

Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning
OECD RNFIL Project
Country Background Report – Hungary



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Similarly to other Central Eastern European countries, over the last decade and a half Hungary has undergone changes of historic intensity and significance. These changes have taken place simultaneously in almost all areas of the economy, political system, education, the legal system and in everyday life. These significant changes have only been possible through intensive and widespread learning, which in one way or another has affected practically the whole population. Besides the significant expansion of formal learning, Hungarian society has been presented with serious challenges in the field of non-formal and informal learning, in terms of setting up, becoming familiar with and using new institutions, as well as becoming familiar with new technology.

In spite of all this, no comprehensive analysis has been carried out in Hungary of the social context of non-formal and informal learning, the way the institutions in question function, or the results of the experimental steps taken so far. Likewise, there is no analysis at our disposal, which scrutinises the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and the policy framework for encouraging learning in adulthood. In this respect, the following report could be seen as the first attempt at such an analysis and as such, it has only been able to draw to a very modest extent on previous analysis and sources related to this area.

In order to make it easier to understand this report, it is necessary to begin by commenting that in Hungary's case, it is not yet possible to speak of a functioning nationwide system – based on uniform principles and procedures – for recognising non-formal and informal learning. At present, partly as a result of European Union initiatives, several policy documents have raised the objective of recognition of non-formal learning, in relation to Lifelong Learning programmes. However, practical initiatives exist only on a very modest scale: implementation is at an initial stage or procedures are only used to a very limited extent (for example, there is no recognition relating to assessment of prior learning). Additionally, there are procedures, built on international standards (e.g. the ECDL examination system or foreign language proficiency examinations), which represent successful implementation of recognition of non-formal learning, even if such procedures are somewhat isolated cases. In conclusion, it is not possible to describe Hungarian practice in terms of a functioning, uniform system for recognition, but rather in terms of the co-existence of several kinds of approaches and solutions. The fact that this report is somewhat fragmentary reflects this situation.

It is characteristic of the Hungarian educational system that there is an over-emphasis on formal education and qualifications acquired through formal education. Recognition of non-formal learning is one possible way of making the system more open and more flexible. At the same time, it does not seem that changing existing educational practices and the thinking associated with them will be an easy or swift process. This report attempts to give an overview of all initiatives, which in terms of their aspirations or content can be seen as implementing the RNFIL approach.

It is the intention of those responsible for the OECD RNFIL project and the experts involved to endeavour to make good use of the reports prepared and the experience gained in the course of the project. Such reports and experience should be used to initiate and broaden discussions in Hungary, regarding the role of learning acquired in a non-formal context, particularly in the interests of further developing efforts made so far.

The primary objective of this document is to enable non-Hungarian experts to become acquainted with the main characteristics of the Hungarian system. However due to the constraints arising from the structure set down for this report and due to the scope of the subject matter, it is not possible to cover the basic institutions of the Hungarian education system in detail. For this reason, the reader's attention is drawn to certain information resources available in English on the Internet. These

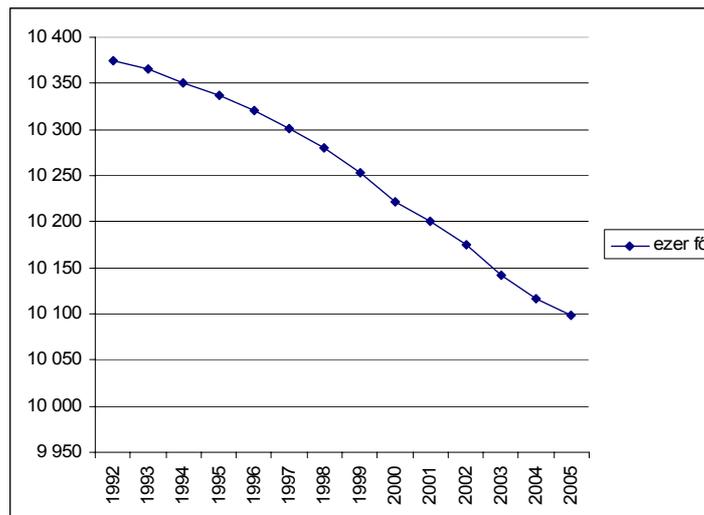
resources provide useful supplementary and background information on the educational institutions, governance and changes which have taken place over recent years (see Bibliography, e.g. Education in Hungary, 2003 or Adult Education in Hungary, 2004).

1. Contextual factors

1.1. Demographic change

The population of Hungary has been declining since the 1980s. In many respects, the demographic situation, which has developed over past decades, is similar to demographic changes taking place in developed European countries. However, there are some characteristics, which are more in keeping with those, typical for Central and Eastern Europe. In 2005, life expectancy for men was 68 years, compared with an average for the European Union of 73. The rate of live births in Hungary is close to that of EU member countries; however, the death rate is the third highest in the EU, after Bulgaria and Latvia. Hungary's natural population decline is compensated for in part by immigration: immigration is higher than emigration by 17.000 people, compensating for some 45% of the decline in population. Consequently, on 1 January 2006, the population was 10.077.000, which was 21.000 lower than the previous year.

Figure 1 Demographic change in Hungary, 1992-2005 (thousand persons)



Source: CSO (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) census data

The decline in population has reached a stage where negative consequences are to be expected for the employment market and social security system, especially the pension system.

There have been two significant demographic peaks in Hungary. The first was during the 1950s, at a time when policies were implemented with the intention of increasing the population; the impact of these policies continued into the 1970s. Both these demographic peaks and the present decline in the younger age group have had a very significant effect on the education system, and they continue to do so. While between 1990 and 1992, an average of 123.000 children were born annually, between 1993 and 1995, this figure was only 112.000 and during the second half of the decade, it was less than 100.000. The lowest number of live births was in 1999, with less than 94,000. Certain age groups are expected to continue to decline quite significantly and the effect of this it already making itself felt in secondary and higher education.

1.1.a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

According to surveys, in the year 2000 60% of secondary school leavers commenced further studies in the same year as they took their secondary school leaving examination. The period spent making the transition from education to the workplace has increased and it is typically between 8 – 10 years. Many higher education students draw out their years in college or university. According to researchers, one of the reasons for this is that increasing, students work alongside their studies: two thirds of 20-24-year-olds combine their studies with some kind of paid work, as do 10% of 20-24-year-olds. There has been an increase in the number of people breaking off their studies, returning to study from the workplace or studying in conjunction with full-time employment. According to 2005 figures on the breakdown by age of higher education students, 12% of new entrants to non-university higher vocational training (i.e. vocational training which takes place within the framework of higher education but where a degree is not awarded) were 25 years old or over and most of them began to study after they had been in employment of some kind. In the case of college education, one third of entrants were 25 years old or over, while in the case of university education, 12% were 25 years old or over. Some 64.7% of participants in postgraduate specialist training belonged to the 25-39-year-old age group and 26.4% of them were 40 years old or over.

The main reason for the expansion of higher education was that the limits previously imposed on numbers had been abolished. However in European terms, the scale of this expansion cannot be described as extreme: between 1990/1991 and 2001/2002, the total number of students increased by 232%. This included an increase in a 187% increase in the number of full-time students and a 210% increase in the number of students enrolled on part-time (evening courses), correspondence courses and distance learning courses (which had been introduced in the meantime). However, the greatest expansion was in postgraduate specialist training, where the number of participants increased six and a half times.

Table 1 Changes in the numbers of students in higher education (2001-2006, applicants' first choice, N)

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
2001	86,027	62,852	148,879
2002	91,022	73,191	164,213
2003	89,294	70,570	159,864
2004	98,780	68,302	167,082
2005	94,663	55,164	149,827
2006	87,987	44,540	132,527

Source: Hungarian National Higher Education Information Centre database (www.felvi.hu)

At the same time, the increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education – in certain segments – was not related to the needs of the labour market. As a result, a few years later there was a sudden rise in the number of unemployed graduates. Although graduate unemployment could still be considered low in comparison with other European countries, the government reacted quickly, bringing in measures to limit the number of entrants – measures that were justified with reference to the labour market. From 2007, these measures reduced the number of state-financed places in higher education by almost 10%. (2006: 62.000 state-financed places;

2007: 56.000 state-financed places) and restructured the relative size of the different disciplines (by reducing the number of places available for humanities, social sciences and agriculture). With regard to the structure of higher education, if international comparisons are made then there is an over-emphasis on college and university in Hungary, in comparison with post-secondary and scientific training.

Table 2 Volumes in tertiary education

Denomination	1990/1991	1995/1996	2004/2005	2005/2006
Institutions	77	90	69	71
Students	108.,376	195.512	421.520	424.161

Source: CSO education data (preliminary data), 2005/2006

Selection in the Hungarian education system shows up strongly in higher education; entrants to and participants in higher education do not represent the overall profile of Hungarian society proportionately. The expansion of higher education has taken place alongside a decline in the 18 – 24-year-old age group. However, this expansion has not resulted in a significant increase in access to higher education or a fairer distribution of the opportunity to continue studying. This expansion in higher education has favoured the children of those who have completed secondary education at the very least, as a greater proportion of this group has been able to access higher education. In cases where parents only have a low level of school education, further study continues to mean entry to vocational training. Just 3% of children whose parents have only completed primary school attend higher education institutions.

Hardly any detailed data has been collected regarding the social profile of higher education students in Hungary.

1.1.b) What are the demographic change (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training

The recent increase of the minimum school leaving age to 18, as well as the delay in specialised vocational training (so that it does not begin until the age of 16) represents a fundamental change in the internal structure of vocational training, but at the same time it does not effect the age profile.

The increase of participation rates is not only receiving ever more emphasis in employment policy, but within Hungarian education policy too. The government is less and less willing to support education in cases where participants will not find a job easily afterwards. The increase in the number of participants has also contributed to a need for restructuring. According to some experts, as the changeover to the Bologna system is made, education at the first level will provide a solution to the challenges raised by the increase in participants, since it will provide a generally useful, “non-specialised education”. This will make it possible to avoid a situation where students graduate with specialised knowledge, which is not in demand on the labour market. Specialisation can follow later at the master’s level, through postgraduate specialist training or through other, non-formal learning. The latter will in all probability be accompanied by expansion in the non-school system education sector.

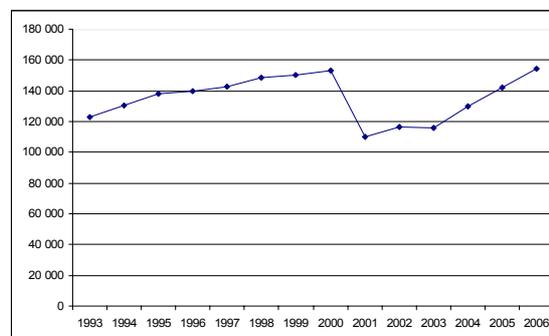
According to some demographic forecasts, it is to be expected that the willingness of members of middle and higher social groups to have children will continue to fall, while the number of children born in less educated, poorer sections of society will stabilise at a fairly high level, or even increase. Forecasts have been made for the size of the Roma minority and its proportion in terms of the Hungarian population as a whole. (Due to concerns regarding the rights of the individual, there is no information in the public domain at present regarding the Roma population, which makes drafting public policy to assist them more difficult.) Estimates place the size of the Roma population at 450.000 – 600.000, representing 4.5%-6% of the general population; some estimates are higher. According to demographic forecasts, in the next 50 years, the percentage of Roma in the population as a whole will increase from the present 5% to 11%. Meanwhile, the percentage of Roma in the 15-19-year-old age group will reach 23%. This process will bring about a change in the profile of the entrants to the education system and the future effects of this will make themselves felt across the whole of that system – including in higher-level vocational training and higher education (table 5/a in Annexe 3).

The older population (the over forties) are hardly present at all in formal (institutional) educational and training programmes (Annexe 3 Fig. 6 and 7). The age of participants in training outside of the school system has increased considerably (Annexe 3 table 20). The significant dropout rates, which have been characteristic in secondary vocational education for some time, could potentially lead to an increase in the demand for education providing a second opportunity for adults.

1.1.c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

In international terms, the proportion of immigrants in relation to the whole population is low – 1.5% in total. Despite the fact that immigration is showing a gradual increase, it has not presented the education and qualification systems with a challenge. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants come from Europe: mainly from Romania, the Ukraine, and former Yugoslavia and from the member states of the European Union, including Germany. There is also a Chinese community of some 10.000-15.000, mainly consisting of business people. The primary source of immigrants is the largest minority in Europe – the almost 1.5 million-strong Hungarian ethnic group living in Romania. For this reason, the usual linguistic and cultural difficulties associated with immigration have been avoided to some extent. Significant numbers of foreigners are employed as casual (and illegal) workers in particular sectors (e.g. in agriculture and the construction industry), but there is not yet any explicit demand from these workers to have their qualifications or skills formally recognised.

Figure 2 The number of alien residents in Hungary 1993-2006



Source: CSO, Migration, 2005

It is generally anticipated that with EU expansion, the Hungarians living outside the country's borders will come to Hungary in large numbers and that they will represent a potential additional workforce.

1.1.d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change?

Admission procedures have changed substantially over recent years as a result of reform of the secondary school leaving certificate in public education. The structure, purpose and requirements for the school leaving examination have moved from a knowledge-oriented, individual evaluation based on a list of topics, towards a general test of education (examined at two levels). As a consequence, there have been fundamental changes to the requirements for entering higher education. The earlier university admissions system point calculations were based on university entrance examinations and results achieved over 11-12 years of public education. Now, the number of points required for admission is calculated instead from results from public education, along with results achieved in the new school leaving examinations. With the abolition of the written and oral entrance examinations organised by higher education institutions, (which had become increasingly difficult to administer, due to the pressure of numbers), the significance of results achieved during secondary school has increased.

The admission procedure also lays down criteria for extra points to be awarded for other knowledge, such as knowledge of a foreign language (the number of additional points depends on the level); for previously acquired specialist qualification at an advanced level or higher vocational qualifications; for third place or higher in the Hungarian Scientific and Innovation Contest for Youth, in competitions held by the National Conference of Secondary School Science Student Societies and in National Arts Studies Competitions; for third place or higher in Olympic sports events at World and European Championships and at national championships and so on. However, all of the above have to be formally recognised in order for the additional points to be granted (with state-recognised language proficiency examination certificates, diplomas and testimonials).

In certain fields, competencies, which applicants have acquired through non-formal or informal learning, are also taken into account by the admissions procedure. In the case of arts courses or courses in fields of study which relate in some respect to the arts, an "aptitude test" is carried out by the educational institution during the admissions procedure, in order to assess applicants' practical skills. In the course of the admissions procedure, evaluation of portfolios and / or competencies under examination conditions takes place. The situation is similar in the case of applicants for postgraduate specialist training; for these applicants, proof of the necessary professional experience and professional competencies is among the admissions requirements for certain disciplines. For example, in the case of postgraduate specialist training for architects, applicants are required to submit a portfolio of their work and to carry out a planning task set by the institution to which they are applying; they also have to complete planning tasks at the admissions test.

With regard to the higher education system, there is an opportunity to transfer from non-university higher vocational training (which takes place in part at secondary institutions) to undergraduate courses (bachelor courses). The way the current rules are interpreted, those wishing to transfer are required to have 30-60 credits¹ recognised. It seems that this kind of

¹ One credit is equivalent to 30 contact hours. For a detailed description of the Hungarian credit system, see section 3.1.

recognition also appears in state regulations for transfer from bachelor level to master's level and from master's level to the doctorate level. In those fields of study where aptitude tests for practical skills are given (basically arts and sports science), recognition of such skills has been granted for some time within the framework of examinations tasks set by the higher education institution. In other fields of study, however, higher education institutions are not in a position to take non-formal learning into account during the admissions procedure.

Up until now, fee-paying courses for mature students (over 23 years old) have represented an important source of income for higher education institutions. These students have sought access to higher education qualifications, but instead of doing so within the full time sector financed by the government, they have done so alongside their employment (correspondence courses). This group is made up of people who were originally not admitted to university or college, or had not intended to study further. This group seems to become more diffuse however, due the large amount of state and private higher education courses being offered to them. As a result, higher education institutions need to seek out new markets. This necessity will increase the practice of assessing and recognising non-formal and informal learning, since by using this procedure; it will be possible for some universities and colleges to admit students who do not have formal qualifications.

1.2. Internationalisation

1.2.a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

No comprehensive government documentation has been published, dealing with training for the integration of immigrants (see the introduction to section 1.1).

The number of immigrants settling in Hungary is low. A breakdown of those with immigration permits or permanent residence permits shows that they are pre-dominantly Hungarian speakers who have moved to Hungary from Romania. Culturally speaking, such immigrants are very similar to the general Hungarian population and they do not face a language gap. In the case of further study, recognition and acceptance of their existing qualifications takes place on the basis of bi-lateral agreements between the two countries and decisions made by the university itself.

1.2.b) Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

The number of foreign students taking part in tertiary education – in one form or another – is increasing. The rate of increase has been slowing since 2001.

Table 3 Participation of foreign students in tertiary education in Hungary

<i>Year</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
Number of foreign students	6,636	8,869	9,904	11,242	11,783	12,226	12,913

Source: OECD statistics

Since the year 2000, the proportion of students at university or college and new entrants to full-time higher education courses who have acquired their previous qualifications abroad has remained a steady 3-4%. Some 60% of foreign students come from countries bordering Hungary and speak Hungarian as their first language. For a significant number of them, their studies are a pre-cursor to permanent residency in Hungary. Those foreign students taking part in fee-paying

courses are usually pursuing their students in another language. Most of them are studying in the fields of medicine or economics, or they are studying technical disciplines.

The higher education administration and institutions in Hungary are implementing the developments set in motion by the Bologna Process with some reluctance. One of the characteristics of this reluctance is the low level of innovation. The education administration has not drafted an implementation plan for the changes, although legal provision for these changes has been made. For this reason, the internationalisation of higher education is not a systematic plan-based process, but rather a random one, based on a combination of institutional drives and tendencies (driven by individual, personal ambitions). The level of mobility both into and out of the country is below the EU average (in the 2004/2005 academic year, 0.52% of Hungarian students took part in European mobility programmes; Hungary's participants represented 1.6% of all EU students, while the overall number of students in Hungary represents 2.5% of the total number of students in the EU; the number of Erasmus students coming to Hungary has trebled in the last 5 years, but it is still only 1305 – 0.31% of the total number of students)².

Integrated courses and joint degrees appear only sporadically and are most common for economics or technical disciplines. Joint development and research projects and small-scale exchanges of educational know-how are more common. Fee-paying courses run in languages other than Hungarian at the medical universities and at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics represent more significant international activities. Apart from these, there is Central European University (CEU), or rather the CEU Business School, which has been running international courses since its inception as a private university. With this exception, significant international presence is most likely to be the result of foreign higher education institutions setting up a “subsidiary” as it were, at Hungarian universities and colleges.

Early in the summer of 2006, the Ministry for Education and Culture set up a working group to create a concept for a national qualification framework, which would be linked to EQF. The concept was drawn up and at present, it is undergoing a process of public and professional consultation. According to the ministry's plans – which have been agreed with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour – detailed drafting and implementation of the National Qualification Framework, NQF (OKKR by its Hungarian acronym) plan will begin at the beginning of next year. This objective is also supported by a number of objectives from the National Development Plan Hungary³ measures currently being finalised.

The ECTS, with its cumulative and transfer function was implemented in its entirety in Hungarian higher education by way of a government decree announced in 1998. This laid down a four-year schedule for higher education institutions to introduce a credit system, which was to comply with the parameters of the government decree (and with ECTS). In September 2002, 50% of the institutions began to introduce the credit system for their new intake of students. The remaining institutions began to do so in the autumn of 2003. Today, the overwhelming majority of students in higher education in Hungary study within the framework of the credit system. The government has reviewed the credit system's operation and impact on several occasions; the most recent representative, nationwide survey was carried out in 2005. The results of this survey show that the credit system is unable to provide proper support for student mobility, neither between faculties or between Hungarian higher education institutions, nor in an international context. This means that not only is international mobility low, but so is the amount of mobility

² Source: Tempus Public Foundation Annual Report 2005, TKA, Budapest June 2006 <http://www.tka.hu>

³ Hungary became a member of the European Union in 2004, and in doing so became eligible to apply for convergence funds.

between Hungarian universities themselves, even though it is possible to use the credit system. According to the results of surveys based on information submitted by students⁴, some 26% of students who completed part of their studies abroad wished to have the credits they had accumulated abroad recognised by their home institution. Of these, only 21% were able to achieve this completely. Another 36% were only able to have some of their credits recognised and another 36% found that none of their credits were recognised. Of those who would like to continue their studies abroad, 82% would like to have their credits recognised upon their return (National Credit Monitoring Project 2005).

