead, since before that there was no higher education programme preparing for work with children aged 0-3 in crèches.

The initial teacher education of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers (ISCED 0) is provided by a 180 ECTS Bachelor programme, primary school teachers (ISCED 1) participate in a 4-year-long 240 ECTS Bachelor degree programme, while ISCED 2 and 3 teacher qualifications can be acquired solely in Master degree programmes. In special needs education there is a 4-year-long Bachelor degree programme and a 1.5-year-long Master programme.

The five major branches of initial teacher education can be distinguished with the following initial teacher education programmes:

| Types of teachers:   | Their initial teacher education programs:   |
|--|---|
| 1. Infant and early childhood educator of children aged 0-3          | BA level, 3 years, 180 ECTS   |
| 2. Kindergarten teacher – ISCED 0                                    | BA level, 3 years, 180 ECTS   |
| 3. Primary school teacher (of grades 1-4 of single structure school) | BA level, 4 years, 240 ECTS   |
| 4. Secondary school teachers:  | Bachelor studies are for acquiring subject knowledge, the Master is pedagogical oriented; Obligatory 30 ECTS school practice at the end of the Master |
| 4.1. Subject teachers of general subjects,                           | BA/BSc of 180 ECTS + MA of 150 ECTS, obligatory 2 subject orientation   |
| 4.2. Arts and VET teachers   | BA/BSc of 180-210 + MA of 120 ECTS, 1 subject orientation   |
| 5. Special needs educator and therapist ( <i>gyógypedagógus</i> )    | BA level, 4 years, 240 ECTS + MA level 1.5 years, 90 ECTS   |

An education science Master programme provides continuation to all teachers with a BA, while in the third cycle education science PhD programmes are also available.

Participation in in-service training at least every seven years is mandatory for teachers as part of their continuous professional development.

Teachers are typically public employees. In higher education a general condition to employment is an MA or equivalent degree.

*Unrevised English*

Information provided by the Hungarian Eurydice Unit.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult EURYPEDIA which provides descriptions of educational systems and policies in the Eurydice network countries: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia>