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1. Introduction

The Hungarian education system faced a lot of challenges and went through major changes in the last fifteen years. The possible directions of the education system and its progress have changed significantly in the recent past. Three main tendencies determined whether or not students could stay and progress in the education system:

- school restructuring,
- expansion of secondary and higher education,
- increase in the number of correction paths making transferability easier.

In Hungary, vocational training and general training are forms of education preparing people for employment and further education. The borderline between public education and other levels of education is continuously fading. The new forms of education developing on the borderline of adult education, secondary and higher education are becoming increasingly important.

The main purpose of education is to satisfy social requirements and to provide basic education in the particular social and economic environment. Apart from general social interests, school-type vocational training also serves long-term labour market interests.

Among the changes of the recent past, the ones taking place in the content of education and the internal world of schools in relation to the European integration process deserve most attention. These changes were introduced for enabling more people to find their place in the labor market and to acquire the knowledge and capability required for making progress in the modern society. According to the recommendations of the OECD and the EU, the Hungarian school structure has become more diversified than before in response to the differentiation in individual learning needs. It has developed an advanced supply of curricula and educational aids, and maintained the various options educational and training pathways. With the help of the various levels and programmes of education and training, education can now be organised flexibly and be adjusted to social needs, ensuring transferability.

The social and economic changes having taken place in Hungary after the political change restructured vocational training fundamentally. One of the reasons of the educational crisis was that vocational training used to supply almost exclusively new generations of skilled personnel for large companies. After the change of the economic and political regime, the vocational training system also underwent comprehensive modernisation, in the following main steps.

The National Qualification Register (NQR), containing the list of vocational qualifications recognised by the state, was issued in 1994. This register renewed and added up-to-date content to the educational syllabus of vocational training. As the educational supply is basically defined in the NQR, and the supply must always be adjusted to the current economic requirements, the register is modified each year. In 1998, school-type, GCSE-based accredited post-secondary vocational programmes were integrated into the system. The NQR was renewed in 2006 again in the spirit of adjustment to the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), within the framework of which modular competence-based requirements were introduced.

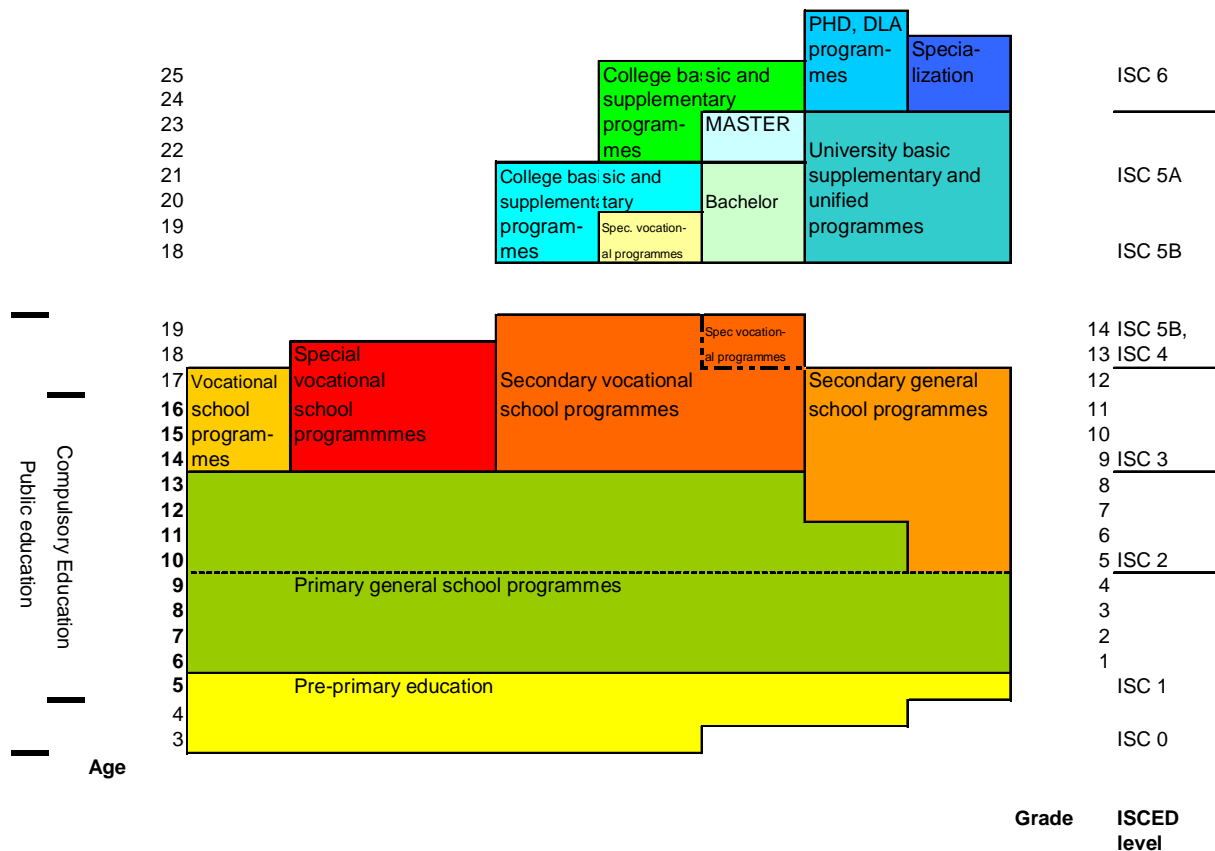
In compliance with the recommendation of the Lisbon Memorandum (2000), the (re)training of employees and of the unemployed is also fundamentally important in Hungary for the purpose of

human resources development. Adult vocational training is much shorter, but much more intensive than vocational training in schools. This type of training is usually based on direct short-term labour market requirements. With the reduction of unemployment, the issues related to lifelong learning have come to the forefront. A target has been identified to put in place conditions for the continuous updating of knowledge and for continuous training in the active economy.

2. The Hungarian Educational and Training Structure

Public education

The structure of the Hungarian Public Education and Higher Education System by age, grade and by ISCED level



- 1) The figure shows the typical age and typical length of programmes in full-time education.
- 2) From the 1988/89 academic year, compulsory education lasts until the age of 18.
- 3) Pre-school, primary, secondary grammar and secondary vocational school programmes also include the programmes for pupils with special education needs.
- 4) Special vocational programmes mean vocational school programmes delivered to students with special education needs at ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 levels; vocational programmes contain programmes without requirements for school-leaving examinations.
- 5) Secondary general school programmes include programmes with 4 (5), 6 and 8 grades.
- 6) Vocational and secondary vocational programmes contain programmes with and without requirement for school-leaving examination and accredited post-secondary vocational programmes.
- 7) College, university and unified programmes.
- 8) Postgraduate specialisation programmes: programmes in ISCED 5A level with requirement for graduation at college or university and with requirement for special attainments. These programmes do not give a higher attainment level, but a special qualification.
- 9) Bachelor and master programmes based on the Bologna process.

Public education

The Hungarian public education system includes independent pre-school institutions such as kindergartens; independent institutions of education and training schools issuing certificates in proof of educational attainment, completion of secondary education (GCSE) and vocational training, as well as basic-level art educational institutions and student hostels. Public education institutions may be established and operated by the state, the municipalities, local minority self-governments, national minority self-governments, religious legal entities registered in the Republic of Hungary, as well as business organisations, foundations, associations with a legal entity, founded and having their registered seat in the territory of the country, and other legal entities or natural persons.

The operation of the public education system is the responsibility of the state. The state provides free and mandatory primary education in the framework of institutions run by public agencies and municipalities. According to the legislation, kindergarten education, various pedagogical services supplementing kindergarten education, school education and training, training and education in grammar schools, secondary vocational schools, trade schools and special schools as well as student hostels are free of charge in the country.

The state provides a certain amount of budget support for the operators of non-state-owned or non-municipality-owned public education institutions as defined in the annual Budget Act for the performance of their tasks. The municipality or the state may also provide supplementary support on top of the budget support if the non-state-owned or non-municipality-owned public education institution performs state and municipality tasks.

Discrimination on any ground, including especially colour, gender, religious, national or ethnic origin, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin of the child or his relatives, or financial and income standing, age, lack or limitation of capacity to act, birth or other condition, or the operator of the education and training institution, is strictly prohibited in public education.

The official language of training and education, as applicable, in kindergartens, schools and student hostels is the Hungarian language or the languages of national and ethnic minorities. Children and students belonging to national or ethnic minorities may participate in kindergarten education, school education and training as well as in student hostel life in their mother tongue, or in their mother tongue and in Hungarian, or in the Hungarian language, depending on their choice defined in the Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities. Education and training may also be conducted in other languages, either in part or in full.

Mandatory school attendance applies when the child has reached the level of development required for entering school, i.e., in the calendar year when he completes his sixth year of age the soonest, but no later than in the calendar year when he completes his eighth year of age. As soon as a child has reached the level of development required for entering school, he begins his mandatory school attendance in the calendar year in which he completes his sixth year of age by 31 May. Upon the request of the parents, the child may also start mandatory school attendance if he will complete his sixth year of age by 31 December. Mandatory school attendance may begin in the 8th year of age for children who were born after 31 August. Mandatory school attendance begins on the first day of the school year.

Based on the modification in legislation introduced in 1999, mandatory school attendance lasts until the age of 18 in Hungary. This requirement must be applied first to those starting their studies in the first year of the primary school in the school year of 1998/99.

In a transition period (until 2010), the mandatory school attendance of a student may be terminated upon his application after the age of sixteen if he has taken an examination of general secondary education or acquired vocational qualification recognised by the state or has been declared a person of major age through marriage, or is responsible for keeping a child. With the exception of students officially declared individuals of major age, such an application may be submitted jointly by the student and his parents. The director of the school recognises the application in writing. Depending on the choice of the parents, the obligation of mandatory school attendance can be performed by attending school or in the form of private tuition.

Mandatory school attendance lasts until the end of the curricular year in which the student completes his eighteenth year of age. The mandatory school attendance of students with special educational needs can be extended until the end of the curricular year in which they complete their twentieth year of age.

Kindergarten education starts at the age of three and lasts until 31 August of the year in which the child completes his seventh year of age.

The primary education and training phase begins in the first year and lasts until the end of the eighth year. The primary education and training phase consists of the following four parts:

- the introductory part starting in the first year and finishing at the end of the second year,
- the beginner's part starting in the third year and finishing at the end of the fourth year,
- the grounding part starting in the fifth year and finishing at the end of the sixth year, and
- the developing part starting in the seventh year and finishing at the end of the eighth year.

In the introductory and beginner's part and, in accordance with the students' requirements and the local curriculum, in 25-40 per cent of the mandatory lesson timeframe of the grounding part, education is not broken down by special subjects, while in the remaining timeframe of the grounding part and in the developing part, education is broken down by subject.

The secondary education and training phase begins in the ninth year and finishes at the end of the tenth year in vocational schools or at the end of the twelfth or thirteenth year in secondary schools. The secondary education and training phase consists of the following two parts:

- the part reinforcing general education, starting in the ninth year and finishing at the end of the tenth or eleventh year,
- the phase intensifying general education based on the interest and capabilities of students, and assisting career choice, starting in the eleventh or twelfth year and finishing at the end of the twelfth or thirteenth year.

Within the phase of school education and training focusing on general education, the syllabus and requirements of the individual school years are built on each other.

During the phase providing general education, the integrity of the content of school education and training and transferability between schools is ensured by the Hungarian National Core Curriculum. The Hungarian National Core Curriculum may set mandatory requirements for educational organisations, including especially limitations on the weekly or daily load on students. The Hungarian National Core Curriculum also defines the tasks of schools related to

health development, consumer protection and environmental protection. The framework curricula issued by the Minister of Education help ensure compliance with the requirements laid down in the Hungarian National Core Curriculum.

The Hungarian National Core Curriculum is issued by the Government. The consent of the National Council of Public Education and the opinion of the Public Education Policy Council, as well as, on issues concerning national ethnic minority school educational and training work, the consent of the National Committee of Minorities must be obtained before the Hungarian National Core Curriculum is submitted to the Government. Based on the Hungarian National Core Curriculum, the Minister of Education and Culture issues a framework curriculum containing recommendations for

- the objective of education and training, the system of subjects, the topics covered by the various subjects and their contents, the requirements of each subject for each year, the time frame available for fulfilling the requirements, and performance of the tasks of the school related to health development, consumer protection and environmental protection,
- career orientation, trade preparatory and basic trade education; and the breakdown in time, timeframe and proportions of education and training laying the bases of general education, of career orientation, trade preparatory and basic trade education as well as theoretical and practical trade education in special schools,
- trade orientation, basic trade-group-specific, theoretical and practical education, and the breakdown in time, timeframe and proportions of education and training laying the bases of general education and trade orientation, trade-group-specific theoretical and practical basic training, and trade theoretical and practical training in secondary vocational schools.

The education and training work at schools takes place on the basis of a pedagogical programme. The pedagogical programme contains the education programme and the local curriculum, as well as the technical programme in schools involved in vocational training.

The education and training work in educational and training institutions can be broken down into the following phases:

- kindergarten education,
- basic education and training,
- secondary education and training,
- school education and training phase preparing for vocational qualifications.

Primary school studies last for eight years. In a primary school, students prepare for studies in secondary schools or vocational schools as well as for integration into society according to their interests, talents and capabilities.

The secondary education and training phase begins in the ninth year and, depending on the type of the school, it finishes at the end of the tenth or twelfth or thirteenth year. The school education and training phase preparing for vocational qualifications starts after the secondary education and training phase and ends in the vocational training year defined in the NQR.

Lifelong learning, which is inevitable given the rapidly changing economic needs and related labour market changes as well as the multiple career changes which are slowly becoming a general practice, puts adult training into the focus of attention again. In this context, the evening, correspondence and distant learning (e-learning) programmes are very popular especially in secondary and higher education.

In the phase focusing on general education, the integrity of the content of school education and training and the transferability between schools are ensured by the curricula developed for the fields of education defined in the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (HNCC). The HNCC defines the mandatory and common objectives of the education and training work during the phase focusing on general education. The HNCC contains the basic principles for the special curricular requirements

- in national and ethnic minority school education and training, and
- in the school education and training of students with bodily, sensory, mental and other disabilities as well as speech impediments.

At the GCSE examination, students take an examination in mandatory and optional subjects. The mandatory subjects are the following: Hungarian language and literature, history, and the native language and literature of students participating in national ethnic minority education, mathematics and, with the exception of students participating in national ethnic minority education, a foreign language. The GCSE certifies secondary qualification and entitles the student to join higher education or vocational education in compliance with the provisions of the Act on Higher Education, or to take a job on the labour market.

Vocational training school studies last for four years. In cases defined in the NQR, there may be more vocational years, too. In general, a grammar school consists of four years. In four-year grammar schools, education and training starts in the ninth year and finishes in the twelfth year.

In a grammar school, students prepare for the GCSE examination and for studies in higher education institutions, or for employment. A grammar school may also operate with six or eight years, if the conditions required for the fulfilment of mandatory school attendance can be achieved this way based on the projections of the mid-term schooling plan, and students intending to start their grammar school studies in the ninth year can be admitted to grammar schools in Budapest and in the counties. Education and training begins in the seventh year in grammar schools consisting of six years, and in the fifth year in grammar schools consisting of eight years, and finishes in the twelfth year in both types – six-year and eight-year – of grammar schools.

A secondary vocational school preparing students for GCSE consists of four secondary school years focusing on general education. Starting from the ninth year, vocational orientation may be followed as defined in the framework curriculum, while from the eleventh year vocational grounding theoretical and practical training may also take place as defined in the NQR. Secondary education and training begins in the ninth year and finishes in the twelfth or thirteenth *or* fourteenth year. The number of vocational grades preparing for the vocational examination is defined in the NQR. In secondary vocational schools where education and training takes place in two languages in secondary school years, training and education may finish in the thirteenth year. Students of secondary vocational schools complete their preparation for the general education examination in the secondary school years, during which he also prepares for the GCSE exam, or higher education studies, or employment, as well as for joining vocational education.

The educational work of parents and teachers and the performance of tasks of education and training institutions are assisted by special pedagogical services. The special pedagogical services focus on the following:

- consultancy in handicapped education, early development and care,

- expert and rehabilitation activity analysing the learning capabilities and national expert and rehabilitation activity,
- educational consultancy,
- speech therapy,
- further training, career orientation consultancy,
- conductive pedagogical services,
- adapted physical education.

The main responsibilities of education for handicapped children, early development and care is to develop and care for the child with the involvement of the parent as soon as the bodily, sensory, mental or other disability or speech impediment is established, and to give advice to parents.

Within the framework of expert and rehabilitation activity, examining the learning capability and within the framework of the national expert and rehabilitation activity:

- a proposal is made for the special care of children based on the screening and analysis of the disability, the method, form and place of the care, and the pedagogical services attached to such care,
- the availability of conditions required for special care are also examined.

The responsibility of educational consultancy is to identify the problems of children struggling with integration disturbances, learning difficulties and behavioural disorders, to prepare an appropriate expert opinion and provide rehabilitation services to the child involving the teacher and the parents, as well as to prepare expert opinions for schooling, upon the request of the pre-school institution, if it is deemed necessary considering the individual characteristics and level of development of the child.

The responsibility of speech therapy is to start speech and correct speech impediments, to improve any language and communication problems, as well as to prevent and cure dyslexia.

The main responsibility of further training and career orientation consultancy services is to professionally assess the capabilities, learning capacity and orientation of the student, and to recommend a school for him accordingly.

The responsibility of the conductive pedagogical service is to provide conductive educational development services and care for students whose central nervous system is damaged.

The main purpose of adapted physical education is to provide special health-based physical education services to children and students referred to adapted physical education or light physical education by the school doctor or on the basis of any special medical screening.

Operation of the public education system

A public education institution is a legal entity established for performing specific public education tasks. The deed of foundation of the public education institution contains the type and name of the institution, its core activities, its national, ethnic, minority and other tasks, its member institutions, the assets used for performing its tasks, the right of disposal over its assets, the rights related to its economic activities, the name of the founder, the address of the registered seat and site of the institution, the name of the programmes for training and education institutions, and the number of grades in schools. In Hungary public education institutions can operate if all the conditions required for the performance of the tasks are in place. The public education institution performs its tasks using the funds made available by its founder or operating agency, as well as its other revenues. The maintenance and operational expenses of public education institutions must be projected in their annual budgets established by the operating agencies.

Public education institutions may also pursue activities for profit, provided that this does not violate the performance of their basic tasks. Any profit arising from such activities must be ignored in the calculation of the budget covering the basic tasks of the public institution and such profit cannot be taken away from the institution provided that it is used for performing the core tasks of the public education institution or for providing remuneration to students taking part in its activities.

In terms of professional issues, the educational institutions are independent. They can decide on all issues concerning their organisation and operation which are not referred to the competence of other agencies by legislation. No parties or, pursuant to the provisions of the Deed of Foundation of education and training institutions, no organisations attached to parties may operate on their premises.

Public education institutions must keep records as defined in the legal regulations and supply data as required in the National Statistical Data Collection Programme (OSAP) or in the local municipality by-laws.

The school year and the structure of the school year are established by the Minister of Education and Culture. The structure of the school year includes the tasks for school year organisation, including especially the first and last days of the school year, the period within which school education and training take place, the period and term of organised school holidays, and the period available for the assessment of admission applications, the examination of basic education, the examination of secondary education and vocational examinations. These school year arrangements are mandatory for all schools. The number of mandatory lessons for students cannot be more than

- 4 lessons a day from the first to the third grade,
- 4 or 5 lessons a day from the fourth to the sixth grade (4.5 as a weekly average),
- 5 lessons a day in the seventh and eighth grades,
- 5 or 6 lessons a day from the ninth to the tenth grade (5.5 as a weekly average),
- 6 lessons a day in secondary schools in the eleventh grade,
- 7 vocational theory lessons a day in vocational training grades, or 8 lessons a day in vocational theory and practice; if the secondary vocational school or vocational training school prepares its students for an arts exam, then the number of lessons for a student cannot be higher than 8 lessons a day as a weekly average in parallel training.

In Hungary a school year consists of five-day school weeks. Saturdays and Sundays are rest-days without education. Students can also rest without education on holidays. The educational schedule changes according to the work time schedule adjusted according to the holidays, and after the last day of the school year, students must have a summer holiday consisting of at least 30

consecutive days. With the agreement of the financier, the school director may also order six-day school weeks without allocating any days to replace missed weekly resting days if, due to an extraordinary school break, the one hundred and eighty five school days could not be arranged otherwise. Students are entitled to school holidays of at least six consecutive days at least twice during the school year, as defined in the school year procedures.

Parents may establish a parent organisation (community) in pre-schools, schools and student hostels to enforce their rights and fulfil their obligations. The parental organisation (community) decides on its own operational procedures, accepts its own work plan and elects its own officials. In schools, a school board can be formed for the purpose of assisting educational and training activities, and to promote co-operation among the teachers, parents, students and institution financiers, as well as any other organisations interested in the operation of the institution.

The parents, the teachers' board and the student self-government of the school can delegate the same number of representatives each to the school board. Each of the following relevant organisations may delegate one representative into the school board:

- the financier,
- an educational home, child and youth protection institution,
- the local minority self-government; for schools performing regional or national tasks, the national minority self-government, providing that it is not the financier of the school,
- the regional economic chamber in vocational training schools and secondary vocational schools.

The decision-making competence of a school board includes the approval of its operating procedures and work plan, the election of its officials, as well as any other matters in which case the teachers' board or the non-municipality financier transfers the decision-making rights to the school board. The school board also participates in the evaluation of any applications submitted against decisions or measures adopted by the educational training institution in relation to the enforcement of students' rights or performance of their obligations.

The students of a school or a student hostel may establish student circles for organising their joint activities in compliance with the house rules. The student communities have the right to make decisions regarding the plans and organisation of their own community activities, and the election of their officials based on consultations with the teachers' board, and they are also entitled to representation in the students' self-government. The activities of the students' self-government is assisted by an individual of major age invited by the students who can also proceed on behalf of the students' self-government, based on the assignment of the latter.

Based on consultations with the teachers' board, a students' self-government decides on its own operation, the use of financial resources made available for its operation, its competences, the programme of one workday without teaching, the establishment and operation of the communication system of the school or hostel students' self-government, and the assignment of the student leader and members of the editorial office of the communication system (school newspaper, school radio, etc.). The students' self-government can form an opinion and make proposals on all issues related to the operation of the educational and training institution and to the students.

The village, town, Budapest district and county borough municipalities must make arrangements for pre-school education, primary school education and the pre-school education and primary school education and training of students belonging to national or ethnic minorities in settlements inhabited by national or ethnic minorities.

The county self-government and the Budapest Municipality must provide the following:

- hostel services and national and ethnic minority hostel services,
- secondary education and vocational education services,
- secondary education and vocational education services for national and ethnic minorities,
- adult education,
- basic level arts training,
- consultation for further education and career orientation, educational consultation, speech therapy and adapted physical education.

The jurisdiction and competence of the Minister of Education and Culture covers all activities in this branch, irrespective of which institution or organisation provides the services or who finances the institution.

The Minister of Education and Culture

- issues guidelines for education in schools operating with two educational languages; guidelines for the pre-school education of children with disability; guidelines for the school education of students with disabilities; the national basic programme of student hostel education; the frame curricula; the requirements and curriculum for basic level arts education; the guidelines for the pre-school education of national and ethnic minorities; the guidelines for the school education of national and ethnic minorities, and performs all supervisory tasks in matters of relevance for the education and training of national and ethnic minorities in the framework curriculum, the national basic programme of student hostel education; furthermore, the Minister must obtain the consent of the National Minority Committee in issues of the frame curriculum and national basic programme of student education concerning the education and training of national and ethnic minorities as well as for the issue of the guidelines for pre-school education of national and ethnic minorities and guidelines for school education for national and ethnic minorities,
- defines the requirements of the general knowledge examination and the maturity examination, and performs all tasks related to their supervision,
- ensures national pedagogical and professional services,
- with the involvement of the National Council for Public Education, the Minister decides on the inclusion of items in books, lists of textbooks or lists of instruments and teaching materials, with the exception of vocational training, and makes arrangements for the publication of such lists, as well as issues a mandatory list of instruments and equipment for public institutions and regularly maintains it,
- the Minister arranges for the professional control and evaluation of the pedagogical work conducted in education and training institutions at national, regional, county and Budapest levels, with the exception of the vocational content requirements of vocational training,
- puts in place conditions for quality assurance,
- operates the office of the ministerial commissioner for educational rights,
- defines the requirements for the planning and healthy and safe operation of public education institutions, as well as other requirements for their equipment and supply of teaching materials and instruments,
- makes a proposal for statistical data supply.

The Educational Authority is managed by the Minister of Education and Culture. The responsibilities of this authority include the following: management, organisation and coordination of control, measurement, evaluation and quality assurance tasks within the framework of the sectoral management of public education, involvement in the performance of the regulatory tasks falling within the competence of the Minister, participation in the organisation of the general knowledge education examinations and

maturity examinations; evaluation of applications for legal remedy, and operation of the independent examination boards during the period of studies, as defined in the regulation on examinations, performance of the tasks related to the National Register of Experts and Examiners, performance of regional development and related financing tasks falling within the competence of the sectoral management, involvement in the performance of the tasks related to the operation of the public education information system.

The operation of the public education system is funded from the state budget and from the contributions of financiers. These funds can be supplemented with the fees for services used by students and other revenues earned by the public education institution. The amount of budget contribution for public education tasks is defined in the annual budget act.

The central budget provides normative budget contribution for public agencies and municipalities as well as non-public and non-municipality institution operators for the education and training institution financed by them based on the number of children or students and the tasks performed by the institution.

The annual normative budget contribution provided to municipalities cannot be lower than ninety percent of the total expenditure of the municipalities for public education two years before the reference year, less the accumulation and capital-type expenditures and operational-type revenues of the institutions as well as centralised appropriations. The normative contribution amount cannot be lower than the normative contributions of the previous year. The normative budget contribution amount calculated for non-public and non-municipality institution financiers cannot be lower than the normative contribution calculated for the municipality under the same title.

Recognition and naturalization

In the Hungarian Republic, a certificate acquired abroad and recognised by international treaty to be equivalent to a qualification obtained in a corresponding Hungarian educational institution entitles its holder for application for further education within the same field, or certifies vocational qualifications and entitles its holder to take a job or exercise a profession (activity) identical with the ones stated in the certificate.

If the equivalence of a certificate acquired in a foreign educational institution is not recognised by an international treaty, then the certificate must be recognised or nationalised. If recognition is acquired, the certificate certifies qualification equal to the school qualification obtained in a corresponding Hungarian educational institution. When the certificate is naturalised, it certifies qualification or vocational qualifications equivalent to the school qualification obtained in a corresponding Hungarian educational institution, and entitles its holder to apply for further education in that field or towards a job or exercise an occupation (activity) identical with the one stated in the certificate.

Until 31 December 2006, of the departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and from 1 January 2007 it has operated as part of the Educational Authority. HEIC's primary task is the recognition of certificates and degrees obtained abroad, but it also provides information about the Hungarian and foreign education systems and issues certificates about Hungarian qualifications and degrees to be used abroad.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, when the borders opened, travel between countries has been liberalised and, as a consequence of this, more and more people have applied for to have their

vocational and other qualifications obtained abroad recognised in Hungary. Based on the increased turnover of clients, a central office had to be created in 1993 with the primary task of recognising certificates of higher education obtained abroad and assisting student and teacher mobility in the form of information supply.

At that time the legislative basis of this activity included Act LXXX of 1993 on Higher Education and Government Decree No. 47/1995 (IV. 27) on the Recognition and Naturalisation of Degrees, Certificates and Diplomas Obtained in Foreign Higher Education Institutions.

However, as various legal regulations defined the conditions of recognition of various qualifications, vocational qualifications and skills which fell under the competence of various institutions, and in relation to the law approximation tasks arising from accession to the European Union, a new and single recognition act had to be established by 2000-2001.

Parliament approved Act C of 2001 on the Recognition of Foreign Certificates and Degrees in December 2001 and its provisions entered into force on 1 January 2002.

With the exception of certificates of vocational qualification, recognition is decided by the Minister of Education and Culture and, with the exception of certificates of vocational qualification, naturalisation is decided by the respective education and training institution.

In Hungary, public education is free, yet tuition fee is payable in the following cases:

- for lessons in basic level arts education above the number of lessons defined by law, and for each lesson after the student has completed his/her twenty-second year of age,
- education and training in kindergartens, schools and student hostels not relating to the educational or pedagogic programme or the local curriculum, and any other related services.

3. Vocational training

In Hungary the interpretation of vocational training covers vocational basic training laying the ground for vocational training; the acquisition of vocational qualifications required for a particular job, occupation or activity; the acquisition of skills required for performing vocational activities at a higher level; rehabilitation training of disadvantaged people and people with changed working capabilities, as well as training promoting employment and enterprise.

Vocational training institutions:

- secondary vocational school,
- skilled workers' school and vocational training school,
- special vocational training school,
- labour development and training centre.

The vocational qualifications recognised by the state are contained in the National Qualification Register (NQR) defining:

- the name of the vocational qualification,
- the term of education required for obtaining the vocational qualification within the school education system, indicating also the theoretical and practical training period,
- the preliminary school and vocational qualifications,
- the level of vocational qualifications,
- the age requirements for participating in vocational training,
- the vocational qualifications that can only be obtained in school vocational training,
- the vocational qualifications obtainable exclusively through vocational education in the school system, and
- an indication whether career suitability or vocational suitability requirements must be fulfilled before the vocational qualifications can be acquired, as well as
- the Minister entitled to define the vocational and examination requirements.

Vocational training is centrally managed by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour who, in consent with the minister responsible for vocational training, issues in a decree, for the entire field of vocational training,

- the NQR,
- the specification of the general rules and procedures of vocational examinations,
- the conditions of naturalisation of vocational qualifications obtained abroad,
- the framework for the fees of vocational examination and of the examiners,
- the conditions for starting and continuing vocational training.

In cooperation with the minister responsible for vocational training, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour operates the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (NIVAE) as a central institution of development and service, for the following purposes: development of the content of vocational training; co-ordination of the qualification requirements within Hungary and internationally; operation of a vocational training information centre; co-ordination of labour market and school-type training activities; regular development of the vocational structure; provision of national consultation services; organisation of professional further training for teachers; organisation of school competitions and support for innovation.

The Minister of Social Affairs and Labour stipulates in detail the rules of allowances and provisions due to students; the conditions of organising vocational education and establishing

practical training sites, and appoints the vocational subjects for school-based vocational education. The Minister of Social Affairs and Labour makes arrangements for the elaboration, publication and distribution of the central programmes (curricula) of the vocational subjects, the related text books and other teaching aids. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, together with the National Institute for Vocational and Adult Training, organises further training for consultants and for teachers delivering vocational theoretical and practical training, and it organises the national educational competitions within its competence. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour performs the tasks defined under a separate legal regulation in relation to the vocational training fund segment of the Labour Market Fund.

Act LXXXVI of 2003 amended by Act CXIV of 2006 on the Amendment of Certain Vocational Education and Adult Education Acts ordered the establishment of the National Council of Vocational and Adult Education, combining all vocational and adult education tasks into one body..

The Council operates as a professional decision-preparation, a reviewing and proposal-making national body assisting the performance of the activities of the minister responsible for vocational education and adult education in relation to adult education and vocational education issues, in which context the Council expresses its opinion on:

- strategic issues concerning the development of the vocational and adult education system,
- the principles of the vocational and adult education support system,
- the drafts of legal regulations on vocational and adult education,
- the reports on the use of support provided from the central budget of this fund segment,
- the available vocational qualifications;

The Council makes a proposal for:

- the separation of the central and decentralised budgets of the fund segment and the distribution of the decentralised portion among regions, and proposes priorities for utilisation,
- the utilisation of the central budget of the fund segment falling within the scope of competence of the minister responsible for education,
- measures promoting the employment opportunities of adults participating in adult education,
- the development of vocational requirements, subject materials and new procedures, and the supply of financial resources for it,
- the introduction of new vocational qualifications.

The Council evaluates the efficiency of vocational education and guidance, the use of the subject materials and the implementation of vocational requirements. It annually reviews the placement opportunities and experiences of career-starter specialists having obtained their qualifications in vocational education, with special consideration to the unemployment of the career-starter youth, and makes recommendations to operators of vocational education institutions. The term of the mandate of the members of the Council is 3 years. The Council consists of

- one representative of each ministry responsible for vocational qualification,
- an individual proposed by the civil organisations,
- a recognised expert of vocational education, adult education and adult training, respectively,
- a representative of the professional social organisation operating in vocational education,
- a representative of the interest representation organisations of adult training institutions,

- nine representatives of the national associations of employers, and six representatives of the national associations of employees represented also in the National Interest Reconciliation Council (hereinafter: NICC),
- one representative of each national economic chamber,
- representatives of school operators (one person from the school-operator municipalities, one from the foundations and one from the churches).

Standard vocational requirements must be set for vocational qualifications defined in the NQR. The institution providing vocational education develops its vocational activities and may also elaborate local vocational programmes within the framework of the standard vocational requirements.

To receive a certificate of vocational qualification, one must pass a vocational examination. The vocational examination is a state examination. Only such certificates or forms can be used for the certification of vocational qualifications defined in the NQR as have been approved by the competent ministry. The production and distribution of these certificates and forms must be authorised by the competent ministry.

Vocational examinations may be organised by institutions authorised by legal regulation by the minister responsible for vocational education. The place and time of the vocational examination are defined by the institution organising the vocational examination, within the framework defined in the school year regulations in the case of school-based vocational education. The institution provides all the conditions required for the examination and keeps the records of vocational examinations. The chief clerk of the county (Budapest) municipality competent according to the registered seat of the institution organising the vocational examination performs all the tasks related to the registration of the vocational examination.

The vocational examinations for the vocational qualifications defined in the NQR must be organised on the basis of the vocational requirements defined by the minister responsible for vocational education and in compliance with the provisions of the regulation on vocational examinations.

A vocational examination must be taken in front of a vocational examination board. The examination board is an independent professional body consisting of a chairman appointed by the minister responsible for vocational training, a representative of the institution organising the vocation examination and a representative of the regional economic chamber, competent according to the vocational qualification, *or* if the given vocational training does not fall into the competence of any of the economic chambers, then a representative of the institution providing a vocational training or, if that is the same as the institution organising the vocational examination, then a representative of the technical organisation appointed by the minister responsible for the vocational training. The examination board must have at least two members and in addition to the chairman. Only such individuals can join the activities of an examination board who possess the vocational qualifications required by law for teaching the theoretical subjects of the particular trade or for providing practical training in the same.