The Learning Agreements and Transcripts of Record specified in the ECTS framework and based on feedback given in regular consultation exercises and conferences organised by the Tempus Public Foundation, acting as an agent on behalf of the Erasmus Institutional Coordinators are not used extensively, although it is possible for these to be accepted. Higher education teachers in Hungary are not always willing to accept credits which have been awarded for knowledge acquired in another institution, insisting that the students should participate in their own lessons and fulfil the requirements they themselves have set, in order to receive the credits. Therefore, it regularly happens that students returning from studies at another institution essentially have to repeat these studies.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee has to give an opinion on the bachelor (BSc and BA) and masters (MSc and MA) courses set up by higher education institutions and the Ministry for Education and Culture has to approve them. One new aspect of undergraduate education is that it provides more theoretical knowledge than the previous college courses did and more practical knowledge than the previous university courses. For example, undergraduates are required to take part in an internship, over a continuous period of six months. Undergraduate study typically takes 6 or 8 semesters and during that time, students have to amass at least 180-240 credits. With the credits acquired as an undergraduate, it is possible to progress to a master's course (MSc or MA) and depending on the type of credits or with the help of additional credits, it is also possible to choose a different discipline to study at the master level. (As yet, there is no information to draw on with regard to changing disciplines, since the first BSc/BA courses began in 2004 and they will only become standard in 2006.) Higher education institutions which are starting master's courses may announce entrance examinations, but if the applicant already has specified academic achievements and results, then entrance examinations may be dispensed with. Setting the rules remains within the competency of the institution.

One of the characteristics of the higher education reforms being carried out within the framework of the Bologna Process is that these reforms will change the financial rules affecting universities. As a consequence, it can be expected that economic factors will have more effect than previously. This fact, along with the demographic trough can be expected to compel the higher education institutions to find new "markets". One way in which they can do this is to broaden their international connections, another is to recognise competencies acquired through non-formal and informal means, in order to acquire access to new target groups.

With regard to certificates and degrees from outside Hungary, recognition for the purpose of further study and comparison with classes of degree in Hungary are exclusively a matter for the higher education institution itself, as specified in Act C of 2001 on the recognition of foreign

⁴ National Credit Monitoring Survey 2005, Ministry of Education and Culture, The Gallup Organisation Hungary.
<http://www.kreditlap.hu/kredit/jelenleg/monitoring2005-2006.asp>

certificates and degrees. It is also purely up to the discretion of the institution to which the application for further study is submitted, whether uncompleted studies (qualifications) are to be taken into account. The part to be played by faculty decision makers within the framework of the Bologna Process is being examined at present.

The concept of developing and organising courses based on results which are output-controlled by design (formulated in terms of competencies) is completely alien to the Hungarian higher education tradition. This is a tradition based on Humboldtian values and is fundamentally designed in terms of processes and content. Teachers and members of professional associations alike reacted with consternation and incomprehension, when they were first confronted with the new concept, (for example, by ministers for education, at a meeting on the Bologna Process, which was held at Bergen in the summer of 2005, when the framework for setting up the European Higher Education Area was accepted, and when they were confronted with the first regulations at home in Hungary). Hungarian practice has been to endeavour to achieve the principles of comparability/equivalency, transparency and transferability in practice, by comparing and harmonising the topics on the syllabus, number of contact hours and academic content. This approach finds it difficult to accommodate the concept and practice of recognising subject denomination, academic syllabuses and content, reading lists and teaching methods which do not appear to be identical or to overlap. This is confirmed by the Hungarian accreditation programme's focus on similar procedures and content. This approach is completely unable to deal with learning which takes place in a non-formal or informal context or with the concept of assessing and recognising the results of such learning; therefore this approach is also unable to deal with regulatory concessions which say that "it is not necessary to fulfil those requirements laid down in the syllabus which the student has already acquired, if the student can prove this in a credible way. In order to recognise requirements which have been fulfilled through professional experience, the institution has to require proof that this knowledge has been acquired through oral, written or practical examinations⁵; this is what makes the recognition of existing professional experience possible. The lack of comprehension was evident in the questions for clarification which arrived at the Office of the National Credit Council, questions which delved into the limits of the opportunities for credit recognition.

Some elements of what is available on the international education market are already available in Hungary; these have been "imported" via the PLA process used within the framework of foreign education providers' programmes. An example of this is the CNAM Hungarian Regional Pole⁶. This offers courses for particular competencies in a modular structure, for which "every course is preceded by a test of prior learning (or competency) and if necessary, compensatory courses are arranged. Someone who already has professional experience may be granted an exemption, so that they do not have to study certain parts of the course. The areas covered are quality management, logistics and transport, management for small and medium-sized business, controlling, assessment of environment-related health risks and planning and implementation of open and distance learning programmes. Several prestigious Hungarian higher education institutions are participating in this system. Between 2000 and 2006, approximately 700 students took part in CNAM continuing vocational training courses in Hungary and received French certificates of competency. However, this practice is an isolated case, which does not have any impact on other institutions.

⁵ Government Decree 79 of 2006. (5 April) on the Implementation of the Act on Higher Education, Section 23(9)

⁶ CNAM is a French adult education institution with long-standing traditions. Source: <http://www.cnam.hu>

1.3. The new role of Information and Communications Technology

After a dynamic beginning, ICT development in Hungary has been gradually losing ground. In the middle of the 1990s, the Hungarian government believed that by developing knowledge in the area of ICT, the country could become a leading information technology player in the region. With this in mind, an ambitious and expensive government programme was launched. In the field of education, this included the launch of the Sulinet programme. (The Hungarian name means School Net.) This was a rather intermittent drive to extend Internet use, provide and modernise information technology equipment and integrate its use across the whole of public education. In 2004, an independent Ministry for Information and Technology and Communications was set up, which launched projects to provide teachers with equipment at a reduced price and to implement the use of information technologies all the way down to the pre-school and infant schools level.⁷ The government made efforts to support purchase of ICT equipment by a relatively broad section of the population, with budget money and tax breaks. The telecottages movement also received support.⁸ Despite all this, reaction to these programmes was ambivalent and implementation was roundly criticised. After a while, the programmes became bogged down or ground to a halt and today, according to statistics, Hungary has fallen behind regionally speaking, in terms of PC penetration, the population's use of the Internet and information technology competence (as well as with regard to many other indicators).

At present, 60-70 per cent of the Hungarian population is neither able nor motivated to use online tools. The proportion of Internet users in Hungary is low if international comparisons are made and is growing relatively slowly.⁹ According the World Internet Project (WIP, <http://www.worldinternetproject.net/>) survey carried out in 2005, the proportion of those who use the Internet at least once a week is 22% (for the population over the age of 14 the figure is 33%). Only 19% of households have some kind of Internet access and only 13% of those have broadband. One of the reasons for this is that in European terms, the monthly charge for Internet access is still high. In addition to this, the Hungarian population's low ICT literacy is a determining factor for Internet-based services and ICT-based learning and learning-related activities. The size of what is known as the "digital gap", between the urban and rural population is significant, especially between Budapest and the rest of the country (partly because of infrastructure disparity). Additionally, there is a very limited amount of free or cheap teaching content and the scope of direct teaching materials and that of qualifications which can be accessed by e-learning are also limited.

From time to time in higher education, there is a fashion for making use of state-of-the-art ICT, for significant high profile investments (e.g. distance learning material development labs, development of e-learning, digitalisation of learning materials), after which these materials remain unused. By contrast, up-to-date ICT equipment and teaching methods which require their use have not become widespread. In the case of higher education institutions, ICT development depends mostly on whatever funds the institution happens to be able to apply for at the time; as a result of this, it is striking that development takes place intermittently. From 1994 to 2004, teaching materials were on the agenda, while more recently e-learning systems have been the

⁷ While 10% of pre-primary education (ISCED 0) facilities use computers, only 5% of children of pre-primary age have direct access.

⁸ In 1995, a voluntary sector initiative was set up with the aim of creating digital equality for rural Hungary, by setting up community Internet access. Locally-based, non-profit organisations presently run some 540 telecottages (Internet access points for rural communities) and these belong to an association. Even by international standards, this is a significant figure and Hungarian practice is considered to be a model for the Eastern European region. <http://www.telehaz.hu>

⁹ At the same time however, mobile telephones have made considerable ground in a very short period, meaning that a score of new services are being developed for this type of ICT (e.g. examination results can be requested by SMS).

order of the day. Since development is intermittent, it follows that studies of effectiveness and economy are not carried out in connection with trials or implementation.

Companies providing training outside the education system, offer learning opportunities partly based on digital learning materials and e-learning. It was expected that it would be possible to training a significant number of students with these tools, which would reduce the “costs per unit” for teaching. The lack of success with which these efforts were met, however, indicates that it is not possible to base adult education on technology alone: e-learning courses can only prove successful with appropriate tutor support and mentoring. During the last decade, the government has invested very significant development funds in the development of e-learning programmes and ICT-based programmes to create tele-workplaces for distance work. These have brought only modest results.

1.3.a) Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

In 2005/2006, the government set the objective of developing a registration system based on the Uniform Educational ID Code. A system based on storing and handling the individual’s information digitally and using an ID code would make it possible to follow the educational process over their lifetime and make it easier to prove what qualifications they hold (e.g. Diploma Supplement, Europass), obtain recognition for qualifications (credit transfer), provide career advice, and also to carry out research and studies necessary for educational policy and evaluating results; it would also make it easier to monitor the use of public funds. A further advantage of this system is that it is cost-effective, client-centred, and replaces the present, piecemeal, redundant system for recording and handling data, which has high requirements in terms of infrastructure and staff. Due to the present budget cuts, however, it can be expected that implementation will be delayed.

Modularisation primarily effects professional training and the National Register for Vocational Qualifications (for details see section 3.1.b). The modular education framework is intended to foster recognition of prior learning. However, this frameworks and has not yet been rolled out, so there is not yet enough sufficient information about how it works in practice.

For students at higher education institutions, it is possible to have credits transferred by submitting a request in writing to the institutions’ Credit Transfer Committees. The committees make their decisions in accordance with clearly defined rules¹⁰; at present, neither technology nor information plays a role in this process. Recognition of credits can be automatically guaranteed on the basis of any agreements which may exist between the two institutions, but this is rare. Experience shows that the recognition of credits acquired elsewhere is considered to be in conflict with the institution’s own interests, since this promotes their “competitors” and reduces their own income. Therefore, the introduction of the credit system has not brought about a fundamental change in student mobility and has not radically altered the extent to which the system is permeable.

1.3.b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.

¹⁰ If in terms of content, the two curricula are 75% the same, the credits must be recognised.

In the updated, 2006 version of the National Register of Vocational Qualifications, there are 15 different kinds of professional training related to ICT. Most of these were not new, rather they were given a new name and modernised (see table 18 in Annexe 3).

A few centres of competence have been set up in the field of ICT, within the context of co-operation agreements made between institutions of tertiary education and capital-rich multinational companies (e.g. Cisco, HP, Intel, Microsoft, Nokia, Oracle, SAP and Symantec). The purpose of these centres is to ensure that the technology integrated into education be as up-to-date as possible. The students can acquire professional certification that is in demand on the labour market: for example, they can become a Cisco Certified Network Associate/Professional or a Microsoft Certified System Engineer/Developer. In keeping with their long-term business objectives, these major, capital-rich companies provide various kinds of support to students (software licences, scholarships, research opportunities, advice and the opportunity to attend courses free, or at a reduced charge).

Further international programmes include the CISCO Networking Academy Programme (CNAP), which has been operating in Hungary since 1997. In the academic year 2006/2007, more than 3000 students began their studies in various groups and courses, held at 48 places in Hungary and at 87 venues. By September 2006, a total of 1661 students had acquired Cisco Certified Networking Associate qualifications.

The Hungarian adaptation of the Danish EPICT (European Pedagogical ICT Licence¹¹) is an accredited, further training programme for teachers; by 2006, some 300 teachers had taken part in this programme. Typically, the acquisition of this qualification is based on prior professional experience, so recognition of existing knowledge and competencies takes place during the course. EPICT provides important, specialised training in the field of ICT, because of the specific features characteristic of teaching. Previously, teachers were generally trained in ICT using more basic, more general systems of examinations (e.g. ECDL).

1.3.c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or ‘learning assets’? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?

With regard to this topic, policy has been fragmented and projects largely experimental.

On the basis of scenarios for the models of education systems which are expected to develop in the future (“OECD Future Scenarios” Project),¹² the Hungarian education system can be classed as bureaucratic at present and can be expected to remain so in the future. This bureaucracy is naturally accompanied by policy thinking which considers the basis of successful administration as recording and storing as much information as possible, and typically, this has been manifesting itself in faculty administration for several years in efforts to set up the most comprehensive databases possible. The object is to integrate databases into the ICT systems (and meta-databases based on those databases), in order to make the whole education system more transparent and easier to administrate. Students’ and teachers’ identification numbers are part of this process, as are the competency card which enables data to be handled digitally, the Europass document, student identity card, the proposed adult learning card and the personal training account and e-portfolio. These developments are often driven by the idea of modernisation, and it is rare that any verifiable economic calculations are made of the benefits brought by these innovations.

¹¹ See <http://www.epict.org> and <http://www.epict.hu>

¹² OECD: What Schools for the Future? (2001)

It is worth citing the example of the experimental projects carried out in 2004, as part of the Leonardo da Vinci program; it was undertaken to update the content and methodology of accredited, higher level vocational training (a particular form of post-secondary education) in the school system, within the context of an international project. Three groups in the ICT teaching process and three in the English language for ICT teaching process from a higher level vocational training first year course (information statistician and business planner) tried a portfolio method of assessment. The assessment methodology of one of the partner institutions, the YALE College of Wrexham in Wales was adopted. The system was part of the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification), which has been developed for use in particular disciplines and particular types of course. The project made it clear to the participants that the portfolio is not only a form of assessment, but a new approach and exercise for carrying out the teaching and learning process, one which is based on ongoing co-operation and increases knowledge. The students expressed clear approval of this method of assessment, but this generates much more work for those teachers who prepare for it, adjust the curriculum, create the tasks and then assess them. (Sediviné, 2004)

1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage / mismatch

In international terms, the workforce participation rate in Hungary is exceptionally low, especially for those who have poor educational attainment, for women and for older workers. At the same time, the unemployment rate remains significantly below the EU-15 average. This can be explained by the fact that a high proportion of the working age population is inactive. There is great labour market disparity between the modern economy of the centralised regions and western regions, and the north east of the country. Mobility between sectors or regions is low and there are shortages in particular professions, as well as shortages of skilled workers, indication deficiency in the capability of the education and training system to react to employment market demand.

There is a significant deficit in qualifications in international terms. In 2002, from the population group which is most important with regard to the labour market – the 25-64-year-old age group – 29% held primary school qualifications only (ISCED_2).¹³ This is substantially lower than the figures for other Central European Countries in a similar situation to Hungary. The proportion of the population between 25-64 who hold lower secondary (ISCED_2) qualifications or lower in other CEE countries are as follows: Czech Republic 11%, Slovakia 13%, Poland 18%.

In European Union terms, the situation in Hungary is not only unfavourable with regard to the proportion of those holding higher education qualifications, but also with regard to participation rates for adult education.¹⁴ Less than five of every 100 people of working age (25-64-year-olds) are participating in some kind of course.¹⁵ The EU average meanwhile is almost double, at 9%.¹⁶ (See fig. 7 and 8 in the Annex 3). At the same time, a greater part of the almost 800.000 participants in adult education already belong to the ranks of the better qualified. In fact, according to OECD figures, there is a striking difference in opportunity to participate in adult education, depending on the existing level of educational attainment. Therefore, adult education

¹³ A further 57% held secondary qualifications and 14% held college or university qualifications. (OECD Education at a Glance 2004.)

¹⁴ http://www.nfh.gov.hu/doc/Partnerseg/NAP_final.doc (download: 2006-07-13)

¹⁵ Non-formal and informal learning was investigated by the LFS 2003 ad hoc module.

¹⁶ Eurostat Yearbook 2005. – Europe in Figures, (104.p)

increases rather than decreases existing differences in levels of education. Over recent years, a number of government programmes were launched which attempted to halt this trend and encourage those with poor educational attainment to study. One such programme increased benefits paid in lieu of wages to participants in adult education. Additionally, starting at the beginning of January 2006 and continuing until the end of 2007, the government launched the “Lépj egyet előre” (“One Step Forward”) programme, which targets those with a low level of school qualifications or without vocational qualifications and provides participants who complete the programme successfully with a one-off payment, equal to the monthly minimum wage (approx. €240).

Among many other factors, the opportunity to make use of adult education opportunities depends on the individual’s workload and the amount of spare time available to them. According to data from over the last ten years, the average annual number of working hours for workers in Hungary is much higher than the OECD average (1740 annual working hours in 2004, which is equivalent to approximately 40 hours a week). In Portugal, the UK and Ireland, which are in the middle of the European rankings, the average worker spends some 256 hours less at work than the Hungarians, while for workers in countries which ranked most favourably (Italy, Austria, Belgium, France and Germany), the difference is as great as 400.

According to figures from the European Union’s CVTS (1999) survey,¹⁷ the companies which offered their workers the greatest proportion of training were from sectors which have undergone fast technological and structural change over recent years. For this reason, there was a great need to train and retrain workers. In other industries, the need to change was less of a factor and therefore, it proved sufficient for workers if they relied essentially on the knowledge they had already acquired. In certain sectors of the Hungarian economy, there are still significant proportions of workers whose positions do not require a high level of education. In the year 2000, more than half of organisations (54.2%) did not support their employees’ vocational education. According to a Hungarian survey carried out in 2005, 81.9% of respondents stated that the skills their employees already possessed were sufficient, so the knowledge they acquired during training was wholly sufficient for them to carry out their work.

1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as ‘Regional Development’ and ‘Learning Regions’?

An important element for reforming education of the workforce is that of creating a new National Register of Vocational Qualifications (for a detailed description, see section 3.1.b); this entered its final phase in 2006. Previously, there was no close connection between the National Register of Vocational Qualifications and the structure of employment. When the new register was set up, the primary considerations were its suitability in terms of labour market requirements and transparency, as well as the development of a more flexible structure. During the development process, the job actually existing in the economy provided the basis for that process, and the necessary tasks, activities and personal qualities for carrying out a given job were defined with the help of job analysis.

In the new vocational education system, opportunities are also given to those who do not possess primary school qualifications. In their case, participation is not based on providing proof of

¹⁷ European Community - Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

primary school qualifications, but rather on what is referred to as “entry-level competencies”. The teachers can prepare those who previously dropped out of the courses for this level, and those who already possess these competencies can join in the vocational training.

In 2005, an interdisciplinary educational programme for the benefit of the Roma minority was piloted with funds from the European Union and the government, under the direction of the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.¹⁸ The aim of this project was to find new employment opportunities. The prior learning, skills, competencies acquired, vocational experience, preferences, personal qualities and motivating factors for some 350 applicants were assessed by tests devised by the Hungarian National Institute of Adult Education (computer test package for assessment of reasoning in mathematics and natural science; computer test package for assessment of communication skills, writing and comprehension). The experts administering the test based their work on an adaptation of a French model, and they developed a concept and methodology for preparing competency cards suitable for people from disadvantaged backgrounds; this made it possible to prepare career plans and learning maps. To our knowledge, this methodology and these tools were not applied on a wider scale. The significant expenditure they require means that developing the system on a national scale would be unrealistic. However, the launch of similar kinds of interdisciplinary programmes and the application of this methodology could be effective for the reintegration of marginalised groups, and those with poor educational attainment.

There were Hungarian participants in the ORACLE-Skills project, which was funded as part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. This project was run by COIMBRA university in Portugal and the West Transdanubian Regional Development Agency participated from Hungary. During the course of the project, the participants made great efforts to develop a methodology which would make it possible to uncover and identify informal learning. This methodology was also to be able to assess and quantify sets of informal learning, abilities and skills, making it possible for these to be integrated into the labour market’s operational mechanism and recruitment requirements. Five countries participated in the project and in the first phase, the participants undertook to develop methodology for the European Code and Classification System, as well as drawing up recommendations for the restructuring of the European Certificate of Informal Learning. To our knowledge, the results from this project have not been disseminated in Hungary. On the basis of the official project report, even in terms of the objectives drawn up during the course of this joint project by the participants themselves, only modest success was attained.

Government planning for lifelong learning and the related recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning is currently under development. The lack of conceptual coherence and the variety of interpretations make objectives difficult to be formulated in terms of concrete tasks and implementation. In the government strategy drawn up in 2005, one objective of particular importance was that “assessment of prior learning should become general practice and be legally recognised (according to professional standards), taken into account; educational programmes should be run in accordance with this”.

