Fundamental Principles

The new Fundamental Law \[1\] of 2011 does not change the fundamental rights relating to education. It declares the freedom of conscience and religion, the freedom of expression, freedom of scientific research and teaching, the right of national minorities to preserve their cultural identity and to receive education in their mother tongues.

It declares that all Hungarian citizens have the right to education, and the state guarantees this right to all of its citizens by extending and generalising public education, providing free and compulsory basic education, free and generally available upper-secondary education, and higher education available to every person according to his or her abilities.

It declares that Hungary ensures fundamental rights to every person without any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status.

It acknowledges that every child has the right to the protection and care required for his or her proper development and that the parents have the right to choose the type of upbringing they deem to fit for their children. At the same time, it declares that the parents are obliged to look after their underage children, including the provision of schooling for their children.

The essence of these constitutional rights from the educational point of view is that the state ensures its citizens basic (i.e. primary and lower secondary) education on a free but compulsory basis, and it further guarantees that upper-secondary and higher education should be accessible to everybody in accordance with their capabilities, and participants will be granted financial support. Thus, education is a public service provided by the state at all levels by maintaining its institutions and creating the necessary legislative framework. The right to education means, beyond scientific and artistic freedom, the freedom of learning and teaching as well. The freedom of learning involves the right to choose one's preferred educational institution and its faculty, and programme(s), and the right to establish educational institutions. Thus, no state monopoly may be enforced in this area, and churches, NGOs, foundations, and private individuals may freely decide to establish and operate educational institutions. Those establishing such an institution are free to specify their institution's educational profile, the religious or ideological orientation or lack of such, as well as the major principles of education.

The right to freedom of conscience and religion, the right to freedom of expression, the separation of the state and churches, and the right of national and ethnic minorities to use their mother tongue and to receive education in their mother tongue are key constitutional rights and fundamental principles as regards to education.

There is a single obligation on the constitutional level related to education, and that is compulsory
education. This means that law obliges parents (residing in Hungary irrespective of their citizen status) to ensure that their children of mandatory school age attend school.

**Educational Laws**

The operation of the education and training system is regulated by sectoral laws.

**General Education System**

The objective of the general education system (Act CXC of 2011 on National General Education [2]) is to promote the harmonious spiritual, physical and intellectual development of children and young people while respecting their skills, knowledge, proficiency, education and their age characteristics. The primary task of general education is to raise and educate responsible citizens who are able to live a moral, independent life, and can reconcile private interests with public interests. Another aim of general education is to prevent social exclusion and support talent promotion through educational mechanisms.

The tasks of general education are also to support pre-school early childhood development, to take into account the special needs of children and pupils with special educational needs, to help their integration, learning and behavioral difficulties, and their ability to adapt to their individual abilities, thus to create the fuller extent in their social inclusion opportunities.

The school system of general education can be interoperable in accordance with the requirements declared by the law, thereby the school system can be transferred to another school or school type even during the school year.

The content unit of general education and the inter-school interoperability is ensured by the National Core Curriculum [3] (hereinafter referred to as NAT), which defines the content of education and sets mandatory provisions for the organization of education. The content requirements of general studies in vocational education and training are stated in separate statutes, which are taking into account the provisions of the NAT [3]. The framework assures the implementation of those provided in NAT [3]. The framework includes the aims of education and training, the subject system, the subjects, content of the subject, the requirements of subjects for one or two class years, furthermore the tasks of developing the cross-curricular knowledge and the capability development. It also specifies the mandatory and recommended time frame for fulfilling all the requirements.

**Vocational Education and Training System**

The aim of the vocational education and training system is to ensure that the vocational qualifications (sought and recognized by the labor market and the economy) can be obtained by providing the principle of equal opportunities for students and young people. In Hungary, the acquisition of the first and second qualification, which are recognized by the state, are insured by the state, for free, within the school system frames. In addition to preparing for a complex vocational aptitude test, the vocational training system at school is responsible for preparing the students for the successful career prospects and for educating them regarding their age-specific characteristics.

State-recognized qualifications are included in the National Qualifications Register [4] (OKJ). The OKJ (regularly revised and updated) which is issued in a government decree contains the basic data on state-recognized professional qualifications (type, level, study area of the qualification, classification of the group of profession, qualification required for entry, etc.). The latest version of the National Qualifications Register has been published in 2016, with 760 (full, partial and follow-up) vocational qualifications in 22 profession groups.
The detailed professional and examination requirements for the relevant qualifications are stated in ministerial decrees issued by the minister responsible for the relevant vocational qualification. The vocational examination requirements include the competences and the expected learning outcomes from work practices for each module.

The National Module Map contains the list and the description of the modules of the vocational qualifications which are included in the current National Qualifications Register, as well as it contains the links between qualifications. It provides information on the professional requirements-modules for each vocational qualification, and a detailed description of the qualifications, skills and competences per module.