For vocational qualifications defined in the NQR, vocational training takes place in the form of theoretical and practical training based on the requirements defined by the minister responsible for vocational training. The theoretical training takes in place in the vocational training school. Practical training can be conducted in any vocational training school or, based on an agreement with the vocational training school or an agreement with the student, in any training facility financed and operated by a legal entity or business organisation without legal entity, or by a

private contractor providing practical training, where the conditions of preparation for the practical requirements defined by law are in place.

In vocational training, the business organisation cannot ask for or accept contribution to expenses or any reimbursement of expenses from the students for organising and providing practical training, or putting in place the conditions of practical training. The economic chamber may ban any business organisation violating this regulation from participation in practical training for a maximum of 5 years.

Practical trainers participating in practical training conducted at business organisations must have appropriate vocational qualifications and at least five years of technical experience as well as a clean criminal record. In terms of selection of practice tutors, preference must be given to individuals holding a master certificate or a vocational trainer certificate. Practical training and supervision of students allocated to individual workplaces may only be exercised by individuals possessing the required relevant vocational qualifications, at least two years of practical experience and a clean criminal record.

If practical training is organised by the vocational training school, but the school only has some of the required conditions and all the required conditions cannot be put in place even in co-operation with other vocational training schools, then the school must enter into an agreement with a business organisation for co-operation in the performance of practical training tasks. The vocational training school must also enter into a co-operation agreement with a business organisation even if practical training is organised by the latter throughout the entire training period. The agreement must be concluded for the entire training period, before admitting students for the training. The provisions of the Civil Code shall apply to the agreement.

The agreement must specify the location and the form of practical training in the various phases of the training period (workshop, group training location, individual workplace). The agreement must also specify who provides the benefits due to the students, who delegates the practical trainer and vocational trainer within the framework of organised basic training, and who supervises the students' activities. The agreement must be made in writing and it must also be approved by the financier of the vocational training school in order to have cover for the operational expenses.

Within the framework of practical training, a student can only be obliged to perform a task defined in the practical training programme, and students can only be trained under healthy and safe conditions. The students must be provided occupational safety education related to the practical training tasks by the organiser of the practical training. During the training period, the organiser of the practical training must regularly arrange medical examinations for the student.

For students of minor age, the training period cannot be longer than seven hours a day, and for students of major age, the training period cannot be more than eight hours a day. The daily training period must be reduced proportionately if practical training regularly takes place at a site (workplace) where the employees of the business organisations are also employed in shorter hours. The daily training of students of minor age must be organised between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Students must have at least sixteen hours of rest between the finishing time of the practical training and its starting time on the next day.

The business organisation must keep a training journal on the practical training of students. This training journal must specify the vocational activities, the time spent on them and the evaluation of the student. The training journal must be made available for inspection upon the request of the vocational training school.

In 1996, an act institutionalised the study contract in Hungary. Accordingly, practical training may also be organised on the basis of a written study contract concluded between the student and the business organisation for the purpose of practical training. Such a contract can be concluded if the vocational training school does not have the conditions required for practical training. Pursuant to the study contract, the business organisation provides for the practical training of the student during the entire training period. Within this framework, the business organisation provides training for the student according to the requirements, ensures his professional development, and protects his health and physical safety.

A business organisation must indicate its intention to enter into a study contract to the competent regional economic chamber and the vocational training school providing theoretical training for the student by the end of the last calendar year before admission to school. If the conclusion of the study contract is proposed by the competent regional economic chamber, then the business organisation is exempt from its reporting obligation.

The study contract must be concluded in writing in front of the competent regional economic chamber, before the school enrolment date. The business organisation must present the study contract concluded in writing to the vocational training school by the school enrolment date. Pursuant to the study contract, students who otherwise satisfy the admission requirements must be admitted to the vocational training school.

Study contracts can be concluded by a business organisation which satisfies the conditions specified under the act and under a separate legal regulation, or can satisfy such requirements in co-operation with another business organisation *or* vocational training school. The study contract and the business organisation providing the practical training are registered at the competent regional economic chamber, which also controls the practical training.

A study contract may be concluded by students who

- have fulfilled their studying obligations required under the Act on Public Education,
- have satisfied the preliminary qualification and health requirements for acquiring the vocational qualification concerned.

In the study contract, the business organisation assumes an obligation to provide practical training and education for the students in compliance with standard professional requirements, at a healthy and safe workplace.

Under the study contract, the student assumes an obligation to

- comply with the training procedures of the business organisations and execute its instructions in terms of training,
- master the professional practical skills according to his best abilities,
- respect the security, health and occupational safety regulations,
- show no conduct which would jeopardise the lawful economic interests of the business organisation.

The study contract must contain the following information:

- identification of the business organisation and personal data of the student,
- the title of the vocational qualification and the training period, as defined in the NQR,
- the place of practical training,

- the monthly amount of financial remuneration for the student, specified by grade,
- the other benefits and preferences provided by the business organisation in addition to the benefits and preferences to which students are entitled by law, indicating also their respective amounts and conditions.

Pursuant to the provisions of the study contract, the business organisation must give financial remuneration to the students. The monthly amount of financial remuneration payable to students corresponds to at least 30% of the effective minimum wages ever, irrespective of the number of theoretical and practical training days. The amount of financial remuneration must be defined in the study contract for each year. The financial remuneration of students must be paid in retrospect, in compliance with the provisions of the Labour Code.

If the practical training is not organised on the basis of a study contract, then the organiser of the practical training can use a certain amount of the revenues earned from the students' work for regular or occasional remuneration payable to the students. The conditions and amount of such remuneration must be defined in the Code of Operation of the institution providing the vocational training and in the agreement concluded with the business organisation.

In relation to practical training, the students are entitled to preferential meals, working clothes, individual protection equipment (protective clothes), toilet requisites, travel expense reimbursement and students participating in vocational training without a study contract are also entitled to remuneration for the term of their vocational practice in compliance with the provisions of a separate legal regulation.

The Act on Vocational Education had to be amended on the basis of the experiences of the period since its entry into force in 1993, the economic and social changes, and adjustment to the requirements of the information society and the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union. The changes in the acts on public education, higher education and economic chambers related to vocational education, as well as the new Act on Adult Education also called for the amendment of the Act on Vocational Training.

The primary objective of the amendment in May 2003 was to co-ordinate public education, higher education and adult training through the Act, in order to promote modern and effective vocational training, thus contributing to the establishment of a flexible and differentiated system of vocational qualifications, up to the European standards and recognised as such, and encouraging the development of a modern control and evaluation system. In order to enforce the right to study and the principle of equal opportunities, the Act has given more opportunities to young people for obtaining their first qualifications.

Based on the new provisions of the Act on Public Education pertaining to vocational training, the scope of the Act also covers the types of education preparing for vocational training based on the regulations of the Act on Public Education and the framework curriculum for the purpose of inclusion in studies and vocational examinations. These include career orientation in vocational training schools, vocational preparatory studies, vocational grounding education, vocational orientation in secondary vocational schools and theoretical and practical grounding training in an occupational group.

The Act enforces the changes made in relation to the revision of the National Qualifications Register by completing the register with the expressions of 'range and occupational group of vocational qualifications' and 'number of vocational training years'. The information related to vocational training and changing more frequently according to the labour market requirements is referred within the scope of regulation on vocational and examination requirements issued by the ministers responsible for vocational qualifications in a decree.

The Act authorises the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour to regularly develop and update the occupational structure, to establish committees by occupational groups and to operate them in co-operation with the Minister of Employment Policy and Labour. The Minister of Education and Culture performs the tasks of the minister responsible for vocational training in terms of the vocational training activities within the sector supervised by him and the tasks assigned to his competence on the basis of the NQR. For the purpose of transparency of regulations, the difference between the ministers responsible for vocational training has disappeared in the top level management of vocational education – with the exception of the Minister of Education managing the activities centrally – as all ministers responsible for vocational training have the same competence.

The Act made it possible for the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education to perform research activities, to develop rehabilitation training programmes and to upgrade the vocational qualifications recognised by the state on a continuous basis, and to act as national reference and information centre in the network currently developing within the European Union on top of its development activities and services.

The Act ordered the national economic chambers to enter into written agreements with the national economic interest representation organisations on the accomplishment of the accomplishment of their tasks as parties contributing to vocational training and on co-operation between their regional organisations.

The Act also put in place the legal conditions for applying the requirements of establishment and operation of the control, measurement and evaluation system in the specification of the vocational and examination requirements mandatory for the vocational qualifications registered in the NQR. This regulation made it a mandatory requirement to elaborate a vocational programme in vocational training schools and a training programme for vocational training taking place outside the school system based on the vocational and examination requirements as well as the central programmes (curriculum) of the vocational subjects. The former framework-type regulation was replaced by the possibility of inclusion of acquired knowledge in the course of the studies and of exemption from vocational examinations.

In Hungary, the head of the vocational training institution decides on the inclusion of acquired and certified knowledge into the studies. The examination board can decide on the exemption of students from the repeated performance of parts of the vocational examination or requirements of its subjects. The examination board can reject the relevant application only when the legal conditions of the exemption do not apply. Legal remedy may be sought against such a decision in case the law has been violated.

Vocational examinations may be organised by institutions authorised to that effect by the minister responsible for vocational education in a legal regulation. Institutions providing vocational educational services may organise vocational examinations after the completion of the training for their students and other individuals having a study contract with them, unless the vocational examination regulation provides otherwise. The result of any interim examination may be taken into account in the vocational examination as defined in the vocational and examination requirements.

Apart from the vocational and examination requirements, vocational theoretical and practical training within the school system is based on the central programme (curriculum) of the vocational subjects. The central programme (curriculum) of the vocational subjects contains the number of school years of vocational education, the total time frame available for learning the subject material, the list of instruments and other equipment, and the duration of the consecutive (summer) practical training. Vocational theoretical training may only be provided in vocational training schools or, for higher-level vocational education and training, in institutions of higher education, while the practical training of students may be organised at any practical training site

financed and operated by the school or a business organisations where the requirements of the practical training can be satisfied.

The organiser of the practical training may organise level tests for each type of vocational training where this is allowed under the vocational and examination requirements, in order to measure the efficiency of the individual phases of vocational training (e.g., initial/foundational vocational training) and the acquisition of the competences required for further progress.

Day-time students of vocational training schools can obtain their second vocational qualification free of charge, too. Practical training for students may be organised by budgetary agencies, by business organisations organising practical training during the consecutive (summer) practical training period and any organisation satisfying only part of the requirements, based on a co-operation agreement for practical training.

Business organisations may provide practical training for students on the basis of study contract. Practical training at budgetary agencies as well as within the framework of related (summer) vocational practice is an exception from this rule. This rule entered into force in the 2005/2006 school year and is applied in an ascending system for the practical training of students starting their studies in vocational training years (grades). The law prohibits and sanctions discrimination in relation to the conclusion of study contracts and during practical training, and requires the involvement of the vocational training school.

Career orientation

Career orientation began in Hungary in the first half of the 1970s, in the form of youth and business consultation institutions. During the period of the development of the market economy and in relation to the dramatic changes as well as the emergence of mass unemployment in the labour market in the beginning of the 1990s, the career orientation issues became increasingly important. Since 1991 the career choice consultation service has been transferred to the labour centres, the basic institutions of the new public employment service (PES) organisation.