Over recent years, graduate unemployment has appeared in Hungary. According to some of the researchers investigating this area, by 1995 it was already evident from the distribution of human capital that some of the graduate workforce were squeezing less-qualified workers out of jobs. In the year 2000, the proportion of over-qualified workers (those graduates working at a lower level than their qualifications) was estimated as being 20%. The education policies intended to address this situation were a more focussed and better planned distribution of state-financed places in

¹⁸ http://www.socio.mta.hu/kutatasok/NKFP_Szlovak/2.hirlevel.htm

higher education and the expansion of higher level vocational training. However, empirical studies (Galasi-Varga 2006) indicated that if restrictions on the number of entrants do not take into account demands for particular disciplines, then this would result in a specific kind of study strategy. This strategy can be described as follows: individuals choose the discipline which afforded them the best chance of being accepted into higher education, then after acquiring their first degree, they chose a retraining course in keeping with their original intentions and personal interests; they do so completely without reference to labour market demand. This strategy however leads to significant additional costs for society and the individual.

In Hungary, there is a very high number of people who are inactive on the grounds that their capacity to work has been affected by ill health. Evidently, among their ranks there are those who are fleeing failure on the labour market by taking invalidity retirement. In order to address this issue, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is seeking, in keeping with the recommendations laid down by the World Health Organisation and by legal means, to modernise the system by which General Practitioners certify individuals as suitable for invalidity retirement. One important characteristic of this will be that the worker's capacity for work will be given in addition to information on the damage to their health. In the new certification procedure, in addition to a statement on the type and extent of disability, the remaining capacity to work which can be developed and other changes to the worker's capabilities will also be dealt with. What methods will be used to achieve this is not yet known.

1.4.b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

Public education in Hungary can generally be described as insufficiently practice-orientated; not enough attention is paid to the active learning and communication skills relevant to employment, or to the acquisition of life skills. Furthermore, at present some two million people – some 40% of the working age population – do not hold vocational qualifications. At the same time as those without vocational qualifications are being squeezed out of the labour market, according to a 2005 statement by the minister for social affairs and labour, some 15% of companies cannot find workers to meet their requirements and at the present time, over 30.000 positions remain unfilled, since companies cannot find suitably trained workers.

For the situation regarding the lack of computer literacy, see the introduction to section 1.3.

One competency deficit, which has existed for quite some time, is that of language skills.¹⁹ In European terms, Hungary is in a deeply unfavourable position. Even in higher education, the number of students who have not received their degree because they have not fulfilled the criterion of passing a language proficiency examination is by no means negligible. This is also connected to the fact that language examination-related fraud is being committed on an almost industrial scale (many either buy a language proficiency certificate or there are cases where another individual sits the examination in the real candidate's place, with the help of forged ID), with many cases being reported in the press. All of this indicates that proven foreign language skills are becoming more and more essential, but at the same time, it is difficult to attain a high

¹⁹ During the 2000 census, 19% of the adult population in Hungary stated that they had some knowledge of a foreign language (although this was on a self-assessment basis and daily experience suggests that the real situation is even worse). The proportion of the European Union as a whole is 53%.

level of competency valued by the market. Regulations intended to encourage language learning are contradictory. The Ministry for Education and Culture launched a programme known as the “Világnyelv” (world language) programme in public education: an academic year focussing on intensive language learning was included at the beginning of secondary education (between ISCED 2 and ISCED 3) and countless other programmes were launched, e.g. intensive language teacher training. At the same time, the foreign language bonus system (which provided a bonus for those employees who held a language proficiency certificate) was brought to an end or restricted in most workplaces.

Further government steps taken to address skills shortages in particular professions: (1) during 2001/2002, basic ICT training was provided via e-learning for civil servants and administrative staff working for the courts; (2) teachers participating in the ECDL training course between 2001-2004 received financial support for purchasing equipment; (3) prior to European Union accession, members of the civil service were able to participate in subsidised language courses; (4) within the context of the Világnyelv (world language) programme mentioned above, in-service training was provided for language teachers and made accessible by way of scholarship funds.

It is difficult to find comparative data, but according to experts, a very significant proportion of Hungarian employees now work in the kind of environment where there is no incentive either to study or to maintain key skills. In any event, it can be concluded from an international studies made in this field (IALS) that the Hungarian adult population’s performance in comprehension is weak not only in comparison with other countries, but more importantly, with respect to effective participation in modern-day division of labour. According to a survey carried out in 2006, 48.4% of those in full-time employment stated that they had not learned anything in the course of their work over the preceding 12 months. It is our opinion, however, that this figure reflects the understanding of the concept of learning, at least to the same extent as it reflects what is really taking place in the workplace.

1.4.c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

The school system plays a defining role in creating and maintaining social inequality. Problems with the system’s effectiveness (a high level of selection, segregation, regional inequalities, lack of relevance to the economy and everyday life) play a role in creating and maintaining disadvantages which are difficult or impossible to compensate for. Some young people who leave the school systems without qualifications will be unable to study successfully at a later stage, e.g. to acquire a marketable vocation, because of missing knowledge. There is a lack of practice-orientated training programmes and services to ease the transition from school to the world of work are underdeveloped. Government and voluntary sector efforts to create equality are insufficient.

Pronounced differences can be observed regarding the level and type of education available and access to education and teaching services, as well the provision of educational equipment and student performance, on the basis of where people live. Another way in which local differences project themselves is in the uneven regional distribution of higher education institutions.

In 2003, the level of inequality in Hungary was the highest since the change in political system. According to figures from the regular Household Monitor survey carried out by TÁRKI Social Research Centre, in 2005 the average income for the 10% of the population in the highest

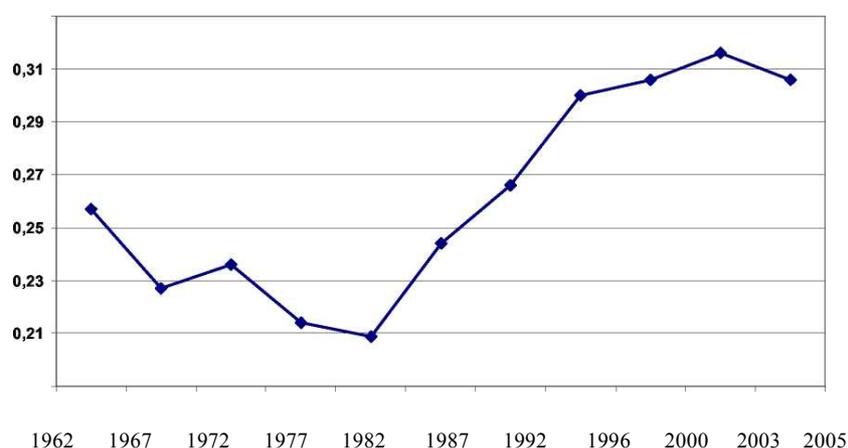
income bracket was 7.5 times that of the average income for the 10% of the population in the lowest income bracket: this situation is similar to that in the second half of the 1990s. With respect to average income, the number of people living in poverty in Hungary is between 900.000 and 1.070.000, which is nearly ten percent of the population. Income inequality trends – in relation to income per head – show that between 1987 and 1992 and during the four years following that period, there was a significant period of growth following the employment, structural economic and property reform. As a consequence, it was characteristic of the second half of the 1990s that inequality stagnated; after a sudden increase in 2003, a return to the levels seen at the end of the 1990s could be observed in 2005.

Between 2000 and 2003, inequality in income from work decreased significantly, but since then it has not really changed. In the period between 2003 and 2005, the decrease in income inequality came about in the midst of an increase in the number of households with a wage earner (employee) and an increase in income originating from redistribution. This process was accompanied by an increase in the budget deficit which was very high even in international terms.

Poverty is particularly in evidence in the Roma population, where the income of 82% of households does not reach the subsistence level calculated by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Some 56% of Roma households belong to the 10% of the population with the lowest income. This is not even enough for them to feed their families.

Income is closely related to the level of educational attainment. In international terms, a good return on investment in education is in evidence, especially in the case of higher education. (OECD Education at a Glance 2005) According to calculations, every additional year in school results in an 8% increase in total earnings.

Figure 3 The Gini coefficient between 1962 and 2005 on the basis of the distribution of per capita household income



Source: 1962-1987: CSO on the basis of income data surveys Atkinson-Micklewright [1992] Fig. HI1; 1992-1996: Hungarian Household Panel I-VI., 2000-2005: Táarki Household Monitor.

The distribution of labour as measured by the Gini coefficient shows that within the Central Eastern European region, Hungary is a country with moderate social inequality. In comparison with the period prior to the change in political system (1989), a change of 19% was recorded up until 2001/2002. Meanwhile, this indicator changed by 28% in Poland and 38% in neighbouring Slovakia (appendix fig. 6).

The second National Development Plan for the period between 2006 and 2013 makes effort to relieve regional inequality by recourse to significant European sources of funding. The Ministry for Education and Culture has developed a number of programmes which are intended to increase opportunities for the disadvantaged/Roma in the field of further study.

1.4.d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

This type of information is not available.

1.4.e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly- skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

A significant proportion of students continue to drop out, especially from secondary level vocational education. Only some of those who drop out continue their studies later; a very significant portion of them disappear completely from the record, i.e. they earn a living in the informal economy, and due to their poor educational attainment, they are squeezed out of the legal labour market. For them, the recognition of partially completed studies would hardly provide sufficient motivation for them to return to organised education. Success can only be achieved by the kind of interdisciplinary programmes which would be able to deal with the social problems of the participants, find teaching methods which are effective with them and would be combined with support services for the individual.

Table 4 Dropout rates for the different levels of education in terms of entry numbers (%)

Academic year	Primary school			Grammar school	Vocational secondary school	Vocational training school
	Year 4	Year 8	Total			
1990/1991	2.8	1.1	3.4	11.9	16.7	23.0
1996/1997	1.8	0.9	2.6	9.3	8.7	23.0
1999/2000	1.7	0.9	2.4	8.5	3.0	31.6

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture annual statistics

According to a survey made at the end of 2005 (Török, 2006), 19.4% of adults indicated that a lack of prior qualifications created a barrier to further study. According to empirical research carried out in 2005 (Tót, 2006) to investigate informal learning related to work, in many cases the unemployed are taking part in the courses provided for them with significant “undiscovered” knowledge and competencies. In the course of this research, life pathway interviews were held with adults who were over the age of 30 and had been squeezed out of the labour market. The research endeavoured to classify the type of work which they had regularly engaged in, as well as the knowledge they had acquired through informal means. Activities carried out within their own households for the purpose of self-sufficiency or as paid work for other households or for companies for the purpose of making a living (although not within the context of legal employment) could almost without exception be matched with courses and activities existing in the vocational training system and organised in workforce training. (See list in Annex 3 table 19.) This also indicates that one route back to the labour market would be to further develop individuals’ existing knowledge and to have it formally recognised. However, it is important to note that in economically depressed regions, where a significant proportion of the individuals in question live, there is no demand for the services they could provide, at least not as paid-for work, or there are no legal job opportunities. This means that in the short term and in isolation,

the formal recognition of this learning would not change the situation facing these individuals on the labour market.

At present, the social security system presently only records elementary information and data about prior learning, competencies and professional experience and this information does not improve the jobseeker's situation in every case. This main issue is that it is not so much data as experience which suggests that the social security system ignores the issue of recognising knowledge acquired through prior vocational experience. Taking all this into account, we are convinced that it is the unemployed with vocational experience who would be those most likely to be affected by RNFIL.

1.4.f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

By international standards, the grey and black economies in Hungary are very widespread, around 20-25% based on estimates, but there are some estimates which place this proportion even higher. The reason for this is partly to avoid having to pay deductions and to avoid the burdens associated with legal employment and partly a survival strategy for those who have been squeezed out of the labour market. The government is endeavouring to legalise the labour market through various measures taken over the last two years (e.g. lower social security contributions for casual workers holding a work record booklet). However, these measures have not been extended to cover either education or the recognition of prior learning.

Activities in the grey and black economy are diverse. The most typical type of activities are seasonal employment in agriculture and various services performed on behalf of households (most of these are activities which do not require qualifications, as well as work in the construction industry and hospitality within the tourist industry (also seasonal). It is our opinion, that with respect to acquiring professional experience, activities carried out in the black and grey sectors of the economy are equivalent to the professional experience that can be acquired in the course of legal employment. This relates to the fact that according to a sample representative of the country, 18.2% stated, "there is no point in studying, because I can get money without qualifications."

1.4.g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that require a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

In Hungary, there are several hundred regulated professions,²⁰ which foreigners need a permit from the authorities, proving that they are qualified, in order to be able to practice them. As a general rule, recognition of degrees, certificates or diplomas is carried out by a designated department within the competent ministry. In the course of the recognition procedure, the authorities accept professional training acquired after qualifying, internships and professional experience as professional experience; therefore in some senses, they recognise informal learning. As a result of European Union policies supporting the free movement of labour and services, there are at present seven fields where degrees and certificates are automatically and mutually recognised in member states, Hungary included: (doctor (1), dentist (2), pharmacist (3), nurse (4), midwife (5), veterinarian (6) and building engineer (7)).

²⁰A list of regulated professions, along with the authorities appointed to grant recognition for these professions can be found at http://www.okm.gov.hu/letolt/nemzet/meik/szabalyozott_szakmak_jegyzeke_es_az_elismeresre_illetkes_hatosagok.hu.pdf in a 48-page PDF document. (Some of the names of the individual ministries have changed since this list was compiled.)

The professions from higher education are engineers [including architects], doctors, [also veterinarians and dentists] and pharmacists, as well as lawyers [solicitor, judge, attorney, notary public].

1.5. Social developments

1.5.a) What are the newly evolved ‘skills and competencies’ to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.

Such developments, without doubt, include computer literacy which is emphasised in almost all education programmes from public education onwards. The government’s ideas for e-administration could become one of the forces shaping programmes to help people acquire such competencies or to have learning recognised. The new requirements system for the Register of National Vocational Qualifications defines the set of skills needed for each profession, since it is based on an analysis of job requirements.

1.5.b) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?

We are not aware of any experience of this kind.

1.5.c) Provide evidence, if any, of recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?

We are not aware of any experience of this kind.

1.6. Other country specific issues and factors

1.6.a) Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

From the end of the 19th century, Hungarian public education enjoyed an increasing amount of recognition; this prestige was increased by the number of Nobel Prize winners from Hungary and the success of secondary school students at many Student Olympics study competitions. Over the last 50 years, the system has undergone significant expansion, but in such a way that there has been hardly any change in the amount of high standard education; by contrast, low standard education expanded quickly to accommodate new student numbers. Over the last decade and a half, there has been increasing criticism of the Hungarian public education system’s performance and this is confirmed by the fact that according to international comparative studies, the Hungary system performs poorly. For example, the PISA 2000 study showed that when international comparisons are drawn, Hungarian students’ knowledge in natural science is average, in mathematics they are below average and in comprehension particularly weak.

Numerous studies confirm that the Hungarian education system is characterised by strict selection and segregation. Results achieved by Hungarian students varying widely, depending on family background and place of residence. It is not simply that the public education system is unable to compensate for these differences: it actually strengthens them. The OECD PISA Study also shows that from all the participating countries, it is in Hungary that family capital – parents educational qualifications, books at home and cultural consumption – has the strongest effect on students’ educational performance and skills level. Hungarian studies (e.g. Liskó, 2004) have

also proved that differences based on social class – and in some cases segregation is developed – between social groups with different social-cultural backgrounds.

With regard to the labour market environment in Hungary, one of the most important defining factors is the long-standing and dramatically low level of participation. In 2005, 56.9% per cent of the 15 – 64-year-old working age group (63.1% for men, 51% for women) were employed.

As a result of this situation, from the very beginning, increasing labour market participation and reintegration in the labour market have been central elements for education, life-long learning, employment and even social policy in government programmes. This significantly restricts the picture formed of the benefit of learning to society. Civic studies, education for personal development, general cultural education and older people's learning – despite many fine words – are almost always pushed into the background in practice. Those competencies, skills and capabilities which do not relate directly to the labour market are devalued, and those institutions which play role in developing knowledge not directly related to the labour market are marginalised (e.g. the network of community education and cultural institutions and libraries).

At the same time, it can be assumed that in setting up a system for recognising non-formal learning means, the acquisition of certification enabling re-entry to the labour market could be an effective incentive, both from the individuals' and the government's point of view.

Education policy and expectations place a great deal of pressure on the school system and the education system, to put direct, short-term labour market considerations at the forefront of education and training. Performance is mostly considered in terms of finding jobs on the labour market. This seems to be increasingly the case, since the recommendations for the 2006 amendments 2001 Act on Adult Education and Training include that organisations providing adult education can only receive state support, if they can provide guarantees of continuing employment or placement for the individuals on the course.

The Second National Development Plan (2007 – 2013) is of defining importance in terms of the development of public education and adult education, since more significant funding will be available to accompany this plan that has almost ever been the case.

1.6.b) Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.

Hungary runs a dual vocational training system that is very similar to the German system: even within the formal school system, learning which takes place in the workplace is afforded an important role, theoretically at least. In reality, in the mid-1990s, the role played by companies was reduced and practical vocational training was pushed back behind the school gates to a significant extent. This is only changing as a result of a slow process.

2. Description of institutional arrangements

2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Hungarian government – after considerable delay and several promptings from the European Union – completed the National Lifelong Learning Strategy in September 2005. This document

clearly reflects the expectations of the EU. However, drafting took place within a very narrow context, without the involvement of, or ongoing dialogue with, social partners and other parties.

This 64-page strategy document deals explicitly with the assessment of prior learning at two different points.

On page 7 under the section “Adoption of the education/training system to the needs of the economy”, there is reference to recognition of a special range of skills, in connection with the Europass system and development of the competency card as a means of recognising non-formal learning. “A national recognition system and an equivalent validation system of vocational qualifications not recognised by the State should be developed, in conformity with the EUROPASS system; a recognition system should be devised – i.e. the so-called competence card system, for knowledge accumulated and vocational education received through non-formal learning – not documented formally.” (Section 1.2.2).

On page 50 under the section “Improving the qualification levels of the working age population”, the text makes general mention of the assessment of prior learning as follows: “There is an excess of supply in the adult training market, therefore the focus should be shifted towards demand, in particular towards generating demands within disadvantaged groups. However, besides creating demand, these groups equally need facilitation of access opportunities. The accessibility of training should be improved by means of flexible forms of training and the recognition of formerly acquired learning.”

The government decision on the lifelong learning strategy passed in October 2005 also refers concretely and by name, to the necessity of developing a competency card system: “In the interests of allowing flexible transfer between the various training programmes, and to enable them to build upon one another, a plan should be prepared for the modularisation of vocational training and for the creation and ongoing development of a competency card system linked with the EUROPASS system. Responsible: Minister for Education, Minister for Employment Policy and Labour, Minister responsible for Vocational Training. Deadline: 31 March 2006.”

Two years prior to this in 2003, another document of defining importance – the Human Resources Operative Programme within the National Development Plan I for 2004 – 2006 – was formulated. One of the general priorities drawn up in this programme was support of lifelong learning and improving adaptability. One of the areas highlighted in the development programmes for these priorities was the modernisation of vocational training, and the development of a modular structure for education. The fact that the development of a modular structure for education also makes it easier to assess prior learning (“in keeping with the Copenhagen Process”) is only mentioned in this document.

The National Development Plan II released for public debate at the end of 2006 highlights comprehensive development tasks for the period of 2007-2013. The plan mentions the need to create connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning in several places: e.g. as a means of creating labour market flexibility (pg. 67).²¹ With regard to increased effectiveness for the public education system and the use of innovative solutions, it states the following: “It is necessary to develop a national qualifications framework, integrated into the creation European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which will provide recognition for competencies acquired by non-formal and informal means in the formal education system and on the labour market. A system for assessing output has to be developed (pg. 74). With respect to the task of improving

²¹ Final version not available online yet.

the quality of higher education, the formulation of a system and procedures for validation are indicated as tasks to be carried out.

