Education sector innovation strategy in Hungary

On 22 September a national conference was held in Budapest, Hungary on a proposal for the country’s *education sector innovation strategy* (ESIS proposal). The document\(^1\) has been elaborated in the framework of a two-year long project co-funded by the European Union, and it has been directly connected to and influenced by CERI’s work on the innovation strategy of OECD. The project has been implemented by the *Hungarian Institute for Educational Research & Development* (HIERD) which is an agency founded and operated by the Hungarian ministry of education (*Ministry of National Resources*). The project has been a small component of a large scale educational development program entitled “21st Century Public Education” which is part of the National Development Program of the government. The conference was attended by Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin who informed the audience about the relevant work of OECD and could also give feedback to the Hungarian participants about the ESIS proposal from and OECD perspective.

The ESIS proposal has been based on 15 analytical background reports. Five of them have explored innovation mechanisms in various other sectors (car manufacturing, IT, biotechnology, health, and business consultancy) searching for what can be used from the experiences of these in education. Five other reports have analysed specific areas and aspects of educational innovation, such as

- Knowledge networks in two disciplinary areas (science and foreign language teaching)
- Educational research and innovation in South-East Asia
- The role of large multinational IT firms in educational development
- The global state of the art of educational research and development
- Innovation in the private sector in education

An overall evaluation of the system of educational research, development, innovation and knowledge management in Hungary has been executed, including the preparation of an expert report by Tom Schuller, former director of CERI, based partly on CERI’s methodology of assessing educational R&D systems.\(^2\) This process included the creation of a *knowledge map* of the education sector, based on a large scale questionnaire survey, identifying knowledge sources and gaps in 10 key knowledge areas and assessing the quality and the relevance of available knowledge.

The ESIS proposal presented at the final conference has defined 5 priorities areas and has proposed 19 specific interventions in each of them. The proposal also includes a detailed implementation chapter. The priority areas suggested have been as follows:

- Developing the institutional and regulatory framework
- Developing the human conditions of innovation and the innovation potential of people
- Assuring quality, relevance, efficiency

\(^1\) See its English language executive summary here [http://tamop311.ofi.hu/szakmai-program/8-1/8-1-executive](http://tamop311.ofi.hu/szakmai-program/8-1/8-1-executive)

\(^2\) See Tom Schuller’s report here: [http://tamop311.ofi.hu/szakmai-program/8-1](http://tamop311.ofi.hu/szakmai-program/8-1)
• Improving the production, mediation and practical application of knowledge
• Innovation and technology

The process of the elaboration of the ESIS proposal has been conceived as a *framework for dialogue* among the many partners interested in improving the sectoral innovation system of education, such as practitioners in the different sub-systems of education, government officials, educational researchers, developers, experts and consultants, the private actors of the “learning industry” and innovation policy specialist. During the running of the project several hundred people were interviewed or consulted and the final conference was preceded by 13 thematic discussion forums focusing on the themes of the background studies. The participants of the final conference discussed the problems of the education sector innovation system in thematic groups representing the three “triple helix” perspectives: (1) the research/development community, (2) the government and (3) the practitioner/user community. An English language discussion group was also organised to provide an opportunity for the three invited international experts (*Maruja Guiterrez Diaz*, *Tom Schuller*, *Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin*) to reflect on the ESIS proposal and to discuss it with the Hungarian participants.

The conclusions of the conference that might be relevant for the international community can be summarized as follows:

- it is possible to identify a *sectoral innovation system* in the education sector, and to analyse and to assess its performance

- a well developed sectoral innovation system contributes significantly to the *performance of the education system* and to the achievement of *key public policy goals* in the education sector

- there is a need for a *coherent government strategy* to develop the sectoral innovation system of education

- applying the most recent approaches of *innovation research* and *innovation policy thinking* to the education sector can help the emergence of such a strategy

- the development of an education sectoral innovation strategy is a good *framework to bring together* the key partners interested in improving the quality of education

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