During the last fifteen years, the vocational training and labour market training institutions changed fundamentally, and although the legislation, too, developed significantly during this transformation, new training contents and training organisations had to be developed.

The main challenges are the following:

- the state is responsible for young people and it strives to provide access to training and employment for individuals,
- the primary task of the career orientation institutions is to provide real information about the labour market,
- attempts must be made within the school system to provide a comprehensive description of the actual training options to the young people,
- the new sub-network systems and the Internet provides new communication technology opportunities,
- the continuous changes must be made flexibly.

The Hungarian situation is more or less similar to what is experienced in the other Central and Eastern European countries. We can conclude that the main processes of transition have already reached their end. Privatisation is almost completed, and in relation to economic growth, employment is also rising. In the current situation there is a wide access to training. Under the Hungarian government policy, human resources are also an important factor. This policy covers both education and training, especially in terms of higher and secondary education; human investments have a special new value, and the government is trying to harmonise the interests of the economy and the society.

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- Career choice in primary schools is directly assisted by the head teachers and in many schools by special career choice consultants. Based on their activities, schools provide career, vocational and school selection guidance to parents and students; schools organise 'open days' and 'training fairs', and edit various information materials. The consultation institutions and the secondary schools prepare regular annual publications summarising the further education options and describing the occupations based on specific qualifications, as well as the subject requirements. Occasionally, schools publish their information assisting in school and career selection on the Internet, through their websites.
 - The career choice consultation in secondary schools is basically limited to grammar schools, while assistance in occasionally required career correction is limited to secondary vocational schools and vocational training schools. These decisions are better founded (more specific and more carefully made) than career decisions in primary schools, primarily because young people are more mature by then. This work is also assisted by the various pedagogical services.
 - The Career Orientation subject within the 'Lifestyle and living' educational field, introduced in the 7-10 grades based on the Hungarian National Core Curriculum, represented significant progress in career choice assistance in primary schools and secondary schools. This subject covers the psychological components of successful career selection and career choice as well as various labour market issues. In view of the fact that to date 40% of the schools have introduced the new curriculum, the impact of career orientation studies is not complete yet. Measures have been taken to work out the relevant framework curricula and to gradually issue new textbooks.
 - According to the Act on Vocational Education, the National Council of Vocational and Adult Education (NCVAE) must review the employment options of young people gaining vocational qualifications in the vocational education system annually and, based on the findings, the Council may make recommendations to school operators for the transformation and alteration of the training structure. This fact finding, analysis and the relevant recommendations can contribute a lot to the elimination of unemployment of young career-starters and the improvement of their placement chances.
 - The career orientation, career and trade choice assistance activities of the regional PES centres and offices focus on the following: special computer programs (e.g., Tájoló, Choices) assisting computer-aided career selection and career correction as well as self-awareness development, widely and effectively used by the PES employment and career guidance services in combination with the traditional procedures (personalised guidance, psychology tests, etc.). They are also supported by a specifically developed technical background, the Vocational Guidance Centre (VGC) media database, containing career description video films and information folders about individual occupations and trades. With these services, the employment service also supports vocational education in line with the labour market requirements and other training directly assisting employment.
 - The Public Employment Service (the employment agency) provides special information to young people (career choice, labour market, training, further training and employment information), and organises individual and group training and theme-based employment, career and job search and rehabilitation consultations. The organisational framework for these activities is provided by the job clubs and the VGC service.
 - Special career choice fora have been established with the financial support of the National Employment Foundation in Budapest and in the counties to support and co-ordinate this

activity. The representatives of schools, parents, students and employers (chambers) take part in the activities of this forum. Based on the work performed so far, we think that this organisational form represents some progress in the organisation of tasks with joint responsibility, and offers further opportunities for more effective joint activities making better use of the interest of the organisations concerned.

- Organisations performing vocational training promoting employment – vocational training schools, regional labour development and training centres, educational enterprises, non-profit – including religious – organisations and institutions –are becoming increasingly capable of providing professional career orientation and correction activities. The participants of employment promotion training, especially the unemployed, are provided vocational career orientation and bridging programmes as well as labour market training as part of their vocational education, with the support of the Labour Market Fund. These days, almost all training organisations schedule these activities together with the vocational training programme.
- Although the Public Employment Service provides its services systematically and continuously, employment and career guidance is not available in all offices. It is a problem in dealing with clients that administrators have relatively little time for that purpose. The technical facilities must be developed, and the contents of the media database adapted originally with German assistance (films, folders) needs to be enhanced too.
- The technical and methodology work and information databases of the organisations involved in the organisation of career choice promotion (schools, municipality agencies, pedagogical services, interest representations of parents and students, organisations of the Public Employment Service (regional PES centres), regional labour development and training centres, training companies, educational institutions, chambers, trade unions, interest protection representations of people with disabilities, non-profit organisations, religious institutions) are not yet known by and accessible for all people concerned, and therefore their efficiency is also limited.

Another factor influencing career choice is the economic demand, depending on labour force management. All those people and organisations who and which intend to help career choice must understand the demand for qualified labour. There are health requirements, too, because the various trades set various requirements for the physical condition of the body and the condition of the nervous system. Special sociological mobility and social movement driven by differences in the social prestige and attraction of the various trades can be observed as well.

In the consultation practice, the matching of personal and career features is a basic procedure. In order to do that, the consultants must have a clear view of the careers concerned and they must understand the personality of the job seeker or advice seeker.

- Career-understanding includes familiarity with the physical and personnel characteristics, material and typical features of the various careers. The description of the career activity covers the work tasks, the material of the subject of the task, and the specification of the instruments and the finished product. It also contains other factors for describing the environmental characteristics of the career (e.g., size and climatic data of the workplace, lighting, noise, comfort, etc.). It contains the typical technical data, economic and social characteristics of the career (type and amount of waging, preferences, social benefits, holidays, supplements). It also involves the health description of the career and its typical

legal and pedagogical parameters/data (employment options and conditions; method of acquiring relevant vocational qualifications; promotion options and conditions).

- Among the personal factors, career understanding contains the following: somatic, i.e., bodily and health requirements. Sensory and motor functions, development level of the capabilities (average reaction speed, balanced nature, pace of movement, rhythm, sound hand movement, manual skills, various skills and abilities). In terms of mental activities, it contains the observable characteristics (sensing, understanding, observation, understanding the gist, memory functions, critical ability, flexibility, speed and thoroughness, verbal expression capacity), and the dynamic characteristics of the personality (emotional features, aspiration features, social tendencies, independence of will and persistence, working habits and working conduct).
- In order to understand the personality of the advice seeker, tests are performed by the consultants.

The first tests are usually made in groups. A general medical test is required. There is also a need for a differentiated examination of interest and motivation, sensory and motor functions. Apart from that, the mental operation and capabilities may also be tested in a differentiated manner.

The result of these tests is a personality “map” allowing to identify the primary function – stimulation, organisation or execution – of the actual personality features and capabilities in the advice-seeking activity and lifestyle of the client.

It is an important principle in career guidance that career and personality should be described with reference to one another, i.e., with a focus on matching the two. Independent decision-making and choice means that the consultant does not choose instead of the advice seeker, but leads him to the appropriate choice. He does not propose a specific career, only career circles, which allow making a qualified choice based on one’s capabilities and interest.

Open vocational training, IT education in institutions

In Hungary, the subject material, the knowledge and the guidelines for learning and for checking the acquired knowledge are contained on various, methodologically highly elaborate, information media (printed materials, audio and video tapes, computer memories, floppy and CD discs) compiled expressly for those participating in open vocational training. The training material of this type of training is accessible also through the internet. The use of subject materials designed for independent learning and flexible individual education gives freedom and flexibility to students in terms of the contents of the lessons, as well as the place, schedule and location of studying. With this flexibility, education can take place away from school, and with a schedule that suits the work and family conditions.

An important feature of open vocational training is the combination and interaction of the traditional educational and training components and the industrial activities (demand survey, resources allocation, economic efficiency, management). The open vocational education forms and the ICT (information and communication technologies) applications remove the spatial and chronological barriers of learning, and allow/ensure that the participants learn from subject materials of identical quality, and with identical tutorial assistance.

In Hungary, the programme improving the qualifications of the workforce enforces an important role on the state, the employers and the employees, because it is part of the plan to improve the efficiency of our economy and social cohesion, which are closely related to the strategic interests of the country. In the future, the frequency of occupational changes is expected to rise from the previous 1.5-2 to 6 as predicted by the OECD, as a result of which in the next few years 15 per cent of the 4 million employees, i.e., 600 000 people, will have to be retrained or provided the option of independent and flexible learning and training.

Programme development started in this area on the basis of the subsidised project themes, in various technical areas. The independent learning and e-learning methods have become more and more popular, and more than 36 000 people have been trained this way. The new professional skills significantly improve the labour market situation of the employees. With the use of resources available under various applications, the open training workshops and centres, which have already achieved good results in programme development, have gained even more strength.

National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education

The National Institute of Vocational Education (NIVE), founded in 1990, played an important role in the continuous development of vocational education.

The NIVE and the National Institute of Adult Training, established in 2002, merged in January 2007 under the name of National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (NIVAE).

NIVAE regularly reviews the NQR as part of the development of the occupational structure, involving the analysis of the typical data of vocational qualifications and of the vocational and examination requirements, as well as the conditions for inclusion in the register. The Institute develops the technical documents of vocational qualifications contained in the NQR and submits them for approval to the Ministry of Education. It prepares proposals for the modernisation of the register and the modification of the related examination requirements. The Institute also directly manages vocational qualifications assigned to the competence of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

NIVAE has prepared central programmes for the introduction of NQR qualifications in the school system, and special central programmes and teaching aids for the vocational education of young people with disabilities (special textbooks, interactive materials, distance training packages).

Its primary task is to help disadvantaged people catch up and to improve their labour market chances, for which various general education, personality development and trade orientation modules have been developed.

The most important research topics of the Institute are the following:

- analysis of the occupations in the driving sectors emerging from economic restructuring,
- review of the education of business skills,
- restructuring in vocational education (with special regard to the representation of the requirements of the employers; the interests of schools and municipalities, and factors affecting the career choice of students),
- analysis of the status of practical training in the period of transition.

The Institute also operates a national consultation services with the primary task of providing assistance to schools

- for the solution of the technical, methodological and pedagogical problems of NQR-based vocational education,
- for the implementation of pedagogical programmes and technical programmes (including preparation and correction, as necessary),
- for the review of vocational qualifications and subject matter requirements, and for level testing,
- for increasing the quality of technical work,
- for changing, if necessary, the occupational structure of the school,
- for preparing and organising vocational examinations.

In its professional activities, NIVAE builds and develops relations with various European countries and joins various international programmes. The topics of international co-operation programmes are of strategic importance for the Institute, because such co-operation can strengthen and promote the essential professional activities in that particular area, improving their efficiency.

The international programmes focus on the following subjects:

- adaptation of qualification and equivalence central programmes (curricula),
- technical and methodology programmes for teacher training and further training,
- use of foreign languages in vocational education,
- adult training methods,
- elaboration of information sources and databases,
- adaptation of a quality assurance model.

Partner countries: France, UK, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Germany.

The activities of NIVAE are supported by its information system, developed continuously since its establishment, at a high cost. This system also supports the further training of teachers, programme development, document management, business activities, examinations, specialist consultancy and vocational innovation. The information, distributed initially on magnetic discs only, has been replaced gradually by the disclosure of information organised in databases. The Institute operates a database with network access (BRS); this database system is accessible for all interested parties from the website of the Institute. The structure of the database and its information content are changing permanently based on the remarks and requirements of the users. This database system is suitable for responding to the queries of experts and other interested parties addressing the Institute.