The government strategy for the development of vocational education during the period of 2005-2013 states clearly that “The capacity to take into account formal, non-formal and informal learning has to be developed at all levels of vocational education. At the same time as the module system is expanded, it is also necessary to develop the capacity to take knowledge acquired during vocational education into account in higher education. This is especially the case for technicians’ vocational qualifications and those regulated by Community law. This task is the responsibility of the education minister, the employment policy and labour minister and the ministers responsible for vocational training. Deadline for implementation: December 31, 2010. (Vocational Training Development Strategy, 2004)

The poor co-operation between ministries which has been characteristic in Hungary for some time was brought to light in the development of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy, the drafting of the National Development Plan and stage I of implementation. It is clear from more detailed analysis of the strategy and based on expert analysis of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the National Development Plan, that the composition of the programmes is much more an arrangement of co-existing departmental policies, than an integrated approach attempting to support the population’s diverse learning activities, within diverse social and sectoral relationships. It is also characteristic of the Hungarian National Lifelong Learning Strategy that it concentrates entirely on labour market-related education, and all kinds of connections between education and training and the labour market are placed at the forefront. A major reason for this is that improving the extremely low employment participation rates comes right at the very top of the government agenda.

In the National Reform Programme for Growth and Employment 2005-2008, the development of a new tool, the Employee Training Card is indicating as being the responsibility of the employment ministry. According to this programme, the introduction of an Employee Training Card would create the possibility of recording various qualifications and knowledge acquired through non-formal learning. As a result, in re-training and continuing training, it would be possible to take into account previously acquired competencies, in turn making it possible to reduce the time and costs associated with courses and to respond fast and flexibly to labour market demand. This would be financed by resources from the Labour Market Fund. During 2006, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (previously the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour) drew up a concept for the Employee Training Card and released it for limited professional debate. The card was to be used for registration purposes and did not include the approach of redistribution of funds for training and education. The recommendations were mostly aimed at creating traceability for adult education activities and the cards were for use in public and higher education. The recommendations outlined a tool which would work independently of the Adult Training Card system but be an extension of it. The analysis uncovers the far-reaching problems associated with the present piecemeal system for storing information.

2.1.b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.

According to Section 17 of the Act on Adult Education and Training, which entered into effect in January 2001, “adults applying for training may ask for their existing knowledge to be assessed;

institutions providing adult education have an obligation to assess this knowledge and take it into account”.

However, neither this act (nor any other document relating to its implementation) express how the assessment procedure should be carried out, at whose expense, what “take into account” means and what happens if the institution does not carry out any kind of assessment. (The 2006 amendment to the Act represents a tightening of the law with regard to PLA, see section 2.1.d).

The 1993 Act on Vocational Training refers to taking account of previously acquired qualifications and knowledge, among the requirements for entering examinations (for more details, see section 3.1.b).

From 1 September 2006, Government Decree 71 of 1998 (8 April) granted state recognition to six levels of language proficiency examinations offered within the structure of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework.

It should also be mentioned at this point, that the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad is regulated by a separate act. The relevant regulations state that the recognition of unfinished studies (qualifications) is entirely a matter for the institution to which the application for further study has been made (Act C of 2001. on the recognition of foreign certificates and degrees).

With regard to public education regulations²² home-schooled student status exists, making it possible to acquire school qualifications without taking part in education, but by preparing alone and taking examinations. According to the Act on Public Education, it is the parents’ right to decide whether the child should go to school or complete compulsory schooling via home schooling. (This decision can only be overturned in exceptional cases by child protection agencies). All the same, the proportion of home-schooled students remains low, some 0.46% of the number of students in public education. What is more, few people choose this route out of choice; mostly, a child is home schooled due to disability, time abroad or other exceptional circumstances.

2.1.c) Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?

There are no grounds or explanation for Section 17 of the Act on Adult Education and Training. There is a single, short, separate section on the assessment of prior learning.

With the Act on Adult Education and Training, the government intended to make adult education services an integral part of education. PLA had already been a familiar methodology in adult education (see section 2.1.d); essentially, it was an integral part of the beginning of the programme and its primary purpose was to inform those running it what level the participants had already reached. Besides this purpose, by matching the programme more closely to individual needs and avoiding needless repetition, PLA makes the programme more attractive both to the participants and to those paying for it (e.g. the employer).

It should be emphasised that the law describes PLA as being a case for individual entitlement and uses the conditional tense (the individual *may* ask for assessment).

²² Act on Public Education, Section 7; Decree 11 of 1994 of the Minister of Education and Culture on its implementation, Section 23(1).

2.1.d) Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.

As far as precedence is concerned, the method for assessing and taking into account prior learning on entry to education and training programmes, as laid down in the 2001 Act, has long been used in the education and training sector. In Hungary up until the 1990s, it was predominantly state-owned training companies, generally speaking the competent ministries' own continuing education institutions, which played a leading role in adult education and non-formal training. According to experts, even in the 1980s, it was general practice to grant exemptions to adults entering a course, if they could prove that they had already acquired the knowledge through another programme. For example, if someone with a foreign trade administrator qualification was sent by their employer to a course for customs administrators, then they would be granted an exemption from attending certain courses and taking the examinations for those courses. This procedure was agreed between the organisations running the programmes and laid down in a set of written regulations, referred to as the "exemption system".

In addition to this, in the case of certain types of courses, for example foreign language courses, for decades now, students with varying language skills have been level-tested in order to group students of a similar standard together.

The usual tool used for this process is a test of knowledge, or rather of command of the language; such tests are also well-known and extensively used in formal (school) education.

In Hungary in the 1990s, a network of nine regional training centres was set up with funding from abroad, as part of the labour provision system. This was mostly intended to address the significant level of unemployment at the time. As a new type of adult education institution, the centres brought in numerous new educational methods and training was linked to adult education services (e.g. advice, training for job seeking). The staff and management at the new training centres, took study trips abroad as part of their preparation, during which they became familiar with Canadian, French and Irish systems and the procedures and methods used in those systems. Experts from abroad also took part in setting up the regional training centres and professional training for staff. These experts introduced a great deal of methodological knowledge which was new in Hungary at the time (e.g. the French "bilan de compétence" or portfolio method). Some Hungarian experts became familiar with PLA methodology, primarily through Canadian experts. At the end of the 1990s, a modest attempt was made to "introduce", by way of a top down initiative. Two top level members of staff from the employment ministry took a study trip abroad and in the report they gave on their return, they recommended that the methodology they had seen in Canada be applied on a trial basis and a model developed. This task was given to the Székesfehérvár Regional Training Centre, which was in any case a methodology reference centre and was to appointed proprietor of the PLA system nationally. A small trial began on an institutional level, however this trial did not receive any resources to speak of. In a short time, it became necessary to accept that local circumstances were not clement for the use of the methodology. The programme devised by centre staff was primarily aimed at regional employers. They offered PLA as a way of improving the use of resources, by shortening training programmes. However, the majority of employers were of the opinion, and this is still the case today, that programmes shortened by taking prior learning into account are of less value than the original, longer training programme. Also, it was not in the interest of the unemployed people taking part in the course to make use of the opportunity presented by PLA, since according to the

regulations at the time, they only received unemployment benefit for the duration of the programme, so they preferred the longer course.²³

Besides this, it quickly became evident that PLA is by no means a cheap process. Drawing up professional references involves significant infrastructure and cannot be carried out by one training institution alone. One major obstacle to widespread use of PLA procedures is that in contrast to expectations, although the procedure itself is relatively cheap if based on tests, drawing up and maintaining the academic standards requires considerable time and work.

Preparatory work for the 2001 Adult Education Act was carried out in professional workshops with a relatively limited number of participants, in which experts familiar with at least part of international PLA/VPL processes also took part. It was certainly on the basis of their recommendations that the section on PLA found its way into the act.

With regard to changes in the law, in October 2006, a proposal was drafted for an amendment to the act. This amendment was made necessary by the reform of government and changes at a ministry level, with regard to responsibility for vocational training. The amendment covers the joint amendment of three, related regulations: the 1991 Act on Employment and Unemployment Benefit, the Act on Vocational Training and greater or smaller amendments to the Adult Education Act of 2001. The amendment of part of the Adult Education Act was motivated by the fact – among many other issues – that earlier regulations regarding the registration of all companies providing education and training services had only brought partial results. Some of the organisations delivering adult education (especially those which did not provide services to the state) have not registered, even to this day. Additionally, the amendment was also prompted by the fact that there were no real sanctions if organisations failed to register or neglected to assess individuals' prior learning. The primary reason behind this amendment was the wish to obtain a better overview of activities of training providers (this is not only in the government's interest, but also indirectly serves the interests of the consumers).

The main thrust of the amendment relating to prior learning (Section 17 of the Act on Adult Education and Training): the County Labour Centre is authorised to monitor whether the activities of a given organisation comply with legal regulations and as a part of this, whether the organisation provides assessment of prior learning and takes such learning into account for programme content or for altering the process to suit the individual. If the activities of the training and education provider do not meet the criteria provided for in the act (including those provisions relating to assessment), then a much higher fine could be levied than was previously the case (500,000 Hungarian forints, which is approximately €2000), or the provider could even be banned from adult education.

Innovation which has found its way into the regulations concerning higher education follow western European models, but in a severely limited way (e.g. government staff who do not know foreign languages make sense of the new concepts and procedures themselves and “redefine” them into familiar concepts and procedures, then include them in the regulations which they are drafting). The assessment of prior learning provided for by the Act on Adult Education and Training is in many respects a restricted interpretation of the procedures in use in some European countries.

2.1.e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/ to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

²³ It is also the case that the tools developed by the training centres – unrelated to their original goal – were successfully applied when integrated into an ICT programme at a nearby secondary school.

To a certain extent, ICT can be seen as an area of preferred competencies, for which several incentives have been drawn up recently. One of these is the ECDL examination, which provides recognition for ICT skills acquired through informal and non-formal means and has been linked with formal training and education programmes at several points (see section below).

2.1.f) Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

Section 17 of the Act on Adult Education and Training has formulated the right to specialist training and education services as a matter for individual entitlement. The Act obliges the training provider to assess the knowledge of applicants to the programme, but the way in which this should be done has not been regulated. There is no uniform, regulated procedure in force: the training provider carries out assessments according to their own training profile, practice and options. Neither are there any regulations with regard to how prior learning should be taken into account. However, in the interests of giving the training providers professional guidance, methodologies have been drawn up in the course of a separate project. At the request of the education ministry, in 2003 the National Institute of Adult Education began to draw up a methodology package. Some 53 training institutions make successful applications to join the project (including the nine regional training centres). The institutions received funds to develop their ICT infrastructure (approximately €10.000 each) and they committed to take part in testing the methodology for three years. Groups of experts drew up PLA tests and instructions for testing in the following areas: English, maths, marketing, business communications and the timber industry. The National Institute of Adult Education developed special software for writing tests and aiding assessment, as well as providing data for the joint project database.

To a great extent independently of the regulations covered above, other separate assessment and recognition programmes also operate in Hungary. ICT skills recognition and certification takes place extensively, for example, within the framework of the ECDL programme.²⁴ ECDL (the European Computer Driving Licence) provides certification for ICT skills obtained by any means (formal, non-formal and informal) and is based on international standards. It has been present in Hungary since 1997. Other, similar systems have also appeared, but it is the ECDL which has become truly widespread. ECDL examination system co-ordination is carried out by a non-governmental advocacy organisation. This organisation is the John von Neumann Computer Society (NJSZT by its Hungarian abbreviation). NJSZT joined the ECDL system in June 1997, as a representative of Hungary and at the present time, the society is the proprietor of the examination system in Hungary and responsible for running it. NJSZT plays a key role in spreading computer literacy in society: since 1997, more than 400 accredited examination centres have been set up nationwide. The ECDL is accredited by the Adult Education Accreditation Board, which at the national level, monitors and co-ordinates the NJSZT as an accredited adult education institution, as provided for in the agreement with the international ECDL Foundation.

In the recent past, Hungary has begun to make use of the Europass portfolio, which is intended to make individual competencies more transparent. In December 2005, the new Act on Higher Education was accepted, which was to come into force from March 1, 2006 (Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education). According to this act: “The Diploma Supplement defined by the European Commission and the European Council shall be issued together with the Bachelor and the Master degree, in Hungarian and English, or in the case of national or ethnic minority courses, at the request of the student, in the language of the minority concerned. The diploma supplement is a public document.” [Section 63(2)]. This means that institutions are to provide the

²⁴ <http://www.ecdl.hu/english/index.php?cim=home>

student with the document free of charge. The programmes for the records of students' studies at the institutions were centralised, in the interests of ensuring that the diploma supplement be provided to every student in a uniform format and layout. During the discussions on this uniform layout, the issue arose of how studies carried out abroad and credits acquired abroad should be indicated and dealt with. In the same way, credits for non-formal and informal learning seems to pose equal difficulty in terms of how they should appear in the diploma supplement. There are plans for the entire contents of the diploma supplement – via data conversion – to be added to the National Higher Education Information Database, which is maintained by a national organisation (OFIK).

In tertiary education relevant laws provide for the process and conditions for the establishment of formal vocational and professional qualifications as well as relevant programmes. The institutions operating these programmes also fall within the legal framework. This means that in addition to higher education institutions, accreditation boards (quality assessment), registration centres (authority, certification), the competent ministry (state recognition) work together in this process (almost in a regulated manner). At the highest level, regulation is provided by law; there are two or three government decrees on its implementation and ministerial decrees on the content and output details.

2.1.g) Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.

In Hungary, prior learning assessment cannot really be described as a uniform system or a procedure which operates uniformly nationwide. There are legal provisions for such assessment, but this is institutional level-practice, which is not regulated in detail.

The practice at the 53 training and education institutions which took part in the National Institute of Adult Education (NFI) project (see 2.1.f) varies. The participating institutions use the tests developed in the context of the project as a kind of licence, or as a shared ICT background, but there is no uniform procedure, regulated in detail. According to our information, up until now, very few people have used the system which was developed. According to information received by the project manager, the system has collected so few test results (around 100 in total), that it is not possible to produce any meaningful statistics. It should also be added that the assessment tool development programme came to an end in 2006 and no further funding was available, not even for evaluating the implementations of the project. In the meantime, the National Institute of Adult Education was also affected by the government's reforms of the support institutions. This means that from 2007, it will continue its activities together with the National Institute for Vocational Education, in one, integrated, support institution. The task which the National Institute of Adult Education had already commenced on setting up a new, national, adult education database will be taken over by the Employment Service, which belongs to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The development of the assessment tests will be continued within the framework of the National Development Plan II 2007-2013 and will be expanded to include other functions.

According to information gathered from the 53 institutions which took part in the National Institute of Adult Education's development project, they use the methodology package which was developed in many different ways. There are also several institutions which prefer to use tests which they have developed in-house. At the institutional level, there is a problem posed by the fact that for more widespread application of the package, it is/would be necessary to have a staff member who spends most of his/her working time on the assessments. Some of the training companies stated that software developed during the course of the project is suitable for creating further tests; however, the restricted copyright for the software prevents further use.

In Hungary, the ECDL examination can be seen as a unique assessment programme. Although in most other European countries, several similar systems are in operation, in Hungary, partly thanks to good management, the ECDL examination has come to dominate. According to data from the ECDL representative, by October 2006, 245.342 people had registered for the programme.²⁵ By this time, 117000 people had been awarded the certificate.²⁶ This means that Hungary is among the top ten countries for ECDL.

The ECDL examination is well-known and widely recognised by employers. Naturally, there has been some criticism of the way it works in practice. For example, experts say that the fact that the examinations are still based only on Microsoft software restricts the opportunity for those who would have the right and the opportunity to teach on exam preparation courses. Many schools concentrate on ECDL examination requirements in their ICT programmes, which restricts the range of the programmes a great deal. Many say that the skills assessed through ECDL become outdated, and that refreshing knowledge is not part of the process.

Linking of the ECDL examination system (and through this system one form of recognition of non-formal and informal learning) to formal and non-formal education is underway. Based on an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture, candidates who attained the top grade in the dual-level secondary school leaving ICT examination introduced in 2005 can request a ECDL certificate, without sitting the ECDL examination, at a generously reduced price. The ECDL examination has been integrated into the national teacher in-service training programme, the civil service in-service training, the cultural experts' further training programme and the new, modular vocational training system currently at preparatory stage.

The descriptive Europass system, consisting of five documents, was created by a European Union decision; in 2006, it became accessible in Hungary as an online service. (EP curriculum vitae (1), language passport (2), diploma supplement (3), certificate supplement (4) and European mobility (5)) From 1 September 2006, on the basis of a government decree,²⁷ the six language levels of the language passport based on the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages are equivalent to state-recognised examinations in Hungary.

Issuing the diploma supplement is regulated by Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education, whereby the document is to be provided free-of-charge in English and Hungarian to any student.²⁸ It is clear from feedback on this issue, that actual implementation is behind schedule due to administrative difficulties, and some institutions only provide the diploma supplement if the student specifically requests it. Some experts have noted that the diploma supplement does not provide a great deal of information, so its usefulness on the labour market is limited. According to research carried out in the recent past, it is necessary to define clear objectives for expanding the use of the Europass in the future; strategically important groups should be identified (multinational companies, employment consultants and agencies, Hungary's Public Employment Service and training institutions), uniform information fields need to be created for all five types of document; it seems there is good reason to simplify the contents; and it would be expedient to include the completion and use of the curriculum vitae and language passport in secondary school and higher education. Similarly to practice in other European Union countries,

²⁵ There is no information available regarding how many candidates prepare for the examination alone and how many take part in some kind of organised, preparation course.

²⁶ To contextualise this figure, the population of Hungary is approximately 10 million and the figure for workforce participation is approximately 3.8 million.

²⁷ Decree 71 of 1998 (8 April)

²⁸ If the Uniform Educational ID Code system is universally rolled out, then Europass certification will be award automatically.

there is a national office which is responsible for dealing with these documents. In the middle of 2004, the Ministry of Education designated one of the support institutions set up in 2000 (Educatio Közhasznú Társaság – Educatio Non-Profit Company), to carry out National Europass Centre tasks in Hungary. Educatio’s main task is to develop and run the information system connected to public education, as well as the related co-ordination and dissemination of information. National Europass Centre tasks include setting up the central information system for the portfolio, maintaining the Hungarian-language website, promoting the Europass, disseminating information and giving advice, co-ordinating the work of the professional associations issuing the Europass, maintaining relationships and co-operation with the European-level network. The Europass Centre works in co-operation (also in accordance with a decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture), with the Tempus Foundation, the National Institute of Vocational Education, the National Credit Office, the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Hungarian employers and advisory services, as well as the organisations which provide information on the European Union.

2.1.h) Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

We are not aware of efforts to propagate the “new entitlement” formulated in the 2001 Act on Adult Education and Training, i.e. the possibility of PLA, among potential stakeholders.

While collecting information, we came across institutions providing training, where individuals who did not wish to study there would undergo a PLA process, intending to use the results for other purposes. They took advantage of the fact that the assessment is an adult education service, which can be made use of independently of the course. This helps them to judge the level of their foreign language skills, and on that basis, at what level of course they should continue their studies (e.g. in order to sit for a language proficiency examination). The institutions, however, indicated that they could not meet this demand on a large scale (this would require employing an extra member of staff). Still, the institutions we contacted also said that it was conceivable that in the long term, the assessment of individual’s knowledge with these methods would become a “paid-for” service (paid for by the individual).

2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) Participation and activity (“who does what”) with regard to non-formal and informal learning and the recognition of it

Who?	What? (competency)
Government	Drafting laws which affect adult education, issuing government decrees Financing state adult education institutions Financing via normative and special education projects in adult education
Ministry of Education and Culture	Drawing up the methodological tools for assessment
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	Running the social security system (including the employment and re-training system)
Regional (county) Labour Centres	Compulsory registration of training services and monitoring compliance with the provisions laid

	down in the Act on Adult Education and Training (including PLA)
NJSZT (John von Neumann Computer Society professional associations) – legal proprietor and co-ordinator of the examination in accordance with international standards	Operating local ECDL offices and the examination system
Higher education institutions	The Credit Transfer Committee at the institution is authorised to and responsible for deciding what kind of formal, informal and non-formal learning is to be recognised, and in the latter cases, what proof of knowledge and skills is required.

2.2.b) Participants and fields of activity related to formal education and their recognition

Who?	What?
Government	<p>Defining the qualifications and disciplines for higher education;</p> <p>Procedural regulations for establishing and launching vocational qualifications and disciplines (in decrees);</p> <p>[Most recently:] defining academic quality for certification, and regulating the scope and operation of the co-operating parties (higher education institutions, accreditation board, registration centre, ministry)</p>
Ministry of Education and Culture	<p>Drawing up the national curriculum for public education</p> <p>Drawing up and maintaining the vocational qualifications and requirements relating to the ministry's remit</p> <p>Programme and output requirements for higher education (including defining vocational qualifications) accreditation and issue</p> <p>The functioning of the vocational education institutions in the school system (those which are part of the public education system)</p>
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	<p>Vocational education and re-training outside of the school system and the functioning of the institutional system maintained by the state</p> <p>Regulating vocational education outside the public education system</p> <p>Responsible for the annual publication of the National Register of Vocational Qualifications and drawing up the professional requirements belonging to the ministry's remit</p>

OKÉV – National Examination and Assessment Centre for Public Education	Responsible for the secondary school leaving examination and organising school system vocational examinations
State examination boards	Awarding of vocational qualifications on the basis of the requirements in the National Register of Vocational Qualifications.
Chambers of trade	Participation examining board for the awarding of nationally recognised vocational qualifications. Organisation of masters examinations

2.2.c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a ‘predominance-of-industry’ model; 2) a ‘predominance-of-public authorities’ model’; and 3) a ‘shared responsibility’ model²⁹. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model. .