**Higher Education System**

According to the [Act on Higher Education](https://example.com) (Act CXIV of 2011), the core activities of higher education are education, scientific research and artistic work. The higher education system encompasses higher vocational education, bachelor education, master’s degree, doctoral training and further specialised training. The educational tasks of tertiary education are provided only by higher education institutions. The aim of higher education institutions is to find, recognize and promote professional, scientific, artistic and sport activities for those who are capable of delivering superior, beyond the curriculum requirements performances, and for the disadvantaged or cumulative disadvantaged students.

Hungary has an advanced higher education system, consisting of 38 universities and 29 colleges. Most of the universities are state-run, 9 are private or ecclesiastical. The difference between universities and colleges is primarily the size: universities have a large number of teachers, students and non-teaching staff, while colleges are relatively small, with few instructors and students. (7 major colleges have recently been classified by the government as a university of applied sciences). Colleges are mainly small private or church institutions, most of them carry out the theological trainings of different churches and denominations.

**National Policies**

The Parliament drafted new educational acts in 2011: the [Act on Public Education](https://example.com) (Act CXC of 2011), the [Act on Higher Education](https://example.com) (Act CCIV of 2011) and the [Act on Vocational Training](https://example.com) (Act CLXXXVII of 2011). These Acts significantly transform the organisation, maintenance, financing and governance of education. A number of decrees supplement the above Acts: some are issued by the government and some by the minister responsible for education.

The government, recognising the utmost importance of pre-school education in broadening the chances of disadvantaged children, aims at ensuring and at the same time makes kindergarten education obligatory for all children aged 3 near their place of residence from September 2014. Kindergarten education and care is already compulsory from age 5. Education is compulsory until age 16. The new [Public Education Act](https://example.com) eradicates the decentralised school maintenance and curricular regulation. The system before 2012, in which the municipalities of close to 3000 settlements took care of their schools and quality of education depending on their wealth and expertise proved to be financially and professionally unsustainable and resulted in major inequalities due to the great differences in their size. From 2013, law provides for the establishment of district level school maintenance authorities to organise basic and upper-secondary education and county authorities to organise vocational training and pedagogical assistance services (speech therapy, expert committees, education counselling services, etc.). Thus, local education administration duties are transferred from the municipalities to the school maintenance authorities. Further restructuring of the state maintained institution system is still in progress, the new system entered into force on 1 January 2017. The
modified institution maintenance system reduces the role and the authority of the decision-makers and controllers of the central level, and instead of tanker districts, it established 60 new territorial maintenance centres of school districts.

The public education policy and development strategy is geared towards responding to the specific problems and challenges of public education in line with the Europe 2020 priorities. The policy objectives of public education are as follows:

- to facilitate the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning,
- priority support for disadvantaged students, early recognition of learning difficulties and the use of personalized pedagogical approaches,
- high-quality pedagogical work, increasing the financial and social esteem of the teacher’s profession, making the teacher’s career attractive,
- to ensure the continuous professional development of the teachers through the operation of the professional advisory, pedagogical-professional control and teacher qualification system,
- the consistency of content regulation in terms of competences, educational goals and knowledge to be developed,
- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of education and teaching work, guaranteeing fairness,
- increasing the volume and improving the quality of pre-school early childhood education and targeted early intervention programs.

In the area of vocational training and adult education, the strategic goals and the direction of changes are based on the new concept of vocational training and adult education, the strategy for employment policy development for the 2014-2020 period, and the policy strategy for lifelong learning as ex-ante. Legislation concepts focus on structural, organizational, and content-related changes in the governance of sectors. The objectives of the concept of “VET on the Service of the Economy” are the following:

- training of workers with modern skills and well-trained and reliable employees with a broad range of basic knowledge,
- the development of basic skills and key competences as well as the useful and reliable knowledge of the labor market,
- to strengthen the practice-oriented dual training and to renew the content requirements (professional and examination requirements, framework curricula).

The adult education section of the Strategy for the development of employment policies (2014-2020) emphasizes the implementation of developments: improving adaptability of employers, workers and the active population and supporting adult training programs for competency development.

Higher education policy aims at building a higher education system that meets both the needs of the economy and the labor market, the expectations arising from the aging society, research, development and innovation. The aim of the reform of higher education is to enable all students to develop their own talents, skills and knowledge by allowing them to enter the labor market through training. To this end, the training needs to give what the real labor market needs. In a broad and high quality, it is necessary to make available the knowledge that is a good basis for fulfilling the domestic and international economy, in other words, the skills required by society and the economy must be synchronized with the knowledge provided by the undergraduate. In order to improve the competitive position of disadvantaged regions and less developed regions, a new institutional form,
a community college, was introduced. By enrolling the Community College's training model, the communities in the backward regions can also gain access to the competitive knowledge that provides them with first-rate local prosperity.

Research and development and innovation are decisive for the future of higher education and our competitiveness, so it is important to pay attention to the fact that domestic higher education shall also stand in the international educational and research sphere. To this end, it is necessary, inter alia, to increase the capacity of doctoral training and at the same time to increase the rate of completion. The system must show the expectations of economic partners and companies, while ensuring that the SME sector has access to the research and development and innovation results of higher education institutions.