The database station embraces all activities of the Institute, and it provides information to the vocational training institutions, ministries, municipalities, chambers, foreign institutions, parents, students and employees. The databases contain the NQR data as they are published, the vocational examination requirements, the central programmes, the data of training institutions and a lot more current information.

The Institute also operates a proofread and professionally supervised Web correspondence forum under the title of ‘Questions and Answers’, where its experts answer incoming questions. The interested parties can find extensive and fast information about the terms and conditions and results of the various study competitions and applications. The website can also be used as a forum for extensive professional debates on various vocational programmes and discussion papers.

NIVAE operates a national vocational education and adult training library. The library mainly collects books in the following categories: education, pedagogy, vocational education; it also selectively collects literature on labour issues, psychology, sociology and other books assisting school education and vocational education. The collection consists mainly of printed publications in the Hungarian language, which has been supplemented with foreign documents relating to the current issues of vocational education in the last few years. In relation to accession to the European Union, Hungary has put a lot of stress on integration issues and on collecting other information on the vocational education systems of the Member States of the European Union in building the library collection. The collection of textbooks contains approximately 2 000 volumes and can only be studied on site. The library services include an online catalogue.

Vocational training contribution

In Hungary, vocational training contribution has been stipulated by law since 1988. The purpose of the regulations on the vocational training contribution and on assistance for the development of the training system is to increase the number of properly trained experts required in the national economy; to develop their qualifications and the economy itself; to improve their knowledge for the purpose of effective employment and assert the related social interests.

The purpose of the efficient use of vocational training contribution is to provide training funds for the development of the vocational knowledge of employees to the extent required by law. Each business organisation, co-operative, housing association and school co-operative, public companies, trusts, law offices, private individuals, work communities with a legal entity and private contractors, with the exception of private contractors paying a flat-rate tax, are obliged to pay vocational training contribution.

The vocational training contribution amounts to 1.5 per cent of the annual payroll expenses. Parties providing their vocational training contribution by organising practical training can reduce their gross liability, up to the amount involved in the organisation of the practical training by

- the costs (expenses) defined and accounted (paid) in the reference year,
- the amount paid out for the purchase, maintenance, reconstruction, replacement or enhancement of instruments, tools, small machines and other assets supporting practical training in groups; other assets supporting practical training in agricultural activities,
- the amount of eligible costs (expenses) in the reference year related to the rent of training workshops, laboratories and other training sites involved in basic training and the related utility service charges,
- any accumulation support for the vocational training school or higher education institution provided on the basis of a development agreement to improve the tangible conditions of practical training, support accounted as 'other expenditure' (hereinafter: development support), the amount of which can only be used to reduce the liability up to 75 per cent of the gross liability,
- expenses of vocational education organised by parties obliged to pay the contribution for their own employees based on an educational contract or study contract (up to 0.5 per cent of the contribution base).

If the development support amount is lower than 75 per cent of the gross liability, then the difference between the gross liability and the development support must be paid into the vocational training contribution account kept by the state tax authority. The state tax authority

transfers the collected vocational training contributions to the account of the Labour Market Fund at a time agreed with the fund manager.

Act LXXXVI of 2001 on vocational training contribution and support of the education system brought significant changes in the decentralised support system realised from the training fund segment of the Labour Market Fund. Instead of counties, the support budget was approved for regions; the county vocational education committees were replaced by regional development and training committees, and decentralised support was approved by the Minister of Education based on the proposals of committees; the Ministry of Education established a Fund Management Directorate for financial implementation and the performance of control obligations and, finally, the higher education vocational training institutions were also eligible for support from the decentralised fund segment. The regional development and education committees were founded as legal successors of the vocational education committees operating at the county/Budapest PES centres. Their main task is to issue and evaluate tenders for applications in relation to the decentralised fund segment. Their work is supported by the National Public Education and Evaluation Examination Centre (NPEEEEC).

In the 27-member committee, regional decisions to promote the development of vocational training were prepared by the representatives of the market sector, representatives of the employees, employers and economic chambers involved in the National Labour Council, municipalities operating education and vocational education institutions, public education development public foundations, higher education institutions and employment centres, in co-operation with the NPEEEEC representatives.

The support available under applications from the training segment of the Fund is available for developing the technical conditions of practical training. The majority of applicants are public education institutions, and at the beginning there were fewer higher education institutions.

The main reason for gradually increasing decentralisation was to enable the local people living in the region and preparing decisions to define local actions requiring support in a useful manner, by focusing on and implementing central guidelines in their specific situation. The implementation of these actions is in line with the central development objectives.

Support of vocational training development

The main source of funding of vocational training development is the training segment of the Labour Market Fund, which can be used for supporting capital expenditure activities required for the improvement of the technical conditions associated with up-to-date practical training conducted at parties obliged to pay contribution in vocational training schools, at labour development and training centres, and in higher education institutions providing vocational qualifications and vocational training, as well as for the examination centre responsibilities of the labour development and training centres. The support for investment services is granted based on public applications.

This fund segment is also used for contributing to the development activities performed in relation to vocational education and to higher education, respectively; the monthly financial resources required for joining the EU vocational training and higher education programmes; the further training of teachers, tutors and practical trainers teaching theoretical and practical subjects within the framework of practical training provided to students; various training and development programmes promoting competitiveness, implemented with remote financing from PHARE and the European Structural Funds, as well as vocational education and higher education objectives of Hungarians living over the borders.

4. Higher education

A university is a higher education institution entitled to provide master training in at least two areas of education, and doctoral education and a doctoral degree in at least one scientific field, provided that at least one third of the tutors and researchers of the higher education institution employed by work contract or under public employment contract holds a scientific degree.

Universities and colleges may provide educational services in all the educational cycles.

Main principles of the operation of higher education institutions

The internal organisation of a higher education institution must be developed so as to ensure the professional, effective and economical performance of its educational and scientific, as well as research activities, its basic creative artistic responsibilities in arts education and the related supplementary functions, as well as of its other operational and maintenance tasks.

Higher education institutions perform their tasks responsibly, based on the requirement of effective use of public funds and public assets.

In line with its core activity, a higher education institution must provide library services, development of the technical linguistic skills in the native language and in foreign languages, as well as organise regular physical exercises.

The Senate is a body of the higher education institution making decisions and controlling the implementation of decisions.

The financial council expresses its opinion on the strategic decisions of the higher education institution and participates in their preparation as well as in controlling the implementation of the decisions.

The higher education institution is managed by a rector.

A quality assurance system must be operated in higher education institutions.

The higher education institution must keep records as required by law, and must supply the data specified under the national statistical data collection programme and in the higher education information system.

The higher education institution defines regulations for its operation and organisation (hereinafter: Code of Organisation and Operation, COO). The Code of Organisation and Operations can regulate all issues that do not need to be regulated in other regulations based on the relevant legal regulations or authorisations contained therein. If the higher education institution operates as a budgetary agency, then the law may contain further provisions for the contents of its COO. Each higher education institution can have one COO. The parts of the Code of Organisation and Operation are the organisational and operational procedures; the system of employment requirements and the system of student requirements.

The organisational and operational procedures must define especially the following items: organisational structure and segmentation as well as management structure of the higher education institution; the tasks and operation of the individual organisational units; the method of communication within the institution and the quality assurance system.

In addition to their primary task, financed by the state, public higher education institutions may also provide higher-level vocational education and training courses for a charge. The higher education institutions may provide higher-level vocational education and training services within the school system defined in the NQR in professional areas matching their educational profile, based on accreditation, as specified under the law.

The higher education institutions may provide school-type vocational education services by operating a vocational training school, within the framework of which they prepare students for

vocational examinations and participate in the organisation and implementation of vocational examinations based on the examination regulation. This activity is governed by the legal regulations applicable to vocational education and training. The legal status of the trainees and the financing of this education are identical with the legal status and financing of students of vocational training schools. Higher education institutions may also provide training for a charge and as a business activity outside the school system within the framework of lifelong learning.

Higher education institutions can also provide educational, research, development, consultation service and other tasks for external clients and principals as a service for a charge or a business activity, providing that their core responsibilities are not violated thereby.

Higher education institutions may establish and operate public education institutions in relation to the specific educational activity conducted by them by issuing a deed of foundation. Public education institutions may be established, operated and financed in compliance with the rules applicable to public education.

Sources of funding of the tasks of public higher education institutions:

- central budget support,
- resources provided from other sub-systems of the budget,
- service fees, other student charges, tuition fee and cost reimbursement,
- revenues from the core and business activities,
- donations and other revenues, as well as foundation resources,
- Treasury assets available for such purposes.

Based on the provisions of Act IV of 1990 on the Freedom of Conscience and Religion and the Churches, the agreement between the Republic of Hungary and the Apostolic Holy See and its provisions and their extension to the other churches for the purpose of the enforcement of identical rights, the state provides the same amount of support for the operation of religious higher education institutions as public institutions. In theological and religious education, the religious institution providing the education is entitled to the same normative support as is provided to the philological faculties of public institutions, and in college training, the normative support due to the church institution is identical with the support amount provided to the philological faculties of teacher training colleges.

University and college teachers, university professors, assistant professors and assistant tutors as well as language teachers, PE teachers, arts teachers and student hostel teachers, other tutorial as well as scientific research staff members may be organised into work groups.

Tutors and scientific researchers working in higher education institutions must

- possess a university degree,
- have a clean criminal record and be able to act,
- comply with the tutorial, scientific researcher and creative arts requirements of the institution, in line with their positions.

Students of higher education institutions are individuals participating in any accredited school-type higher-level vocational education, college and university bachelor training, specialised further training and doctoral training, irrespective of the type of education in which they perform their studies. The student has a student contract with the higher education institution. The student contract is established with the enrolment, and it is effective until the day when the certificate or

diploma is issued, or the student is discharged or excluded from the institution, and deleted from the students' register.

The student card is a public document certifying the student status of the individual, entitling its holder to the benefits provided by law or defined by the institution. The higher education institutions form their own organisation, making sure that it is capable of performing educational, scientific, research, arts and other tasks and capable of economic operation.

The university and college may be divided into faculties. A university may also have a college faculty. In higher education institutions, education and scientific research activities take place in educational organisational units (department, clinic, institute, etc.). Higher education institutions may also operate research institutes and research groups.

A higher education institution may also include a students' hostel, a library, a practice school and kindergarten, a practice site, a practice farm, organisational units for providing medical, production, service and other activities. Practice schools also perform public education and higher education related tasks.

Establishment and termination of faculties in public higher education institutions, and recognition of the establishment and termination of any faculty in non-public higher education institutions falls within the competence of the Government. The Minister of Education and Culture prepares his proposal based on the opinion of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) upon the recommendation of the Higher Education and Research Council (HERC). The establishment and termination of educational, research and other organisational units falls within the competence of the higher education institution.

Public education tasks of the public agencies

Parliament

- defines the higher education development plan,
- defines the annual higher education development plan and the operational budget in the Budget Act,
- establishes, restructures and terminates public higher education institutions,
- gives its consent for, and withdraws its recognition of, the establishment or termination of non-public higher education institutions.

The President of the Republic

- appoints and dismisses university tutors,
- assigns and dismisses university rectors.