In the course of the transformations which took place in the 1990s, the influence of social partners in planning and decision-making was weakened even by earlier standards; the government became the main player in the modernisation programme and this is still typically true today. The non-governmental sector is relatively weak (with regard to funding, it is still highly dependent on the government). There are diverse local initiatives (mostly local, project-based developments) and these endeavour to follow the European trends with which they are familiar (often only in a fragmentary way). Usually, however, these projects do not become sustainable. Their results do not become known on a wider basis (the projects are very weak in terms of disseminating information and results). Furthermore, government-level initiatives and local-level innovations do not interconnect in a way which could mutually strengthen them. Section 17 from the Act on Adult Education and Training regarding the prior learning assessment is also an example of where the government launches an initiative which could be a means of modernising the system; however, no elements are related to it which would enable implementation on a wider scale (or only at a later stage, and then programmes are small scale and receive only temporary funding, such as the development project arranged by the National Institute of Adult Education). Given the lack of funding, the government – even if it has the will to support such initiatives – will not be able to extend the real impact.

The situation is similar in areas concerning developments in higher education.

2.2.d) Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

The inter-ministerial working group was set up to implement the objectives of the 2005 government decree on lifelong learning. The working group’s task is to draft proposals for the area highlighted in the decision and to co-ordinate the implementation of the tasks assigned as the responsibility of the individual ministers. During the course of this work, the problem raised

²⁹ See UNESCO UIE Report (Draft) at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/recognitiondraftsynthesis.pdf>

earlier of difficulties with co-operation at a ministerial level came to the fore. In the present structure for co-operation, one of the ministries' tasks is to direct the drafting of proposals. Due to the principle of equal participation the distribution of responsibility is not always possible to follow. In recent years, depending on which ministry has been charged with drafting and putting forward the national lifelong learning strategy, the emphasis has changed (from a main focus on early development of skills in public education to adult education aimed at increasing labour market participation).

2.3. Resources

2.3.a) Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

The development of assessment tools carried out by the Institute of Adult Education was financed by the education ministry. This was one-off project financing (approximately HUF 14 million or €530.000), through which 53 training institutions received funding for the infrastructure development necessary for carrying out assessments (setting up workstations). This funding was used to finance the development of special-purpose software (which remained the property of the developing company however), and the drawing up of the assessment tools (tests).

No calculations have been made of how much it costs to assess an individual's prior learning. According to the opinion of the training institutions which took part in the programme, the costs depend on how many individuals are assessed altogether – how far the assessment flows in a “production line” fashion. There is no legal provision for funding the procedure. The training institutions mostly make the procedure part of the training (first stage).

Official proof of qualifications needed in the case of study or work abroad are issued by the Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre³⁰ for a charge. (Recognition for vocational qualifications costs approximately €180; recognition of level of qualifications and vocational qualifications is approximately €240.)

2.3.b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.

Since the process does not appear in the budget, chronological data is not available.

2.3.c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.

The 2001 Act on Adult Education and Training states that the assessment procedure is the task of the training institution; there is no mention of a separate funding system. The costs are borne by

³⁰ Which is also the Hungarian representative for the ENIC-NARIC network.

the training institution; or rather they are calculated into the programme fees, since the time spent on assessment is part of the programme. Generally, the first one or two lessons are spent in this way. If the programme is financed or supported by the state, requested from the company by the employment centre, then state funds pay for the assessment procedure; no calculation is made of the costs, however and no data is collected with respect to this.

Most of the costs for the ECDL process are met by the participants themselves, but employers also organise and pay for ECDL preparation courses for their employees (which they can set off against compulsory contributions to vocational education, so against their vocational education tax burden). Registration costs are approximately €30 - €40; total costs depend of the number of modules acquired (one module costs approximately HUF 4000 or €15). Full-time students receive a discount of 20%.

Costs for having a degree acquired abroad recognised in Hungary are met by the individual requesting recognition.

There are no regulations governing assignment of the institutional costs associated with recognising credits. Usually, the institutions shoulder them as part of their general costs.

2.3.d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centers? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

The obligation to assess prior learning, as laid down in the Adult Education Act applies to all companies providing adult education (education and training services); therefore, there are several thousand places where theoretically, an adult can undergo such an assessment. In practice, this is more likely to be possible at larger companies (precise information is not available).

Some 53 training institutions took part in the development project run by the National Institute of Adult Education; these institutions have been using the tests drawn up in the project since 2004. Before the end of the project, preparatory training was arranged for individuals who were to carry out assessment.

Potentially, in the long run, and in terms of a development concept, the new local vocational education institutions, the regional integrated vocational training centres (TISZK by their Hungarian acronym) and the national network of training centres (there are nine altogether, one in each of the regions), could become the bases for the kind of national network, which would serve as a national base for the assessment and recognition of prior learning, based on uniform principles and procedures, the same methodology and ensuring regional access.

There is only one Equivalence Centre in the higher education sector, meanwhile every higher education institution, and often every individual faculty could be described as an individual assessment point or centre.

There are presently 400 accredited ECDL examination centres operating in the country.

2.4. Other country-specific issues and factors

2.4.a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

The regulation of master examinations, as part of vocational training, is related to the assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. Part of the regulations on master examinations is the recognition of qualifications acquired elsewhere. If requested, the chair of the examining board can grant an exemption from the oral part of the theory examination in an appropriate field, to candidates with postgraduate university, college, higher and secondary level technical schools or accredited higher qualifications. Additionally, candidates with higher-level postgraduate qualifications which include pedagogical and business knowledge are exempted from taking the section of the examination relating these fields. Alternatively, if the candidate has passed a master examination which includes pedagogical or business knowledge, then they are also exempted from taking the section of the examination relating to pedagogical and business knowledge. The request for an exemption has to be submitted at the same time as the application to take the examination and the examining board chair gives their approval.

3. Description of technical arrangements

3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualification framework

3.1.a) What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

The first term used by a narrow group of professionals in Hungary (in the second half of the ‘90s) was “előzetes tudás értékelése”, a verbatim translation of the English term *prior learning assessment*.³¹ (It is to be noted that in Hungarian there is often no distinction between *learning* and *knowledge*; the word *tudás* is used for both. – translator’s note.)

In the late 1990s one of the Hungarian regional training centres launched an experiment with the help of a Canadian expert. To date their web site has contained a menu item that offers this procedure. The description includes PLA/ETFE, ETFE standing for *prior learning assessment and recognition*. However, this denomination is not known or used outside this particular institution. Cf. the web site of the training centre: <http://www.szrmkk.hu>

Because of its length, the original term is often shortened to *recognition of prior knowledge/learning*.

The terms *recognition of non-formal and informal learning* have increasingly been used roughly since 2000 (after the inception of the EC’s relevant materials). Again, this is a one-on-one translation; there is no Hungarian acronym to abbreviate it and persistent usage is rather cumbersome. (Professionals often talk about “informal knowledge”, which is a misconception, as

³¹ The term *prior knowledge* is also used by educational professionals in the context of so-called constructive education.

informal indicates the way of acquisition – the knowledge itself is in no way different from knowledge acquired by other means.)

The 2001 Act on Adult Education and Training provides for “assessment of knowledge” (i.e. assessable prior knowledge that is in conformity with the training programme). Instead of *recognition* it speaks about *set-off*, in the narrower sense that the training institution takes into consideration one way or another the individual’s prior knowledge and experience when implementing the training programme; however, this is not done according to uniform regulations.

In practice, the main problem is that training is not organized for individuals but rather for groups and the provider should “take into consideration” highly diverse prior knowledge within a group.

3.1.b) Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages.

Since 1993 vocational qualifications recognised by the State have been provided for by a relevant decree in Hungary. Commonly known by its Hungarian acronym OKJ, the National Register of Vocational Qualifications (NRVQ) lists the qualifications that can be acquired in the context of vocational training. Initially the annual publication and updating of the Register fell within the competence of the Minister of Education; however, this changed several times over the past ten years and is again the responsibility of the Minister of Labour at present, in cooperation with the other portfolios concerned. Decisions regarding the creation of new vocational qualifications or discontinuing old ones are taken with the participation of economic stakeholders (employers, chambers of commerce, employee advocacies). Vocational qualification examinations required for the trades listed in the NRVQ are organized by designated institutions in accordance with the Rules of Vocational Examination. The requirements in relation to the trades listed in the NRVQ are determined by decrees of the ministers responsible for the particular trade. The vocational qualification examination must be taken before an independent board of examiners whose members include a chairperson delegated by the minister responsible for the particular vocational qualification, a representative of the institution organizing the vocational examination, and a representative of the regional chamber of the trade. In the mid-1990s the NRVQ contained about a thousand trades. This number was reduced to around 800 by 2005. In recent years several major projects were aimed at developing and linking modular vocational qualifications and training systems. Prepared by mid-2006, the revised Register contains 417 trades in the form of modules and partial qualifications building on each other.

The 1993 Act on Vocational Education and Training provides for the recognition of knowledge that can be certified by formal qualifications acquired elsewhere. Under the Act studies in vocational training institutions and higher education institutions will count towards the vocational qualification requirements in cases where the contents are identical. The application for recognition should be submitted to the head of the vocational training institution together with proof of prior studies and of meeting requirements. The extent of recognition is decided by the head of the institution. An appeal may be lodged against the decision with the Examination Centre. Similarly, based on successful examination(s) in the course of studies in vocational training institutions or higher education institutions exemption must be granted from retaking certain parts, subjects or courses (modules). The decision regarding exemption is taken before the beginning of the vocational qualification examination by the Board of Examination upon the proposal of the head of the institution organizing the examination. The request for exemption can

only be denied if the statutory requirements of exemption are not met. The grades of the part or subject of the examination are determined by the Board of Examiners based on the grades achieved at the previously taken examination. (An example from the experience of a non-formal training provider: If an adult who only completed two years of studies at the College of Health Care without acquiring a diploma wants to obtain medical masseur qualifications in the context of adult continuing education s/he may be granted exemption from the anatomy examination if the chairperson of the Board of Examiners so decides after examining the relevant documents – in this case, the transcript of the higher education institution shows that the anatomy examination has been successfully taken. According to other experts' opinion, the transcript is not proof of qualifications, so it cannot be interpreted in the context of the law providing for exemption.)

The qualifications in the new modular National Register of Vocational Qualifications introduced gradually from 2006 allow for the recognition of certain ECDL modules. In terms of recognition of informal learning, linking the ECDL to formal education can be considered as a kind of indirect application. Pursuant to the agreement between the Ministry of Education and John von Neumann Computer Society, coordinator of the ECDL examination system in Hungary, from the 2004/2005 academic year students who pass the intermediate or higher level secondary school final examination in ICT with *excellent* result are entitled to request an ECDL certificate against payment of the most preferential registration fee. The ECDL can be requested within two years from the secondary school final examination. An increasing number of higher education institutions recognise the ECDL in their academic requirements, thus holders of an ECDL may be granted full or partial exemption. This can be interpreted as a form of PLA outsourcing.

Transfer between the National Register of Vocational Qualifications and the ECDL is also ensured by the agreement between the Ministry of Education and John von Neumann Computer Society. Accordingly, holders of certain ICT-related qualifications listed in the NRVQ (for example economic information technologist I, information systems analyst, ICT expert, information technology programmer, etc.) are exempted from the examination if they acquired one of the listed qualifications in or after 1994. Conditional exemption may be granted to holders of other vocational qualifications on the Register if they began training before 2001. If the persons concerned have themselves registered by an ECDL centre and pay the registration fee (about 40 euros) and serve proof of their acquisition of the relevant vocational qualification the ECDL will be mailed to them.

3.1.c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?

Taking a foreign language proficiency examination is (and, in theory, has always been) independent from where and how the person has mastered the language (e.g. by spending a longer time abroad, independent learning or private language lessons, through informal learning with the help of native speaking relatives, or in the context of public education). The examination has been open for decades, and in this sense, while there are clearly delineated examination requirements the foreign language proficiency examination can also be considered as a specific process of RNFIL.

No wonder foreign languages and ICT are the two areas where RNFIL seems to be working. Both areas are closely linked to private activities and the world of work (i.e. the areas where a large part of informal learning takes place); moreover, both readily lend themselves to modular structuring.

There are trades and activities where it is impossible to acquire work experience without qualifications (for example some of the health professions, driving, activities requiring an official

license, etc.). Conversely, RNFIL is expected to be applied in areas where work experience can be gained irrespective of qualifications.

The difficulty in linking the qualification framework to the RNFIL procedure is that while it is relatively easy to break down knowledge of vocational theory to assessable components, recognition of practical knowledge and skills would require a consensus across the entire trade. Moreover, it would call for major development efforts, as hundreds of qualifications would have to be broken down to its components and standardised to this end.

In higher education there is a strong resistance to the RNFIL both at the level of institutions and in the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The culture of knowledge transferred and supervised by the lecturer in a highly formal framework by means of old traditional methods still prevails.³² This concept does not embrace the idea of recognising non-formal and informal learning: it is met first by incomprehension, then rejection as it questions the general self and public concept of the exclusivity and omnipotence of professors to possess and transfer knowledge. In a society such as the Hungarian, classified, with some exaggeration, as “post-feudal” by some opinions, holding positions is extremely important. A position confers professional authority upon its holder. Any aspiration that might reach its goal “circumventing” the position is to be attacked by the order of position – it is seen as an attempt to undermine the position by showing the goal can be reached without interference by the person filling the position.

3.1.d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing ‘legitimacy’ both in working life and in the educational system?

According to its developers, the NRVQ renewed by 2006 makes a conscious attempt to recognise non-formal and informal learning.

There is no such difference in higher education.

3.1.e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

Hungary is rather characterised by parallel structures; prior learning assessment has not proven to be a special driving force towards the development of a national qualification framework.

As regards the qualification system, the National Register of Vocational Qualifications has existed since 1994. According to its developers, the updated, modular version prepared by 2006 is favourable for RNFIL procedures but this was not the main consideration in the background of the works.

³² Higher education in Hungary is characterised by the Humboldtian tradition of disregarding the educational relevance of the socio-economic environment of the educational institution. This contributes to aloofness and exclusivity of academia, which, in its pursuit of the truth considers external impulses as disturbing factors. In this respect it largely differs from the American model, for instance, which regards universities deeply embedded in their social environment.

Hungary received the European Qualifications Framework with incomprehension and rejection, not least because an output-oriented concept is seen as alien from not only education but numerous other areas of life. At the same time, the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated the development of a Hungarian National Qualification Framework (NQF), following the European trend set by the European Qualification Framework. The concept is currently at the stage of consultation with representatives of stakeholders. Based on the agreement between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Culture, once the concept has been approved, development and implementation of the Hungarian NQF will start in 2007. The Hungarian NQF concept proposes the framework should be considered a strategic tool that, on the one hand, supports the individual's planning of learning and career, and on the other hand, serves as a point of reference for providers in developing their programmes. This will promote coordination of training outputs between the branches of education (primary, vocational and tertiary education) and the various areas of the economy, an effort that has to date been unsuccessful. The development and introduction of the Hungarian NQF may be an opportunity for expanding conscious practices for the recognition of the achievements of non-formal and informal learning by, among other steps, creating an institutional system that supports it. These efforts are supported by several of the priorities and measures of the Second National Development Plan (2007-2013). Reservations regarding the EQF are highlighted by observations formulated in the course of the nationwide consultation process. It can be said that development of the Hungarian qualifications framework is a ministry initiative without any social support.

3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

Higher education in Hungary has been undergoing significant changes in recent years. However, this does not mean the modernising effect of the Bologna process, rather it is the impact of the transforming traditional educational markets. The traditionally oriented higher education still considers the provision of subsidized full-time undergraduate studies to 18 to 25 year-olds to be its main task. Older age groups and students choosing part-time studies have the only option of correspondent programmes where tuition fees are going up as state subsidy is shrinking. Distance learning and other part-time forms of education are negligible in terms of their volume. With the age group 18-20 the demographic bottom reached the traditional market of higher education enrolments. On the other hand, increasing numbers of part-time (correspondent) programmes launched in recent years helped higher education to work off the backlog of masses of those who could not make it to higher education because of limited intake or did not want to continue their studies for some other reason and now changed their minds and decided to obtain a degree while working. Built from bottom up, the market of traditional full-time programmes and the market filled by older students who want to enrol higher education at a later stage after leaving secondary school narrowed simultaneously, which resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of both applicants and enrolments (see the table and fig. in section 1.1). Moreover, the government imposes strict limitations on the numbers of students in the subsidized programmes. This means that higher education institutions lose not only students but also income from the state and the market, as they have to compete for students with a growing number of small and flexible private institutions in a shrinking market. Private institutions recognised the opportunities offered by the regional market that stems from the Hungarian population's extremely poor propensity to mobility, and focus on medium-sized towns not covered by the large higher education institutions with an offer consisting of basic and higher-level vocational programmes, taking away potential students from the larger state institutions located at a distance of 50-100 kilometres. The joint effect of these processes is that several institutions struggle with lack of

funds. The competition for students is very keen, so higher education institutions are strongly opposed to any measures that might result in further loss of potential students. Thus the establishment and operation of a procedure and the related institutional framework to certify vocational or higher educational qualifications by recognising knowledge and competences acquired in the context of non-formal and informal learning rather than within the formal system of education would be contrary to their fundamental interests. Conversely, a recognition practice within the higher education system might be acceptable for them as it would make all those who do not have formal secondary or higher educational qualifications but are in possession of the required competencies “eligible for enrolment”, which would increase the number of students in their programmes. Nevertheless, it will be a slow and difficult process for academia to recognise competencies acquired outside the formal framework, even if they are validated by a formal procedure – after all, higher education institutions have been the depositories of the right to offer highly formal programmes providing qualifications guaranteed and certified by the state, and the right to issue the relevant diplomas that are considered to be public documents. The same applies to faculty, who have been nurtured by this institutional concept and environment. As indicated above, recognition of credits is by no means a smooth process even if they were obtained in another, also accredited, higher education institution, which may even be partner to institutional cooperation. They may be more willing to accept validation if they also participate in validation processes and realise that they have an expanding effect on the market. Even so, it may take them years to come around this.

3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

3.2.a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)

The credit system first appeared in Hungary in the 1990s in the context of spontaneous institutional reforms after the political changeover. It was regarded primarily as a tool for upgrading curricula and modernising the organization of education. Initially, the institutions (or faculties) at the vanguard of reforms developed their credit systems independently. A comprehensive survey conducted in 1996³³ found that each newly introduced system was similar in that they were accompanied by curricular changes and were shaped according to the proposals or ideas of a go-ahead senior manager (dean, president or vice president). Their success was also due to their control from the higher echelons: in institutions where similar initiatives had been taken but the senior management changed along the road curricular transformation and the development of the credit system generally came to a halt. Another typical feature was the rather differing structure and underlying philosophy of the credit systems due to the different experiences faculty and education administration staff gained in foreign countries. Consequently, transfer between the systems was not possible. In other words, the same processes occurred in Hungary, albeit at a smaller scale involving only a few institutions, as in England a decade

³³ Survey of the possibilities of introduction of the credit system in Hungary. Tempus-CME 01219-95 project, MoPEC, 1996. (In 1995 the Hungarian Parliament passed a resolution on the guidelines of higher education development. The resolution envisioned substantial reforms and restructuring in a number of areas. A feasibility study was launched late in 1995 by the Federation of the Hungarian Higher Education Associations, the Educational Research Institute and the Ministry of Public Education and Culture in the form of a joint research project financed by TEMPUS-CME. It consisted of three clearly delineated sub-projects one of which was the feasibility study of the credit system and the modularisation of curricula. In 1996 and 1997 numerous surveys and studies were prepared, documents were analysed, interviews were made and background reports were written. The result of these efforts was a series of proposals to the government.

earlier that resulted in the emergence of regional credit consortia and the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) that promoted transfer between the regional credit systems.

This was the period when the Higher Education Reform Programme was developed and prepared for financing from World Bank loans with the assistance of World Bank experts. A cardinal element of the programme was the introduction of the credit system as an indispensable tool for the much-needed curricular reforms.

The 1993 Higher Education Act was substantially amended in 1996. The idea of a credit system repeatedly appears in the amended text. The Act authorized the government to develop a detailed regulation of the credit system by virtue of decrees.

After a year of preparation the government's Decree on the introduction of the credit system was promulgated in the spring of 1998. The Decree provided for the mandatory introduction of the credit system from September 2002 in all higher education institutions operated or recognised by the state. It also formulated guidelines of developing the credit system for the four-year period before its introduction. The aim was to pave the way for systems that would be either in conformity with, or easily transferable to the nationwide system determined by the Decree in order to promote student mobility. The parameters determined in the Decree reflected the main features of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The Decree also provided for the establishment of a National Credit Board, a professional body to promote the development works, as well as an office of coordination and services.

The government Decree on the introduction of the credit system was amended at the end of 2000. It tightened the nationwide system in that it excluded the possibility for institutions to deviate from the national parameters. In September 2002 about half, and in September 2003 all of the Hungarian Higher education institutions introduced the credit system in their full-time programmes, generally in a rolling format, from the first year onwards. The credit system had to be introduced in continuing education, part-time programmes and PhD programmes as of September 2004.

Preparation, introduction and the first experiences of the credit system were monitored by several surveys over the past years. The most recent monitoring was conducted in the spring of 2005.³⁴ Based on the findings of the project, the credit system has only been implemented at a formal level, i.e. it did not meet earlier hopes of modernisation: no up-to-date methods were introduced in the institutions' curricular organisation or educational processes, or in the assessment of academic achievement and there was no breakthrough in supporting student mobility. While the regulation of the credit system under the new Higher Education Act and its Decree of Implementation adopted in late 2005 fractionally opened the door towards the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by awarding credits, the best word to describe the reception of this possibility by academia is "incomprehension".

The principles of the Hungarian credit system are the same as those of the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS). Credits are calculated on the basis of student working hours, which include contact hours plus time spent with independent work. So the latter component relies on non-formal and informal student work, yet here lies the main difficulty of application in Hungary as well as in Europe as a whole as there is no uniform and accepted procedure for measuring students' individual work, and the system reckons with an estimated amount of time a student with average abilities spends at independent work. Therefore the credit is a quantitative measurement: 30 working hours are awarded one credit. In Hungary this value is set forth by law, so this is the basis of credit calculation in all cycles and forms of education at every Hungarian higher education institution. Consequently, because of the ECTS, in theory

³⁴ Nationwide Credit Monitoring Survey started by the Ministry of Education. The data were recorded by the Gallup Organisation Hungary and professional supervision was provided by the Professional Body consisting of members of the National Credit Council. For details of the project, see <http://www.kreditlap.hu/kredit/jelenleg/monitoring2005-2006.asp>

there is no impediment to credit transfer between the various institutions, levels and programmes even at an international scale. The law promoted transfer and recognition by imposing the obligation of recognition on higher education institutions: “Student performance having earned credit shall be recognised by any other higher education institution – provided that the relevant preconditions are met – irrespective of the higher education institution and the level of training at which it was accrued. Recognition – on the basis of the programme in the subject concerned – shall exclusively be performed by way of comparing the knowledge content serving as the basis for the credit. The credit shall be recognised if there is a seventy-five percent overlap between the contents compared.”³⁵ This is a rather formal prescription and is based on identical knowledge. The decree of implementation of the Higher Education Act provides for awarding credit to knowledge acquired through informal learning: “curricular requirements shall not have to be met if the student has mastered the relevant knowledge earlier and can serve sufficient proof thereof. In order to recognise the requirement met through work experience higher education institutions shall verify the acquisition of relevant knowledge in the form of written, oral or practical examination.”³⁶ However, this paragraph is about “knowledge” rather than competencies, and thus conveys traditional concepts to institutions. Moreover, the predecessor of the current Decree effective from the spring of 2006 in strict legal terms did not allow recognition acquired outside the system of higher education:³⁷ “The higher education institution shall only recognise its students’ credit which has been accrued (...) at another Hungarian or foreign higher education institution.” [Section 2(1)]. So the possibility of converting knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning into credit that is transferable in higher education is a relatively new concept in Hungarian higher education.

A questionnaire-based survey conducted at the end of 2006 among education administration managers of higher education institutions (registrars, heads of studies departments) also reveals that recognition of prior learning predominantly involves knowledge that has earned credit at another higher education institution, but even this is not general practice. Most of the institutions do not, or only minimally support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The survey also pointed out that students are equally ignorant of their opportunities: from the answers of the institutions polled, very few students request recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and those who do submit such requests generally want to have their compulsory practical courses recognised. Interviews with faculty reveal that the majority of them have not even heard of this possibility, and while they welcomed the issue, most of them reject the idea of recognising non-formal and informal learning, or only consider it as a theoretical option and certainly not applicable in their own areas. Those who are more lenient consider recognition applicable mainly for higher-level vocational training and even more so for postgraduate specialist training, primarily for practical courses. Interestingly enough, respondents raised the need for short-term credit-earning courses or programmes for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning whose credit can then be transferred to formal undergraduate and graduate education according to the statutory rules. This is a remarkable opinion as it reveals the general attitude of faculty: they are prepared to accept new features if they can be handled in the context of the established procedures but are not receptive of unusual, non-formalised solutions.

The credit system is applied in every Hungarian higher education institution and it encompasses almost all of the students included in the system, albeit at a formal level in some institutions. There is much to be done yet in the field of recognition of independent student work included in the credit on its merit. The 2005 Credit Monitoring Survey quoted above highlights the fact that

³⁵ Higher Education Act, Section 58(7)

³⁶ Decree No. 79 of 2006 of the Government, Section 23(9)

³⁷ Decree No. 200 of 2000 of the Government on the Introduction of the Credit System and a Credit-Based Record of Studies

in many institutions the number of hours students spend with individual learning is very low (not even twice the number of contact hours). Student surveys revealed that in two-thirds of the cases even this low rate is overestimated (in half of the cases, significantly) compared to the actual time spent with individual work. In the current credit allocation practice, the possible or expected time spent with independent work is not estimated – rather it is determined by multiplying the number of contact hours with a certain factor (1 or possibly 1.5). The main focus is on contact hours and the credits remaining after allocating the 60 credits to be earned per academic year is spread across the courses. In other words, independent informal learning is not recognised even where it is prescribed by statutory provisions or institutional commitment (for example the Erasmus University Charter) or international agreements (Learning Agreement).

Professional organisations or sometimes laws prescribe regular in-service training for degree holders for practising their profession. The credit system is not expanded to this type of training, and even where it does, it is not in a systematic fashion. For instance, teachers are required to participate in 120 hours of in-service training every seven years, and only the contact hours are recognised. Health workers and doctors have to secure 100 and 250 credits respectively every five years, of which 75 and 100 credits can be respectively acquired by specific practice (thus informal learning is recognised), and the rest should be earned by participating in courses with contact hours. (Admittedly, credits can also be earned by participation at conferences, which can be regarded as non-formal learning.) Mandatory in-service training in legal and public administration jobs is not included in the credit system at all (but they involve a substantial requirement of practical work).

In theory, institutions may sign mutual agreements on credit equivalence and transfer but we are not aware of the existence of any such agreements.

All in all, the credit system is implemented at a formal level and was unable to import up-to-date methods and novel solutions in curriculum design and methods of education and assessment (as it was the main intent originally, and less the support of international mobility). However, it did create a small opening towards PLA.

The framework is provided for by law and is based on the ECTS protocol. It encompasses all levels of higher education. PLA is addressed by some of the provisions but only as a possibility. It is implemented by every higher education institution at a formal level. Its use beyond formalities is at its very initial stage with a lot of problems still to be tackled. Even the credit earned at other Hungarian and foreign higher education institutions are recognised with great reluctance.

3.2.b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

Under the legal regulations providing for the statutory implementation of the credit system (Higher Education Act and the relevant Decree of Implementation) higher education institutions should set up their Credit Transfer Committees and this body will be responsible for the recognition of formal and non-formal learning and the credit it has earned. The same transpires from the responses returned by institutions to the questionnaire sent to them in conjunction with this country report: each of them indicated the Credit Transfer Committee as the body responsible for credit arrangements. Institutions set up the rules regarding the powers and functioning of the Credit Transfer Committee in their Rules of Operation. There is no difference between formal and non-formal learning in terms of responsibility for recognition.

3.2.c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

As the measurement of individual student work is not clearly delineated it appears in the credit as an estimated value based on the time necessary for an average student to be spent with independent work. Because of the highly detailed training requirements regulated by credits and contact hours institutions allocate credits to contact hours and in many cases barely take into account the work students put into their studies outside the contact hours.

On the average, courses consist of 30 contact hours (in practice this means 2 x 40-45 minutes for 14-15 weeks) and they earn two credits (one credit for the contact hours and one credit for independent student work). This highly extensive and formal education is the prevailing practice in Hungarian higher education. The few exceptions are private (mainly foreign) institutions (e.g. the Central European University).

3.2.d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

There are two opposite drives among students. For some, the main driving force is to get a degree within a shorter time, and to avoid retake of courses that have already earned credit. In addition, greater flexibility at the level of curricula allow more room for students to avoid courses where credit is hard to earn (because of more rigorous requirements or more demanding lecturers), and to “hunt” for cheap and easy credits. On the other hand, the opposite is also true: slower progress and administratively easier deferment is an equally important driving force as it facilitates part-time studies for working students; there is more room for personal interests, and it is easier to tackle situations related to the student’s social background. At the same time, students strongly resent that equal work does not earn them equal credit and that their general workload is uneven as they progress through the curriculum.

A large number of institutions are not motivated by the credit system: they see it as a statutory constraint. Some institutions with larger student numbers realise that the credit system can be an efficient tool in education administration and assessment as it reconciles student interests with learning pathways. However, recognition of prior learning and the resulting savings on teaching effort does not seem to be a consideration anywhere.

The introduction of the credit system was surrounded by general distrust by all stakeholders. Lecturers were afraid of layoffs in the wake of decreasing contact hours. The government was concerned that institutions would make use of the possibility to recognise individual student work and would consequently reduce their teaching activities. To prevent this, the law provides for minimum contact hours and credit. On the contrary, under the pressure of their teaching staff to retain contact hours for fear of losing their jobs, institutions did their best to increase rather than cut back teaching.

3.2.e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

Conceived according to the German pattern, the dual vocational training model offers practical experience in an organised framework at school workshops or in the context of placements. The rate of experiential learning (in percentage) is set forth in the National Register of Vocational Qualifications (without using the concepts and procedures of the credit system). Practical training is an integral part of the school-based vocational training system but it is not credit-based.

The same applies to non-school based vocational training (as both are regulated under the NRVQ). In practice this training model was undermined by the collapse of large companies in

the early 1990s and in the absence of the former real-life setting, vocational practice was confined to the workshops of the training institutions.

Both the previous and the currently effective Higher Education Act regulate the transfer from a vocational training (provided it is higher-level vocational training) to undergraduate programmes and the recognition of learning in the vocational training system. Learning acquired in the vocational training system will only count towards the academic requirements if it is from the same area, i.e. if the undergraduate studies can be seen as the “continuation” of the vocational training. The institution must by law recognise the prior learning of students transferring from vocational training to undergraduate programmes and award them 30 to 60 credits towards the credit requirement of the undergraduate programme. (See also in section 1.1.d.)

3.2.f) Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

The non-full-fledged and ad hoc surveys conducted so far indicate there is hardly any practice in higher education for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by credit. There are two typical areas where recognition occurs, mainly in private colleges: one is computer skills, provided the student has proved his skills at a standard examination and also presents the relevant certificate (e.g. ECDL examination); the other is foreign language skills, which are also recognised on the basis of a certificate of proficiency. At the same time a great many institutions consider these skills as so-called criterion requirements i.e. they set them as prerequisites for graduation without awarding credits for them. So prior computer and foreign language learning only appears as meeting the academic requirements before the latest deadline set by the institution.

Many institutions prescribe compulsory external practice or internship (at companies or institutions). This, however, is part of the formal learning process, a requirement set forth in the curriculum. Most of the institutions award no credit for the practice but handles it as a prerequisite for graduation, similarly to foreign language skills. In part-time programmes several institutions recognise the student’s work in his regular job as the compulsory practical course (and awards the credit determined in the curriculum) provided the job is more or less in conformity with the direction of the programme. However, institutions see this as a way to ease the organisational and administrative burden of finding a practice site rather than the recognition of learning while working by awarding credit.

3.3. Assessment methods and procedures

3.3.a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

Section 17 of the 2001 Adult Education and Training Act sets prior learning assessment in adult education and training at the point of entry. Linking the procedure to training institutions and training programmes strictly limits the potential target groups. When writing the country background report we started collecting additional information and we found training providers follow highly varied practices.

The National Institute of Adult Education (NFI by its Hungarian acronym) launched a pilot project with the participation of 53 training institutions. The project opted for the test as assessment method, mainly because it seemed to be the cheapest procedure. The participating institutions use the tests developed in the context of the project in different ways. The institutions we interviewed make their applicants write a test and some of them also apply additional oral assessment.

Language schools have applied PLA for decades as a tool to classify their students into groups. The 2001 Act essentially made this procedure mandatory for every provider. The Professional Association of Language Schools, a nationwide advocacy organisation of private language schools created in 1992 on the basis of voluntary membership developed guidelines for PLA as a mandatory procedure. Since in language teaching the focus is on communication skills, PLA should also be focused on oral examination and no scope is given to computerised assessment at this stage. Other providers combine NFI's methods with their own tools. Some language schools do their own oral and written assessment instead of applying the National Institute of Adult Education tests, as they did not like the specific test items.

The Székesfehérvár Regional Training Centre has propagated their method since the late 1990s (see also section 2.12.d). Their procedure is as follows: Application – Familiarisation with the training programme – Selection of the module – Written test – Assessment of the test and decision on whether or not the candidate is exempted from attending the module. The procedure was first applied for ICT training (but later its implementation came to a halt).

The Pécs Regional Training Centre offers the assessment procedure with a slightly different focus as part of its adult training services. Their web site at www.prkk.hu states “PLAR (prior learning assessment and recognition is the term they use) is the recognition that any learning, skills and aptitude acquired through experience in every walk of life may be equivalent to school-based training and as such, they can be measured, evaluated and recognised towards a training programme. In the context of PLAR highly qualified professionals use appropriate and reliable tools to assess the learning the applicant acquired through non-formal vocational or other training or from experience and which can be recognised in the training programmes offered by the adult training institutions. In its current format PLAR is the assessment of knowledge, experience and aptitude gained through life, work and learning. Its purpose is to help people who want to learn in identifying, documenting and presenting the knowledge, experience and skills they gained in the course of their work and life.”

There is no uniform assessment procedure in higher education. The relevant law uses the term “certified” knowledge but the method of verification is the institutions’ competence.

Our quick poll conducted among higher education institutions revealed a variety of assessment procedures. The majority review and assess the applicant’s “evidence” of prior learning (such as certificates, written works, portfolios, etc.). Other institutions stage written and/or oral examinations in addition to assessing evidence. Yet others claim they do not conduct any kind of PLA procedure. It is clear from previous feedback on the assessment and recognition of prior learning and credit acquired in higher education that lecturers tend to accept or reject previously earned credit primarily on the basis of the lecturer of the particular course (the lecturer’s academic qualifications, renown and acceptance) and/or of the awarding institution (its rating and acceptance). In other words, they do not conduct assessment procedures but develop their position along “heuristic” principles.

3.3.b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based

assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.).

1/ The dominant method of assessment is testing. One reason is that there are sample tests to follow; testing is a well-known method and trainers consider it as an objective form of assessment; moreover, in their opinion, “tests only need to be developed once, after that they come cheap”. An important consideration is that tests can be automated by means of ICT tools so they save on human work.

According to the project manager of the National Institute of Adult Education testing is evidently chosen mainly for reasons of savings. Under the project an expert was invited to write a manual about the methodology of developing and evaluating tests.

2/ In the 1990s there were other approaches as well. In the late ‘90s some people working in employment administration were trained in portfolio development (some of them were familiarised with the French “bilan de compétence” system). Foreign experts held training courses in Hungary, and staff from the newly established regional training centres went on short study visits (e.g. to Ireland). Unfortunately this knowledge was not incorporated in the daily routine of the organisations.

The portfolio method and the formative approach are lesser-known methods of assessment particularly in Hungary. These two methods are far removed from the general Hungarian concept of the dominance of formal training. They are individualised approaches to training and learning that have not yet been embraced by Hungarian education and training professionals. While the methods exist to some extent at the level of employment provision and services, they are applied in exceptional cases (for instance in problem cases). Civil organisations tend to use them more frequently (examples can be found in adult training programmes targeted at underprivileged groups, see in section 1.4.).

3/ In the vocational training system “practical examination” is widely used as part of the vocational qualification examination. (The qualification examination consists of a written examination assessing knowledge of vocational theory. At the practical examination candidates are given the task of preparing a specific piece of work or solve a situation that occurs in the practice of the trade.) The ECDL examination, which is the recognition of ICT skills, also consists of practical tasks to be solved.

4/ There is no special Hungarian term for declarative assessment; perhaps the description of competencies in CVs can be regarded as such. Europass and similar devices also fall in this category.

3.3.c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

The requirements of the National Register of Vocational Qualifications (NRVQ) are developed in accordance with the procedure set forth by law. Publication of the NRVQ is currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (earlier it was the competence of the Ministry of Education). The competent ministry is indicated for each trade. (See section 3.1.b for more detail).

There are significant differences between regulated and other trades. Regulated trades and professions are controlled by the competent chambers: they “own” and supervise the

trade/professional and occupational standards. They also organise and supervise training for this task (for example they are involved in legal specialist training). Academic standards, and partly professional standards are controlled by the Ministry of Education through the Accreditation Committee. In other cases, the three types of standards are not separated. Standards are owned by the Ministry of Education and supervised through the Accreditation Committee. The competent ministries have a slight indirect influence on the shaping of standards in their relevant trades and professions and even this influence is becoming weaker.

3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your country of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.

The procedure set forth by the Act on Adult Education and Training is conceived as part of the rights of individuals (rights of the citizen) and is mandatory for every provider. We are not aware of any debate in this respect.

3.3.e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?

The Act on Adult Education and Training provides for the conditions of accreditation of institutions. Thus quality assurance is connected to the operation of training institutions rather than to PLA. This can be regarded as services provided to students, including prior learning assessment, forming part of the quality assurance system.

3.4. Other country-specific issues and facts

3.4.a) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

This description of the Hungarian system is unilateral in that we only have reliable data of only one of the two clearly delineated areas of RNFIL: training. The report itself as well as the pieces of legislation and experimental projects address only the educational and training side. We have very little information about the practices of the economic side. Based on our rather fragmented knowledge (from, for example, a few case studies concerning multinational companies established in Hungary), it appears that the integration and promotion of non-formal and informal learning is an integral part of the HR development policy of large companies and of corporate knowledge management practices. All we know about the many possible ways of recognising non-formal and informal learning is that there are numerous partial procedures of many different names in use. Multinational companies established in Hungary adapted many innovative procedures from the practice of their parent company and apply incentives and special recognition of non-formal and informal learning in their internal career promotion system in an increasingly conscious fashion. Exploration of these corporate practices requires systematic research. Based on our experience, it seems that the corporate sector is way ahead of the formal school-based or adult continuing education sector in terms of recognising the role and nature of informal learning, the individualisation of training, and in general, the tools used in their training culture. Conversely, it is also an increasingly prevalent corporate practice that the HRM strategy is part of the company's overall business strategy and is regarded as a depository of competitiveness. Consequently, companies allow very little insight into their HRM strategy even for researchers. For the same reason they do not share their innovative ideas in the field of training with other companies or representatives of the formal training sector.

Internal corporate practices are only limited by relevant labour and employment regulations. Employee advocacies play a minimal role in formal and on-the-job inner training (and related procedures including RNFIL), as they have no clear position in this respect that they could represent.

Because of the nature of the Hungarian training traditions and the supremacy of the formal approach, the recognition of informal learning is dominated by the summative rather than the formative method. Formative assessment and the portfolio method, and in general, any method focusing on the individual and the individual's history appears primarily in the culture of helping civil organisations, in their work and projects aimed at specific target groups. The civil sector has undergone a dynamic development in Hungary but civil organisations are still largely dependent on government support and play only a minor part in non-school based training and work experience (cf. the appreciation of the civil sector in European countries), nor do they have a strong say in the representation of civil values (and competencies). It is encouraging that a survey on lifelong learning conducted at the end of 2005 (Török, 2006) found that 5.3% of the 18-65-year-old Hungarian population stated they had learnt something in the previous 12 months in the context of civil or political work related to Church life or activities done for civil organisations. At the same time, the multifarious forms of informal learning are typically not considered or called learning by respondents.