Within the scope of its higher education tasks, the Government

- puts in place the maintenance and operation conditions of the public higher education institution network; identifies the tasks of higher education development and scientific research development financed by the state, and provides the conditions required for their implementation,
- gives its consent for the establishment or termination of faculties in public higher education institutions, and recognises the establishment or termination of faculties in non-public institutions,

- specifies the qualification requirements in bachelor education,
- specifies the procedures of doctoral education and the awarding of a doctors' degree, and the rights and obligations of doctors and participants taking part in the education programme,
- specifies the state grants for the title of 'Professor Emeritus',
- defines the general rules of the habilitation procedure,
- specifies the organisation of HAC and the principal rules of its operation,
- stipulates the recognition and naturalisation of foreign degrees, certificates, diplomas, and controls the related procedure,
- defines the total number of state-financed students every year,
- regulates the fees and compensations payable by students at public higher education institutions and the rules of issuing student identity cards and the benefits attached to the card,
- defines the system of state support for students,
- regulates certain issues of education of foreign students in Hungarian higher education institutions and of scholarships abroad,
- regulates the procedures of establishment, termination and operation of higher education institutions.

The Prime Minister

- appoints and releases college tutors,
- at state colleges, assigns and dismisses and, at non-state colleges, confirms the college rectors and directors general,
- assigns and relieves the president and members of HAC.

Public tasks of the Minister of Education and Culture related to higher education:

- participation in the Government's decisions on higher education policy and development; control of the scientific policy of the sector and its implementation; co-ordination of the development of national science policy concepts and proposal-making in relation to it,
- submission of the annual budgetary report and support plan for higher education to the Government based on the standpoint of HERC,
- statutory supervision over higher education institutions, in which competence the Minister may annul any institutional regulation and decision that violates the provisions of legal regulations, and may take actions for eliminating any violations of law,
- approval or withdrawal of approval for establishing a faculty in bachelor education based upon the opinion of HERC and the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC),
- specification of the qualification requirements in postgraduate specialisation programmes on the basis of HAC's standpoint,
- publication of postgraduate specialisation programmes that satisfy the qualification requirements stipulated in a separate regulation, and publication in the Educational Gazette of the accredited school-based higher-level vocational education and training programmes listed in the NQR, based on the relevant requests of higher education institutions,
- based on the standpoint of HERC, decision on the admissible number of state-financed students for the first year of different education levels and its distribution among the institutions, as well as compliance with the student quotas specified under agreements concluded with various churches and religious institutions,

- suspension of the right to organise final examinations and issue certificates in certain institutions for a specific period of time based on HAC's proposal,
- control of the lawful and effective use of the resources made available by the state, elaboration of the control organisation in co-operation with HERC and publication of the results of such control, including also the opinion of the supervised institution,
- support to higher education institutions in the development and expansion of their international relations.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education (HAC)

- approves the operation of doctoral institutions and decides in which branch of a certain scientific field the university can provide doctoral education and grant PhD degrees,
- issues position statements in relation to the quality of education during the implementation of the respective act.

Upon the request of the Minister of Education and Culture, the HERC or a higher education institution, HAC expresses its opinion on

- the establishment and recognition of higher education institutions,
- the establishment or recognition of any faculty,
- the qualification requirements,
- granting permission to introduce a major in first undergraduate (bachelor) education,
- the doctoral and habilitation regulation of the university,
- the scientific or art branches of the higher education institution, where the conditions are in place for the start and performance of postgraduate specialisation programmes or accredited school-based higher-level vocational education and training,
- the rules of application of the credit system,
- the approval of operation of a foreign higher education institution in Hungary,
- draft international agreements on the naturalisation and equivalence of foreign certificates.

Each Hungarian citizen has the right to carry out higher-level studies in any higher education institution or faculty, at his choice.

Conditions of applying for a higher education institution:

- general certificate of secondary education (maturity certificate) or any other certificate of equivalent secondary education, or a diploma obtained in a higher education institution in the case of bachelor education and accredited school-based higher-level vocational education or training,
- university of college diploma obtained in a higher education institution and defined by the specific higher education institution in the case of postgraduate specialisation programmes,
- university diploma or an equivalent certificate in the case of doctoral education.

At universities with more than 5 years of studies, in exceptional cases, a student may be permitted to start their PhD studies, provided that he has already taken examinations in each subject of his PhD education.

Higher education institutions may set further requirements for admission, including especially the rating of the maturity examination (GCSE), specific results in secondary education studies,

secondary education competitions, entrance examination or school-based higher-level vocational education and training accredited according to a specific act, aptitude tests, employment, specific jobs, professional experience for a specific term, or specific qualifications. Higher education institutions publish their entrance examination requirements at least 2 years, and other requirements at least one year before their introduction.

Higher education institutions provide regular information about their education; the admission requirements are published annually, in due time. Higher education institutions conduct school-based accredited higher-level vocational education and training, university and college undergraduate training, postgraduate general and specialisation programmes and doctoral education for regular students and in other forms (e.g., evening courses, correspondence courses, e-learning).

Education in the higher education system

In the institutions of higher education, education is based on an educational programme. The educational programme becomes effective when it is approved by the Senate. Within the framework of the educational programme, higher education institutions prepare a curriculum for bachelor and master training, respectively, based on the educational and output requirements issued by the Minister, while higher education institutions can freely prepare their curriculum for postgraduate specialisation programmes.

Higher-level vocational education and training takes place according to the vocational training programme prepared by the higher education institution and approved by the Senate. A vocational training programme may be prepared for higher-level vocational qualifications defined in the National Qualification Register, based on the vocational and examination requirements issued by the Minister responsible for vocational qualification.

The higher education institution and the economic (professional) chamber, in co-operation with the national economic interest representation organisations, develop the vocational and examination requirements based on an agreement with the Minister responsible for vocational qualification, and initiates the inclusion of the higher-level vocational qualification in the National Qualification Register. The higher-level vocational qualification must be added to the NQR following a simplified and accelerated accreditation procedure, if the Minister responsible for vocational qualification agrees with it.

The vocational training programme contains the possibility of inclusion of any knowledge and skills acquired in vocational training with identical contents, and credits obtained in higher-level vocational education and training in bachelor training in the same field of education. At least 30, but no more than 60 credits may be included. The training period is 4 semesters, unless the European community legislation specifies a longer period of training for some qualification. Credit may be obtained in higher-level vocational training conducted in a secondary vocational school if the secondary vocational school organises higher-level vocational education and training based on an agreement with a higher education institution.

Basic degrees (baccalaureus, bachelor degree) and vocational qualification may be obtained in undergraduate education. Undergraduate education is the first higher qualification level, the basis for the commencement of master training. The vocational qualification obtained in undergraduate education entitles to employment in jobs defined under the legal regulations, and it is defined according to the training and output requirements applicable to undergraduate education. In practice-intensive undergraduate training, a six-month consecutive professional practice (hereinafter: consecutive professional practice) must be organised. The performance of the consecutive professional practice is a condition for taking the final examination. In undergraduate education, at least 180 credits, or if professional practice is also involved, at

least 210 credits must, but no more than 240 credits may, be achieved. The training period is at least six, but no more than eight semesters.

In master-level education, a master degree (magister, master) and qualification may be obtained. The master degree is the second qualification level in higher education. Vocational qualification available in master education is defined based on the training and output requirements applicable to master education. Vocational qualification obtained in master education entitles to employment in jobs defined under the applicable legal regulations. At least 60 credits must, and no more than 120 credits may, be obtained in master education. The training period is at least two, but no more than four semesters.

At least 300 credits must, and no more than 360 credits may, be obtained in undergraduate education and the related master education and in the consistent, indivisible training programme altogether. The training period is at least ten, but no more than twelve semesters.

Postgraduate specialisation qualification may be obtained in postgraduate specialisation training following the acquisition of the bachelor or master degree. At least 60 credits must, and no more than 120 credits may, be obtained in postgraduate specialisation training. The training period is at least two, but no more than four semesters:

Doctoral training is also part of the educational programme, preparing candidates for getting a PhD title after the master's degree. At least 180 credits must be obtained in PhD education. The training period is six semesters.

The rector sends the documentation related to the launch of undergraduate and master training and the regulation of the doctoral school to the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education (HAC). The training may be launched if the HAC supports it in its expert opinion, and the higher education institution has reported the new course to the registration centre. Without the support of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education, training may be launched if the higher education institution has been licensed for it.

The Government defines the

a) educational fields, branches and faculties of undergraduate and master education; the number of credits assigned to them; the procedures for launching the training activities, and the faculties where practical training must be organised in external institutions other than higher education institutions,

b) procedures for organising higher-level vocational education and training,

c) procedures and conditions of establishing a doctoral school; the general rules applicable to the membership and organisation of the doctoral school, the competences of the doctoral council; the publicity of doctoral theses and doctoral dissertations; the procedures for gaining doctoral degrees, as well as the conditions of obtaining the PhD title.

In higher education, training may be organised in the form of full-time training, part-time training and distant training. Full-time training consists of at least 300 lessons in each semester.

Full-time training must be organised according to the time schedule applicable to regular training. Education provided according to the regular (day-time) training work schedule must be organised in five-day educational weeks, on workdays. Departure may be made from these regulations with the agreement of the students' self-government of the higher education institution.

Part-time education may be organised according to the time schedule applicable to evening and correspondence training. With the exception of postgraduate specialisation training, the term of part-time training may be at least 30, but no more than 50% of the number of lessons delivered in full-time training. The term of postgraduate specialisation training may be at least 20, but no more than 50% of the number of lessons delivered in full-time training. Evening and correspondence education must be organised on workdays or, in justified cases, on the weekly rest-days, taking into account the students' duties.

5. Adult education

Government Decree No. 170/2006 (VII.28.) on the Tasks and Competences of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour regulates the tasks of the Minister in relation to vocational training and adult training. Pursuant to the provisions of the Decree, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour

- a) defines the conditions of starting and delivering vocational education; the contents requirements of co-operation agreements concluded by institutions providing vocational training pertaining to the organisation of practical training, and the tasks of career monitoring,
- b) defines the general rules and procedures of vocational examinations and the rules of keeping centralised records of vocational examinations,
- c) defines the eligibility criteria for organising vocational examinations,
- d) defines the framework for the vocational examination fees and the examiners' fees,
- e) defines the detailed rules of students' benefits based on the study contracts,
- f) prepares and issues the National List of Vocational Experts and the National List of Vocational Examination Chairmen,
- g) defines the formal criteria of the vocational and other examination requirements,
- h) establishes and operates the committee serving the continuous development and modernisation of the vocational training structure,
- i) establishes and operates strategic committees for the purpose of successful performance and co-ordination of the tasks under the vocational training development strategy as well as for the purpose of successful interest reconciliation,
- j) prepares the national module map based on the modules maps of vocational qualifications supervised by the Minister responsible for vocational education, and arranges its publication,
- k) proposes and implements development programme using national and international resources,
- l) participates in the implementation of public tasks related to the operation and improvement of the public education and higher education system for the purpose of promoting lifelong learning, in compliance with the provisions of a separate legal regulation,
- m) elaborates adult training and labour market training programmes and encourages the dissemination of their forms supported by modern IT instruments,
- n) performs the tasks of the Minister responsible for vocational education with regard to vocational qualifications falling within his competence based on the NQR,
- o) establishes and maintains adult training institutions defined under separate legal regulations,
- p) participates in the performance of the functions of the Minister of Education and Culture related to school-based vocational education.

There are always numerous new challenges of relevance for the structure of education and vocational training. No doubt, more importance should be given in the future to the personal development pathways of individuals; the improvement of their knowledge and skills; the satisfaction of demand for general and professional basic and further development; the establishment of the information society; the increased flexibility of the labour market; the overarching principle of permanent development, etc.

The answers proposed to the above-mentioned challenges show that, in the near future, it will be necessary to make profound changes in the systems of education and vocational training. The reformed education and vocational training will certainly contribute to economic growth and more successful competition, while lifelong learning will act as a vehicle of raising the employment rate.