4. Stakeholder behaviour

4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders

4.1.a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition.

Over the past fifteen years an extensive four-pillar training sector has emerged in addition to the school-based (public and tertiary) education system. The four pillars are as follows:

- 1/ State-run training institutions (primarily vocational training schools and nine regional training centres);
- 2/ private training providers (their number are around 700-1000);
- 3/ non-profit training organisations and the civil sector; and
- 4/ training offered by labour organisations and employers (i.e. inner training at the workplace).

Non-formal learning (Stakeholders Grid)

Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.)	Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.)	Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.)	Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.)	Main user(s) (Specify)
For-profit private training companies		Depending on the type of training, language proficiency certificate, NRVQ qualification	National Adult Education Accreditation Body (FAT in Hungarian) County Employment Centres	In theory anybody
Regional training centres		Depending on the type of training, e.g. NRVQ qualification, certificate of attendance	Currently the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	In theory anybody; users are mainly unemployed or workers in the region
Company's in-house training		Recognised by the company itself (e.g. by granting promotion or reclassification in a higher wage category)		Workers of the company
Non-profit training organisations				Mostly special target groups (e.g. Roma, women, people at a disadvantage)
Universities, colleges	State regulated examination system (e.g. NRVQ qualification examinations); some institutions recognise some of the learning so acquired as transferable to regular higher education programmes.			Adults, part-time students, degree holders

Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Types of skills gained by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeracy, business protocol, negotiation skills, etc.)	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body	Main users (specify)
The National Institute of Adult Education developed tests in the following areas: English Mathematics Marketing Business communication Timber industry	The institution where the applicant wants to learn	For instance exemption from an examination module	Compliance with the statutory provisions is supervised by the local employment centre	In theory anybody but the existing modules limit the area of intake
ICT skills	ECDL examination centre	ECDL Licence	International standard, managed by John von Neumann Computer Society	In theory anybody
FL skills (e.g. language acquired abroad)	Language proficiency examination system	Certificate of foreign language proficiency	Legal regulation by the state + professional body	In theory anybody

4.2. Access

4.2.a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HED, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

There are no such conditions.

4.2.b) How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

In the narrower sense set forth by the Adult Education and Training Act, in theory every provider should assess applicants' prior learning. In practice this means a much smaller group of institutions. No data are available.

PLA is a general practice at language schools.

Currently there are 400 ECDL examination centres throughout the country.

4.2.c) Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.)'. Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

The project launched by the National Institute of Adult Education is not widely known even among education professionals. Their database includes tests and test results are available on the Internet but only for the participating institutions.

A small number of training companies that use a recognition system upload a short notice on their web site indicating the availability of a recognition procedure (e.g. regional training centres).

We are not aware of any information activity relating specifically to the procedure.

4.3. Participation

4.3.a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?

Developed in the context of the National Institute of Adult Education project, the database also serves for collecting data on test users. Only a smaller number of the 53 participating institutions uses the system. There are data about the participants' age, sex and test result from about 15 institutions. But on the whole, the system was used by so few participants that according to the project manager, statistical analysis is impossible due to the insufficiency of data.

The manager of the ECDL examination system was able to provide statistical data about the participants. Half of the ECDL examination applicants are students. The proportion of women is 61.8%. In terms of age, the great majority of applicants have left school (although this cannot be stated with certainty due to the breakdown of age groups).

Table 5 ECDL candidates by age

Age groups (years)	Numbers	%
Under 16	70.700	28.8
17-34	107.742	43.9
35-54	63.181	25.7
55-74	3.719	1.5
Total	245.342	100.0

Source: data from the Hungarian ECDL headquarters

We have no information on the number of language proficiency examination candidates who have not been involved in formal or non-formal language learning (i.e. those who want to obtain evidence of their informally acquired language skills), nor do we have data on the number of candidates involved in non-formal language learning (at language courses) before the examination.

4.3.b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

No such data are available.

4.3.c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the 'learning leads to learning' and 'training leads to training' track? Who constitutes the 'disadvantaged group' in your country?

The main target groups where RNFIL procedures could be a driving force to be reintegrated in the labour market and to motivate learning are groups with low educational attainment, the unemployed and the Roma.

The existence of this potential, albeit not articulated, demand also transpired from the findings of research carried out in 2005. (Tót, 2006, also see section 1.4.e) Sixty life pathway interviews were conducted about the informal learning of unemployed respondents with low educational attainment. Much informally acquired learning could be identified from the interviews that the respondents benefited from in the grey economy (carer and nurse of the elderly, housekeeper, seamstress, outside worker in arts and crafts, etc.). It would be potentially possible for these people to obtain NRVQ qualification based on the informally acquired skills and learning if appropriate assessment procedures were used together with some additional training where necessary. One of the surveyed areas was training of social caregivers. At the stage of admission previous experience was taken into consideration to some extent (a candidate, who brought meals to the home of elderly clients stood in for the social worker who was temporarily unavailable; in another case, the fact that the applicant had three children, including one with health problems, was regarded favourably as the admission board felt the candidate had experience in nursing and care). In the course of the training programme both teachers and the other participants benefited from these applicants' prior experience. (This, of course, is generally part and parcel of adult training methodology.) However, RNFIL procedures were not applied on an institutional basis and the candidates did not receive any formal advantage in the course of their training. The participation enhanced the group and the training content as they shared and discussed a number of real-life situations and problems with the group (e.g. special conflicts with the client, professional ways to handle personal involvement, etc.). However, it was never raised that they should be exempted from some of the modules – in fact, they themselves said they had no intention to shorten their training, which they thought involved a rather busy schedule, more like a crash course, and they would prefer to have more time to absorb the new learning. (The participants, generally lacking self-confidence, received the minimum wage for the duration of the training.) This example is a good illustration that previous life and work experience can be useful in non-formal training; it also shows that there is no strongly articulated need on the part of training participants to see institutionalised RNFIL (at least not among those with lower levels of schooling).

4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.

“Non-formal recognition” of prior learning and experience features very strongly in the recruitment policies of companies and other employers. With some exaggeration, non-formal and informal learning is recognised not in an institutionalised context but “informally”. This practical approach is rather widespread. It can be seen as the “social recognition” on non-formal learning as opposed to the “formalised” or “bureaucratic” recognition procedures that grew out of this practice.

4.4.b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)

A typical feature is that the new (2006) NRVQ contains the maximum number of training hours. One of the professionals involved in the NRVQ development works said while in such cases generally the minimum number of hours are stipulated, the actual situation calls for the opposite.

Limitations must be imposed on providers, who have a vested interest in stretching out training (and thus making them more expensive, particularly in the case of state-funded programmes).

4.4.c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

No such data or evidence are available.

4.4.d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

Tax incentives extended to companies is not related to RNFIL.

4.4.e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

The government's 2005 strategy on lifelong learning makes reference to disadvantaged groups in the promotion of access to training when it advocates for recognition of prior learning. (See section 2.1.a.)

4.4.f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

For stigmatisation see section 3.1.c).

There are no explicit attempts to change this situation.

4.4.g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements? There have been no such schemes. Steps taken towards the recognition of prior learning stayed essentially within the training sector.

4.5. Other country-specific issues and facts

Hungary has been concerned in the European Inventory Project that described and evaluated the RNFIL practice of 25 countries. The seven-page report on Hungary written by a foreign expert states, "Hungarian umbrella organisations on a sectoral level have not really started to set up concrete initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. There are no particular sectors, which are currently working on this topic. In general, there seems to be an expectation on the sectoral level that initiatives will be taken by the government and national bodies (ministries). There seems to be a centralized approach at work here. It functions very much top-down instead of bottom-up (coming from the industrial bodies or industries themselves)."³⁸

Recently a Hungarian higher education institution made a survey of 400 respondents among part-time (correspondent) students to find out to what extent they considered recognition of prior learning applicable at the admission procedure and also in the course of their training. The

³⁸ A European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning - Hungary (see in the list of references).

answers show that students tend to focus on lexical knowledge in the course of their studies and think RNFIL is more applicable in training than at the level of admission. (Varró, 2004)

4.5.a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

RNFIL does not appear in the world of work as an explicit and regulated procedure (what we have is companies' individual initiatives and practices without central regulation). Collective contracts (that concern less than half of workers) do not address these issues.

4.5.b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

We quote an interesting example. Recently the legal regulations concerning acquisition of a driver's license have been amended. Earlier an individual was eligible to acquire a driver's license (or for applying to the relevant training course and examination) if s/he could serve proof of having accomplished eight grades of primary education. (This alone was a strong incentive for some social groups to complete primary education if for nothing else, at least for the driver's license.). According to the amendment, verification of the candidate's literacy is the examiner's duty. There are no provisions as to how this should be done. We tried to find out how driving schools tackled the issue. To our inquiry over the telephone they answered driving school applicants "serve proof" of their literacy by completing the application form and signing a statement of literacy.

5. Case studies on benefits and barriers

No separate detailed case studies have been made to measure some of the benefits.

According to providers one of the basic, as yet unexplored, problems of the modular training system is the organisation of examinations. At the end of a training programme the board of examiners is set up only once. In a modular training structure, if each module is concluded by an examination (as suggested by training professionals in order to assure the quality of training) organisation duties and costs would skyrocket. These additional costs will have to be paid by either the participants or the state (in the case of state-financed programmes).

6. Conclusions

Legislation regarding prior learning assessment is part of the government's attempts to modernise vocational training and adult continuing education. However, the only achievement so far has been the partial adoption of a procedure that is considered up-to-date, and the concept and attitude that PLA represents has not always gone hand in hand with the introduction of the procedure. In Hungary there is only one area where there is an assessment and recognition procedure called PLA that functions according to a specific law (the Act on Adult Education and Training and 53 training institutions involved in the experiment).

The language proficiency and the ECDL examinations can also be considered as systems that have emerged independently. In addition to these, there are also a few minor experimental projects in progress.

These procedures are mainly aimed at creating transfers between formal training pathways. The interesting feature is that the ECDL also includes the recognition of non-formal learning, so at this point recognition of non-formal learning joins the formal training system.

Ways of utilisation of non-formal and informal learning can be identified in other areas, too, but these are generally latent practices before they become institutionalised, and their operation cannot really be described in this reference framework.

The entire education and training system is characterised by a lack of interest in recognising learning activities outside the system. Because the system and the stakeholders are as described above, recognition of non-formal and informal learning is expected to emerge as a practice integrated into, or closely linked to, the formal training system. It is commonly known that western countries have different practice in terms of the extent to which the recognition procedure depends on the formal education and training system. In some countries recognition has a certain degree of autonomy but it is still closely connected to the formal training system.

Very little is known about the regulation of RNFIL procedures and techniques. Most of the training professionals have no, or superficial, lopsided knowledge of the principles and approaches of prior learning assessment and recognition applied in different countries in Europe and overseas. They use some of the terms but with differing contents.

The articulation of stakeholders' interests is very poor. The dominance of formal training is coupled with training institutions' rejection of any solution that they see as competitive or as a threat to their autonomy and market position.

6.a) Which national goals, if any, in your country, are 'the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.

The connection exists on a verbal level – improving the flexibility of training, facilitating transfer between the educational branches, improving access to training.

6.b) What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalise the 'recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning' in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?

Education and training professionals consider these issues to be addressed in connection with the development of the Hungarian NQF.

6.c) Address important policy issues for your counties which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.

There is a general overrating of academic learning as opposed to practical knowledge and skills. This is conspicuous in the concept on adult continuing learning and non-formal learning. Only a small group of society conceives of learning in the classic context of lifelong learning and regards it as a long-term value even if it cannot be immediately or directly operationalised in the labour market; this group is aware of the importance of the general development of the adult personality. The system of cultural and educational institutions and the related activities of the previous era keep up these traditions. The integration of new learning tools in the traditional forms of learning only concerns a narrow group and is likely to emerge along the known lines of inequality. The data of Internet penetration also show the limitations of the Internet, in terms of access and intensity, as a tool in learning and recognition procedures.

There is no clear policy and practice addressing education and training and the various forms and levels of formal and informal learning in the context of a uniform system. Human and physical bottlenecks in the implementation of ICT technologies are a major barrier.

The Hungarian civil sector is a largely unexplored area in terms of both recognition of needs and learning that can be acquired.

6.d) Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?

Based on statistics from different sources (CSO, Eurostat LFS, OECD Education at a Glance CET indicators, CVTS data), the Hungarian adult population participates in organised post-compulsory training in very low numbers. Nevertheless, there are many signs of extensive and often intensive learning processes both at the workplace and in private life. We know very little of these processes. The current data recording systems are unable to provide a full picture of even those adults who participate in organised training programmes.

The Hungarian government’s lifelong learning strategy did not emerge in the wake of exclusively internal pressure (as an implementation of stakeholders’ aspirations). When preparing the strategic document and the related decision the government was primarily motivated by the drive to meet EU expectations and have access to sources of funds available for such purposes.

As regards incentives of lifelong learning, several steps have been taken in recent years that are seen as disincentives as they have eradicated formerly existing incentives. The wage supplement paid for certified language skills was done away with (despite the fact that Hungary is the last among the EU countries in terms of useful FL skills).

On the other hand, substantial new sources of funds have been opened in the context of the Second National Development Plan, specifically under the Human Resource Development Operative Programme and the Regional Development Operative Programme, which will be involved in upgrading existing adult education institutions and their methodologies and in launching special major projects. (At least these are the plans revealed by the available documents.)

6.e) Please list some ‘factors’ which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the ‘Open Learning Society’ scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Stakeholders who can be expected to come up with interest-driven initiatives should be identified.

A professional centre should be created which would be able to explore, gather and disseminate the knowledge related to non-formal learning and the possibilities of its utilisation on a national scale. Experience from other countries indicates that centres of this kind are successful in setting the machinery in motion. (For instance in the Netherlands economic actors articulated their interests and set up Kenniscentrum, a knowledge centre.) Elsewhere the government played a regulatory and coordinative part (e.g. in Norway), and the key role was played by institutions that disseminated experience related to the procedure and launched experiments.

The lack of such stakeholders and centres seems to be a serious barrier. In practice, the government does not consider the lifelong learning concept to be a key issue.

Employers do not want to see an overarching “European” system or its adoption – they want to have their own economic considerations and interests recognised.

The position of workers’ representative organisations is very weak in training and similar matters. It would be important to change this, for example in the newly emerging branch advocacies. Here again, the positions are not clearly articulated.

Raising awareness of the multifarious forms of adult learning and the advantages of RNFIL is a task to promote a change in attitude.

The most important step forward would be to explore the needs of the employer side and to develop procedures that also respond to the needs of small and medium-size enterprises.

As regards the development of a Hungarian RNFIL system, instead of an overarching “central” system it would be more desirable in many respects to promote experiments or even different practices that rely on uniform underlying principles but take into consideration the specific features of different branches, and to evaluate the outcome of experiments on a regular basis.

Annexes

Annex 1

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Annex 2

Acronyms

CSO – Central Statistical Office

EQF – European Qualifications Framework

MAB – Magyar Akkreditációs Bizottság

NEK – Nemzeti Europass Központ (National Europass Centre)

NFI – Nemzeti Felnőttképzési Intézet (National Institute of Adult Education)

NJSZT – Neumann János Számítógép-tudományi Társaság (John von Neumann Computer Society)

(H)NQF – Hungarian National Qualification Framework

OKÉV – Országos Közoktatási Értékelési és Vizsgaközpont (National Public Education Evaluation and Examination Centre)

NRVQ – National Register of Vocational Qualifications (OKJ by its Hungarian acronym)

OKM – Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium (Ministry of Education and Culture, in 2006 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture merged)

OM (since 2006 OKM) – Oktatási Minisztérium (Ministry of Education)

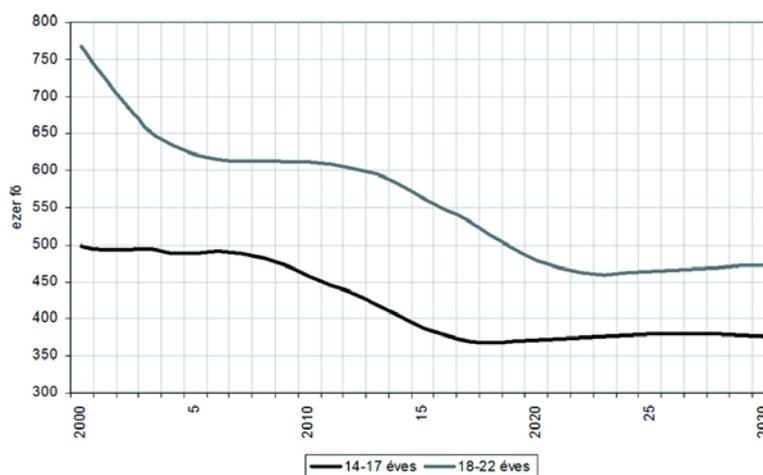
PLA – Prior Learning Assessment

SZMM – Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, in 2006 the Ministry of Employment and Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs merged)

TÁRKI – Társadalomkutató Intézet (TÁRKI Social Research, Inc.)

Annex 3

Tables and figures

Figure 4 The 14–17 and 18–22-year-old population, 2000–2030 (thousand)

Source: Polónyi, István: A hazai szakképzés formálódása (Vocational training in Hungary). Educatio, 2006/3

Table 5/a The percentage of Roma children by age groups

Age group	1997	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
0-4 yrs	13.6	15.2	16.4	19.2	22.4	23.6	24.8
5-9 yrs	11.7	12.5	15.6	17.5	20.8	23.0	24.1
10-14 yrs	10.0	11.1	15.1	16.2	19.0	22.2	23.4
15-19 yrs	8.4	9.4	12.4	15.5	17.4	20.7	22.9

Source: (Polónyi 2000)

Table 6 Distribution of income – Gini coefficient³⁹

Country	Before changeover	During changeover	After changeover	Percentage of change
	1987-1989	1996-1997	2001-2002	
Czech Republic	19.8	23.9	23.4	18
Estonia	28.0	36.1	39.3	40
Poland	27.5	33.4	35.3	28
Latvia	26.0	32.6	35.8	38
Lithuania	26.3	30.9	35.7	36
Hungary	22.5	25.4	26.7	19
Slovakia	19.4	24.9	26.7	38
Slovenia	21.0	24.0	24.4	16
CEE-8	23.8	28.9	30.9	29
EU-15	26.9	27.8	28.6	7

Source: CSO. Extrapolated from the 2001 census data. Source: CSO

³⁹ The estimates are based on the interpolated distribution of the group data from different household income surveys. (Kornai, 2005)

Table 7 Distribution of students by age at the various education and training levels

Age	Students involved in										
	Higher-level voc. tr.		College prog.		University prog.		Postgrad. specialist tr.	PhD, DLA		Aggregate	
	Total	New entrants	Total	New entrants	Total	New entrants	Total	Total	New entrants	Total	New entrants
Under 18 years			0.04	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0			0.0	0.1
18 years	10.9	17.6	3.2	11.5	4.7	22.6	0.0			3.6	14.5
19 years	24.5	30.7	8.4	19.2	11.7	37.1	0.0			9.2	24.2
20 years	21.6	17.3	10.0	11.1	12.7	12.0	0.0			10.4	11.4
21 years	12.6	9.8	10.9	8.8	12.7	6.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	10.6	7.9
22 years	7.5	5.9	9.9	6.4	12.7	4.2	0.9	0.2	0.6	10.0	5.6
23 years	4.9	3.9	7.9	5.0	11.4	3.4	2.7	3.9	10.7	8.6	4.7
24 years	3.1	2.6	6.2	4.2	8.3	2.8	5.2	10.4	18.5	6.8	4.1
25 years	2.2	1.9	5.1	3.7	5.7	1.9	6.2	15.3	14.9	5.5	3.4
26 years	1.5	1.2	4.6	3.4	4.1	1.6	7.0	13.1	10.0	4.7	3.0
27 years	1.4	1.1	4.2	3.2	2.9	1.2	6.5	11.2	8.4	4.0	2.7
28 years	1.1	1.1	3.8	3.0	2.3	1.1	5.7	8.3	6.5	3.4	2.5
29 years	1.2	0.9	3.7	2.9	1.9	1.0	5.9	6.5	5.1	3.2	2.3
30-34 years	3.7	3.4	10.7	8.3	4.5	2.6	18.1	14.1	10.0	9.0	6.5
35-39 years	1.9	1.5	6.2	4.8	2.2	1.3	15.3	6.7	5.7	5.4	3.7
At least 40 years	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.5	2.2	1.2	26.4	10.3	9.5	5.6	3.6
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (N)	9,122	5,489	240,297	65,578	138,169	27,824	25,991	7,941	2,570	421,520	101,461

Source: MoE statistics

Table 8 Participation of students in higher education by levels of education (%)

Academic year	Higher-level vocational training	College	University	Postgrad. specialist training	Doctoral PhD or DLA	Total (N)	Percentage of women in total
Full-time, part-time and distance programmes							
1990/1991	0	48.2	46.3	5.5	0	108,376	48.6
1991/1992	0	45.9	47.4	6.6	0	114,690	49.1
1992/1993	0	45.9	47.4	6.7	0	125,874	49.4
1993/1994	0	44.6	48.1	6.3	1.1	144,560	51.7
1994/1995	0	47.4	43.6	7.5	1.5	169,940	51.9
1995/1996	0	50.2	41.6	6.4	1.8	195,586	52.7
1996/1997	0	50.1	42.4	5.7	1.7	215,115	53.2
1997/1998	0	49.0	42.8	6.7	1.6	254,693	54.0
1998/1999	0.3	49.4	43.0	5.7	1.5	279,397	54.2
1999/2000	0.7	49.4	41.9	6.6	1.4	305,702	53.8
2000/2001	1.1	55.5	34.7	6.7	2.1	327,289	54.7
2001/2002	1.3	55.9	33.8	7.0	2.0	349,301	55.2
2002/2003	1.6	56.8	32.7	7.0	1.9	381,560	56.6
2003/2004	1.8	57.1	32.6	6.6	1.9	409,075	57.1
2004/2005	2.2	57.0	32.8	6.2	1.9	421,520	58.2
Full-time[2]							
1990/1991	0	45.7	54.3	0.0	0.0	76,601	48.8
1991/1992	0	44.3	55.7	0.0	0.0	83,191	49.0
1992/1993	0	44.2	55.8	0.0	0.0	92,328	50.0
1993/1994	0	41.1	57.4	0.0	1.5	105,240	51.6
1994/1995	0	44.7	53.2	0.0	2.1	118,847	50.7
1995/1996	0	45.8	51.6	0.0	2.6	132,997	51.5
1996/1997	0	45.0	52.5	0.0	2.6	145,843	51.8
1997/1998	0	44.1	53.4	0.0	2.6	156,894	52.1
1998/1999	0.5	42.8	54.2	0.0	2.5	168,183	52.9
1999/2000	1.0	42.2	54.4	0.0	2.4	177,654	53.4
2000/2001	1.5	45.8	49.9	0.2	2.5	183,876	53.3
2001/2002	2.0	45.9	49.5	0.1	2.5	192,974	53.6
2002/2003	2.5	45.9	49.1	0.2	2.3	203,379	53.7
2003/2004	2.7	45.8	49.0	0.2	2.3	216,296	53.7
2004/2005	3.3	45.4	48.7	0.2	2.4	225,512	54.3
Part-time (evening)							
1990/1991	0	62.2	37.8	0.0	0.0	4,737	54.9
1991/1992	0	67.6	32.4	0.0	0.0	4,372	58.4
1992/1993	0	68.8	31.2	0.0	0.0	4,298	61.8
1993/1994	0	67.1	32.9	0.0	0.0	4,640	67.0
1994/1995	0	67.2	32.8	0.0	0.0	5,453	73.0
1995/1996	0	79.1	20.9	0.0	0.0	5,764	74.2
1996/1997	0	76.3	23.7	0.0	0.0	5,750	70.1
1997/1998	0	73.2	26.8	0.0	0.0	6,538	69.3
1998/1999	0	69.9	30.1	0.0	0.0	6,866	67.1

1999/2000	0	72.8	27.2	0.0	0.0	7,861	69.9
2000/2001	0.3	64.3	17.7	17.8	0.0	10,526	68.2
2001/2002	0.2	58.9	16.6	24.3	0.0	12,796	67.0
2002/2003	0	60.3	15.7	24.0	0.0	13,031	68.2
2003/2004	0	59.2	19.5	21.3	0.0	12,950	67.1
2004/2005	0.7	60.3	20.0	18.6	0.4	11,656	67.5
Part-time (correspondent)							
1990/1991	0	52.5	25.3	22.2	0.0	27,038	47.0
1991/1992	0	47.5	24.4	28.1	0.0	27,127	48.1
1992/1993	0	47.7	23.5	28.8	0.0	29,248	42.4
1993/1994	0	52.0	21.8	26.2	0.0	34,680	49.8
1994/1995	0	52.2	19.7	28.1	0.0	45,640	52.3
1995/1996	0	57.6	20.3	22.1	0.0	56,825	53.3
1996/1997	0	59.5	21.1	19.4	0.0	63,522	54.9
1997/1998	0	55.7	25.7	18.7	0.0	91,261	56.2
1998/1999	0	49.8	31.3	18.9	0.0	84,827	60.0
1999/2000	0.4	47.9	30.3	21.4	0.0	94,812	56.8
2000/2001	0.6	60.4	19.6	17.1	2.2	99,031	59.2
2001/2002	0.6	61.8	18.4	17.2	2.1	108,087	59.0
2002/2003	0.8	63.3	17.6	16.2	2.1	126,885	61.1
2003/2004	0.9	64.5	17.7	14.9	2.0	140,491	62.1
2004/2005	1.1	66.2	17.4	13.6	1.7	149,073	63.9
Distance education progr.							
1990/1991	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1991/1992	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1992/1993	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1993/1994	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1994/1995	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1995/1996	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1996/1997	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1997/1998	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
1998/1999	0	97.4	2.6	0.0	0.0	19,521	36.0
1999/2000	0	97.7	2.3	0.0	0.0	25,375	40.0
2000/2001	0	90.6	1.1	8.2	0.0	33,856	45.2
2001/2002	0	91.3	1.4	7.3	0.0	35,444	48.5
2002/2003	0	91.4	1.2	7.3	0.0	38,265	52.8
2003/2004	0	92.4	0.0	7.6	0.0	39,338	55.0
2004/2005	0	91.3	0.0	8.7	0.0	35,279	56.7

Source: Calculated from Ministry of Education statistics

Table 9 Participation of 15-74-year-olds in training and learning by age groups, 2003 (%)

Age group	Formal	Non-formal	Informal learning	<i>Total</i>
15–24	64.0	6.5	13.0	69.2
25–34	8.0	7.2	8.0	19.5
35–44	2.3	6.3	6.7	13.0
45–54	0.5	3.7	5.4	8.4
55–64	0.1	1.4	3.9	4.5
65–74	0.0	0.2	2.1	2.2
Average	13.1	4.5	6.8	20.5

Source: LFS, ad hoc module on lifelong learning, 2003.

Table 10 Companies providing in-house training by number of workers, 1999

Number of workers	Number of companies	Percentage of companies providing in-house training
10-19	13,149	29.2
20-49	7,310	36.6
50-249	4,184	50.8
250-499	563	75.3
500- 999	268	85.1
Over 1000	131	86.3

Source: Calculations by the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour based on CSO statistics (Main data of in-house training, 2002)

Table 11 Participation in informal learning

<i>Question:</i> What kind of independent (informal) learning method did you use to expand your knowledge over the past year?	N	%
Read professional literature (books, periodicals and other printed materials) for the purpose of independent learning	458,610	35.2
Used the Internet for the purpose of independent learning	274,307	21.0
Used a computer without Internet access, CD-ROMs, television and other audio and video equipment for the purpose of independent learning	294,865	22.6
Visited libraries or other institutions lending educational materials for the purpose of independent learning	237,507	18.2
Visited institutions conveying learning (museums, galleries, etc.) for the purpose of independent learning	112,290	8.6
Other	37,838	2.9

Source: LFS, ad hoc module on lifelong learning, 2003

Table 12 Number of immigration permit holder aliens by nationality as of 30 June 2006

Nationality	Immigration permits
Romanian	23,752
Former Yugoslavian	7,571
Ukrainian	4,765
Chinese	3,559
Former Soviet	2,702
Vietnamese	1,413
Other	9,917
Total:	53,679

Source: <http://www.bmbah.hu/statisztikak.php>

Table 13 Number of permanent residence permit holder aliens by nationality as of 30 June 2006

Nationality	Permanent residence permit
Romanian	19,336
Ukrainian	3,433
Chinese	1,063
Serbian-Montenegrin	1,000
Former Yugoslavian	675
Russian	336
Other	2,560
Total:	28,403

Source: <http://www.bmbah.hu/statisztikak.php>

Table 14 Unemployment in Central and Eastern Europe

Country	Thousand	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Hungary	304	8.4	7.0	6.4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.2
Czech Republic	410	6.4	8.6	8.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	8.3	7.9
Poland	3,044	10.2	13.4	16.1	18.2	19.9	19.6	19.0	17.7
Slovakia	430	12.5	16.4	18.8	19.3	18.7	17.6	18.2	16.3
Slovenia	66	7.4	7.3	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.3	6.5
EU-15	14,545	9.3	8.5	7.7	7.3	7.6	8.0	8.1	7.9
EU-25	19,116	9.5	9.1	8.6	8.4	8.8	9.0	9.1	8.8

Table 15 Participation in employment promoting training

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Unemployed participants total	66,700	71,484	75,482	80,383	83,151	86,203
Employed participants total	5,280	4,509	4,122	4,381	5,022	5,316
Total	71,980	75,993	79,604	84,764	88,173	91,519

Source: www.szmm.gov.hu Statistics**Table 16 Participation in employment promoting training**

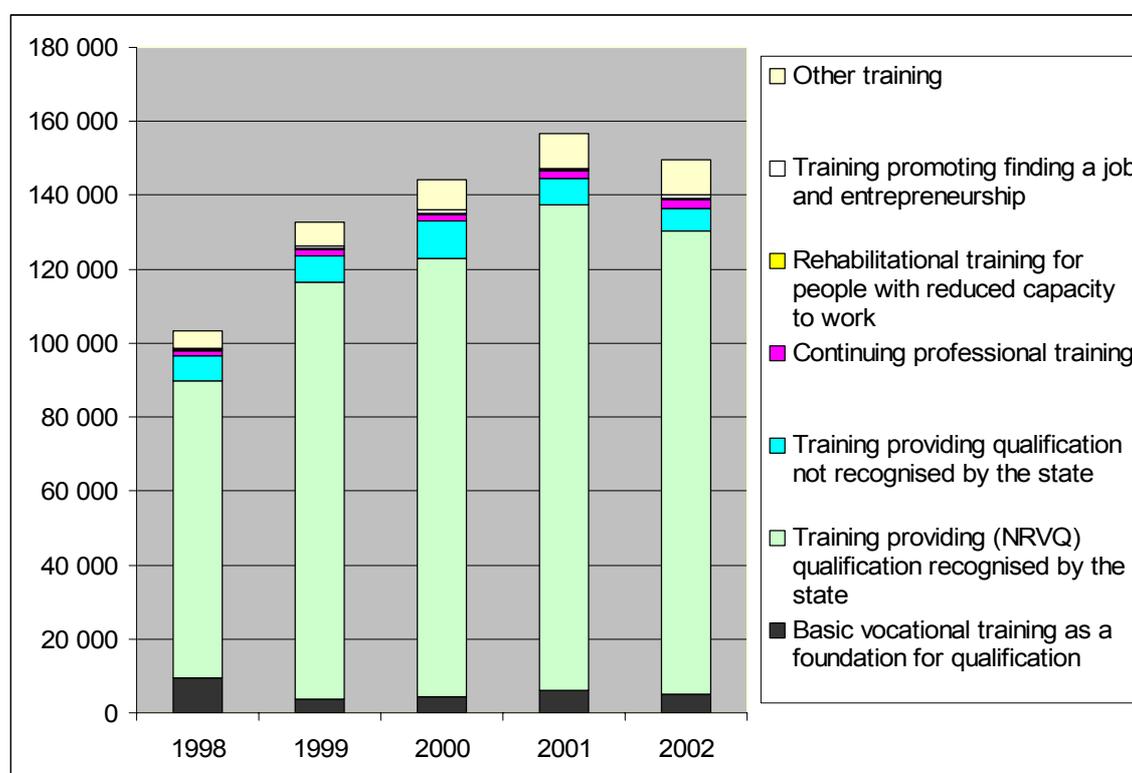
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Group participants	40,280	49,137	52,157	55,560	56,356	57,130
Individual participants	31,700	26,856	27,447	29,204	31,817	34,389
Total	71,980	75,993	79,604	84,764	88,173	91,519

Table 17 Participation in employment promoting training

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Participants of programmes offering (NRVQ) qualification	56,937	58,592	63,219	67,311	69,213	72,076
Participants of programmes not offering (NRVQ) qualification	15,043	17,401	16,385	17,453	18,960	19,443
Total	71,980	75,993	79,604	84,764	88,173	91,519

Source: www.szmm.gov.hu Statistics

Figure 5 Participation in non-formal training, 1999-2002



Source: Adult Education Statistics of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, <http://www.szmm.gov.hu>

Table 18 ICT trades on the 2006 NRVQ

1. CAD-CAM designer, document handler ICT specialist
2. Health care operator
3. Business information technologist I
4. Business information technologist II
5. IT network installer and operator
6. IT statistician and economic planner
7. IT specialist
8. Systems analyst
9. Multimedia developer
10. Technical and information technology engineer assistant
11. PLC programmer
12. Computer programmer
13. Computer software operator
14. Computer operator (user)
15. Computer systems programmer

Table 19 Connection between work in the grey economy and training and trades

Work done for households	Is there such a training programme in the formal system?	Trade / Profession / Job	Services performed not as a trade (“grey zone”)
Cooking	X	Cook	Day help
Cleaning	*	Cleaner	Day help
Nursing	X	Nurse, care giver	Home care
Elderly nursing and care	X	Nurse, care giver	Home care giver
Gardening	X	Gardener, park maintenance	Gardening
Gardening – vegetable growing		Agricultural producer	Sustenance farming
Child minding	X	Pre-school teacher	Baby-sitter
Sewing	X	Dressmaker	Outsourced work, occasional commissions
Handicrafts (knitting, crocheting, needlework)	-	-	Outsourced work, ornaments maker
Washing and ironing	-	Dressmaking shop work	Day help
House building	X	Bricklayer, carpenter, etc.	Self-financed building, building related jobs for own purposes
Home maintenance	X	Decorator	Decoration for own purposes, “tinkering”
Repair of household appliances	X	Repair technician	“Handyman”
Furniture making	X	Cabinet maker	DIY
Helping pre-school and school children	X	Teacher	Private tutor
Hair cutting	X	Barber, hairdresser	Help, doing work as a favour
Driving	-	Professional driver, transporter or passengers or goods	Occasional haulage
Plumbing	X	Plumber, HVAC technician	Self-made works and repair
Electric work	X	Electrician	Self-made works, “tinkering”

* in the case of industrial services or in the context of “home economy training”

Source: Tôt (2006)

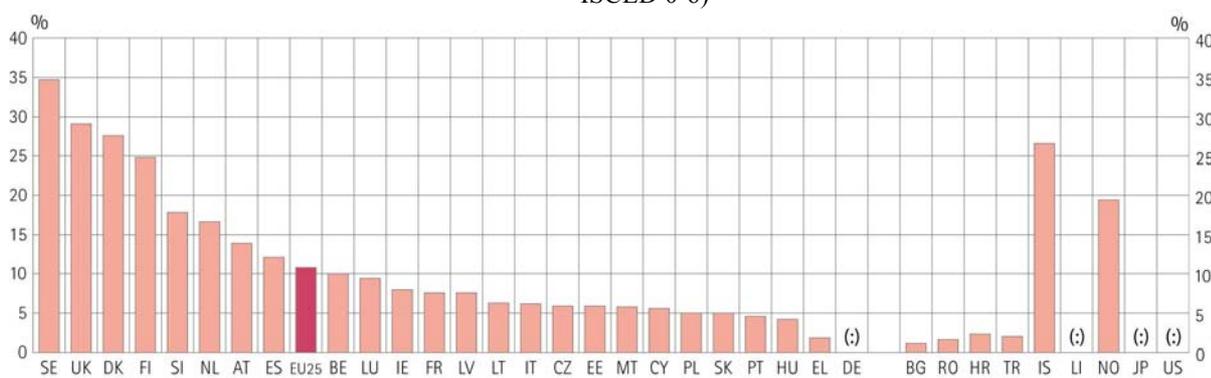
Table 20 Distribution of participants in non-formal training by age groups

	1996	1998	2000	2002
Under 20 years	13.5	9.8	8.0	6.8
20-24 year-olds	27.3	25.2	23.0	20.2
25-29 year-olds	17.3	18.7	19.6	20.0
30-34 year-olds	12.6	14.8	15.8	16.3
35-39 year-olds	10.8	11.3	11.6	12.3
40-44 year-olds	9.2	10.0	9.6	9.7
45-49 year-olds	6.1	6.7	7.8	8.4
50-54 év	2.6	2.9	3.6	4.6
55 and older	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.7

Source: Szígyártó-Peresztegi, 2002.

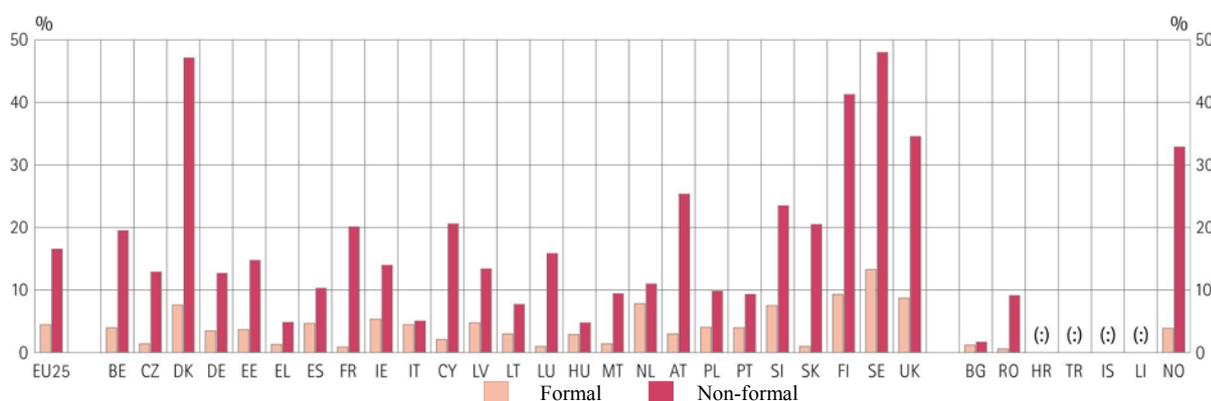
Figure 6 Participation of adults in lifelong learning (2005)

(Percentage of population aged 25-64 years participating in education and training in four weeks prior to the survey, ISCED 0-6)



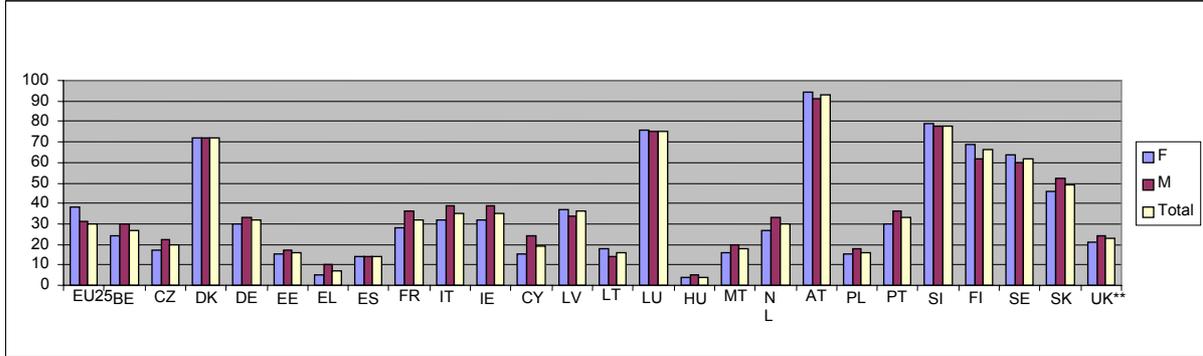
Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey)

Figure 7 Rate of participation (%) of 25-64-year-olds in formal and non-formal education and training (2003)



Source: Eurostat LFS, ad hoc module on lifelong learning 2003. Target population: 25-64 years, reference period: 12 months

Figure 8 Participation rate 55-64 years old in any kind of learning (2005)



Source: Eurostat LFS, ad hoc module on lifelong learning 2003. Target population: 25-64-year-olds
 (*)Informal training is not included in the UK.

Annex 4

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