In order to ensure permanent employment and to decrease unemployment, employees with higher general and professional knowledge and skills are needed, to match the changing needs of the economy. Consequently, education together with training will play a key role in the solution of the employment problems. Adult education, either within or outside the school system, allows people to develop their skills, knowledge and professional and technical qualifications, and hence be able to satisfy their social as well as personal aspirations.

The education and vocational training sectors are also affected by the economic and social processes. This field, too, shall operate on the basis of a modern view responding to the current economic requirements. Thus organised learning, including education, training, the acquisition of culture and, from another aspect, self-learning, shall comprehend the entire active life, and apart from the generations subject to compulsory education, it shall also involve the adult population.

The modern state must provide an opportunity of lifelong learning for each member of society. To achieve this aim, adult education as well as the development of its funding and conditions must be regarded as primary issues.

Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education (the Adult Education Act) is a framework act setting the general regulatory framework criteria of adult education according to its own specific content and regulation criteria.

Accordingly:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Hungary declares that everyone has the right to study, and ensures this through the extension of public education and access to training. The Act regulates firstly the fields of adult education supported by the state and, secondly, by presenting the guarantees of consumer protection, it enables the extension of the constitutional rights of citizens. This quality expectation is a requirement even if the training is not supported by the state, but offers a qualification that is acknowledged by the state.
- The scope of the Act includes adults participating in adult training and taking services of adult education. The Act does not cover adults having a student legal relationship with public education institutions and with institutions of higher education, supported by the state; neither does it cover legal persons created according to Section 13 of Act IV of 1990 on the Freedom of Conscience and Religion and on the Churches, with the exception of those founded exclusively for the purpose of carrying out adult education activities.
- Through the Act, the Government receives authorisation, as part of its tasks pertaining to adult education, to declare the accreditation of institutions and programmes of adult training, the regulations of access to normative supports for adult education in a decree, and, furthermore, it gives authorisation to the Minister of Employment Policy and Labour to regulate the conditions of registration of institutions dealing with adult training and further detailed rules in the case of certain forms of adult training.

One of the main objectives on the Act on Adult Education is to provide consistent regulations to ensure the transparency and controllability of the adult education system and to provide a

framework regulation for the state support of adult education. The institutions controlling adult education were put in place in the summer of 2002. The Act also sets a target of increasing the opportunities for all members of society to have access to adult education.

After the entry into force of the Act, the National Council of Vocational and Adult Education (NCVAE) was established as a professional decision-preparation and proposal-making national body assisting the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour in the performance of his tasks in the field of adult training.

In order to ensure the quality of adult training, an Adult Training Accreditation Body (ATAB) was established for the accreditation of adult training institutions and adult training programmes. It is an independent professional body entitled to audit accredited adult training institutions and their adult training activities.

The establishment of National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (NIVAE) also relates to changes in legislation. In the framework of its core activity, this institute is responsible for the professional and methodology development of adult training, and for the co-ordination of adult training research activities and services.

NIVAE's tasks have been increased with the organisation of tenders issued from the adult training budget. The tasks of NIVAE were also defined in relation to the operation of ATAB, to make the accreditation process smoother, as a result of which the institute completes all activities for decision preparation in relation to the accreditation process (formal check of submitted applications, procurement of expert opinions, etc.). NIVAE acts as the ATAB secretariat (e.g. preparation of meetings, administration tasks), and it keeps records of the accredited institutions and programmes.

The registration tasks related to adult training institutions are performed by the regional labour centres of the Public Employment Service (hereinafter: PES). The detailed rules of registration, including the provisions applicable to the competence, task and condition criteria, are defined in a decree issued by the Minister of Employment Policy and Labour. The National Employment and Social Office is entitled to judge appeals submitted against resolutions rejecting registration, or ordering cancellation from the register.

If the training institutions do not enter into a training contract required by law with their training participants, or the contract does not contain the required contents, or training institutions provide training without a training programme, the labour centres controlling adult training activities are authorised by law to proceed against the institutions violating the law. The PES centre may impose a fine of HUF50 000 to HUF500 000 on institutions engaged in adult training without registration. If the institution continues its adult training activities without registration, the fine may be imposed again and the PES office will ban the institution from training.

Fines can also be imposed on institutions that are registered, but do not operate according to the legal regulations. These fines are adjusted to the weight of the legal violation. In such cases, the fine varies from HUF20 000 to HUF200 000.

The basic tasks of the regional labour development and training centres focusing on lifelong learning, on the national and regional tasks of human resources development and on the assertion of the principle of equal opportunities include the following:

- participation in the delivery of training promoting employment and job creation,

- participation in international adult training programmes and in the preparation and implementation of human resources development programmes supported from EU Community funds,
- organisation of training to promote the realignment of disadvantaged people and participation in the development of such programmes,
- establishment of e-learning networks to support prospective trainees choosing non-formal education,
- operation as regional curriculum development and consultation centre.

State support of adult training is primarily aimed at creating chances and ensuring equal opportunities for access to training and the acquisition of vocational qualifications. The normative subsidy is designed to support those in the most unfavourable labour market situation, i.e. persons without officially recognised vocational qualification and disabled adults. With the support, the groups concerned are provided an opportunity to obtain a marketable vocational qualification in order to stabilise their position in the labour market and to acquire the competences required for their individual career, in accordance with their health conditions.

- The Act regulates the basic rules of the quality assurance of adult education. It is a general condition that training can be started exclusively on the basis of a training programme. The contents of the programme are specified by this regulation. The training programme shall be adjusted to the differences in the previous knowledge and skills of the participants. Therefore, the applicant may request the previous assessment of his/her knowledge, which shall be evaluated by the training institution and the applicant shall be assigned to the appropriate level on the basis of the outcome of the evaluation. The Act allows making training available in the form of open and distancing learning as well.
- The registered adult training institutions may apply for the accreditation of their training programmes. The requirements and the process of accreditation are regulated by government decree. The programme accreditation has a great importance in the training fields which offer general or vocational courses or foreign language courses at different levels not included by the National Qualification Register.
- According to Act IV of 1991 on the promotion of employment and supports for the unemployed, the *Employment and Social Office* has the right to decide whose courses it will support (right of discretion). Financing is ensured by the employment segment of the Labour Market Fund. Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, support shall be granted exclusively to adults provided training in an accredited institution.
- The Act on Vocational Training Contribution and Support for the Development of the Training System specifies as a special form of support education support granted to one's own employees.
- The accredited institution, based on application, can receive support for establishing the technical infrastructure of the training.

According to the Personal Income Tax Act, adults and adult students are eligible for tax relief on based on participation in training.

6. Diplomas and titles

In Hungary, the first Adult Education Act (Act CI of 2001) was passed by Parliament in December 2001. Pursuant to the provisions of this legal regulation:

- The adult education institution is allowed to start adult education only if it is registered by the National Public Education Evaluation and Examination Centre (NPEEC). Registration is valid for two years.

- The application for registration shall be submitted by the keeper of the register at the regional directorate competent by its seat, with the following documents: certificate of incorporation (not older than 30 days); valid deed of foundation or statutes of the applicant; statement including the specification of the training programme; statement including the accreditation number for foreign language courses; statement on the vocational qualifications in the case of vocational training, statement on the specification and identification of the services related to training; statement to the effect that the applicant is not in public debt, not under bankruptcy, final settlement or liquidation procedure; and a copy of the receipt of the paid registration fee.

The identification numbers of adult training activities are published in the communication of the Minister of Education.

The register includes the following data: the name, seat and address of the adult training institution; the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) identification number; number and date of registration; reporting deadlines; the purpose of the adult education activity and the form of the related services, for foreign language training, whether it targets the acquisition of a state or an international certificate; entitlement to organise language examinations; name of the vocational qualification; entitlement to organise vocational examinations; name and identification number of the accredited training programmes; date of and reason for cancellation/suspension from the register. Any changes in the applicant's circumstances shall be reported to the keeper of the register, who will issue a certificate of the change. The date of registration is the date of the relevant notification. Data of institutions cancelled from register shall be preserved for 5 years.

The registration application shall be rejected if one of the documents to be attached is missing; if adult training does not figure among the core activities in the certificate of incorporation, the document, or in the entrepreneur's permit of the entrepreneur; if the applicant has been cancelled from the register for non-fulfilment of his reporting obligations or the adult education activity pursued by the applicant failed due to his actionable conduct.

The scope of the Government Decree on the detailed regulations of the accreditation of adult education institutions and programmes includes the accreditation process of institutions and programmes determined by the Act on Adult Education, the applicant institutions and the Adult Training Accreditation Body (ATAB) and its members.

- ATAB is the body in charge of implementing the tasks determined by the Act, and it has an independent professional decision making capacity. ATAB is responsible for the accreditation process; it issues accreditation certificates and exercises the right of supervision of the accredited institution or programme.

- ATAB prepares recommendations for the organisational and operational regulations, the order of procedures (detailed process description) and the system of requirements, to be published as communications in the official MoEC gazette. ATAB takes into consideration the different natures of the adult education activities in its procedures. The Code of Organisation and Operation, the order of procedures and the system of requirements can be modified by the Minister, if necessary, and ATAB is entitled to make amendment proposals.

- In the framework of its institution accreditation procedure, ATAB examines whether the training and adult training activities meet the relevant requirements. With respect to institutions of higher education, ATAB investigates whether the effective accreditation of the institution conforms to the criteria of the requirements and the order of procedures fully or in part.

- In the framework of programme accreditation, ATAB examines one or more training programmes and adult education services of the institution. It takes its programme accreditation decision on the basis of the contents components of the programmes and services. The central programmes developed for the vocational qualifications included in the NQR are considered accredited programmes. Pursuant to the provisions of the Adult Education Act, ATAB issues a programme accreditation certificate without carrying out an accreditation procedure, on the basis of the announcement. Documents certifying accreditation based on other legal regulation or authorisation in official capacity shall be attached to the announcement. The term of the validity of the programme accreditation, a minimum of two and a maximum of five years, shall be specified by ATAB in view of the contents and specifics of the programme and services.

- ATAB develops its standpoints regarding the quality certification of adult education, i.e. issues of relevance for the quality of education, and provides expert opinion to institutions requesting that in regard of the development of their quality assurance activity. ATAB has to justify its position, specifying the accreditation activity, the reasons underlying its position and its recommendation. The President of ATAB forwards their position statement to Minister for publication.

The accreditation procedure is launched upon the request of the institution of adult education. Accreditation can be requested only by institutions listed in the NPEEC register. The accreditation of the institution and programme, respectively, is obtainable by separate procedures. ATAB performs its duties on the basis of the Order of Procedures and the requirement system. The accreditation process shall not exceed 90 days. The Order of Procedures shall be determined so as to ensure fast, simple and competent action. The National Council of Vocational and Adult Education (NCVAE) shall express its opinion on the Order of Procedures and the requirement system. For the purpose of the accreditation of the adult education institutions and programmes of the churches, ATAB sets up a theological special committee. The fee of accreditation procedure shall determined annually by ministerial decree.

- Conditional institution accreditation can be issued if the activity of the adult education institution targets exclusively the training of disadvantaged groups and disabled people, provided that ATAB accepts the action plan drawn up by the training provider, covering the prospective measures and tasks scheduled for a period of at least 12 months, and necessary to ensure compliance with the terms of the final accreditation of the institution.

ATAB monitors the preparation activities on a continuous basis, and withdraws the conditional accreditation if the institution fails to meet the conditions identified under the action plan by the specified deadline.

- A simplified accreditation process can be pursued if the public education and vocational training institution or institution active in other adult education activities has a certified quality assurance system.

Certified quality assurance systems include the ISO 9000, ISO 9001, 2000, and any other system specified by the Minister in the relevant specification. In the simplified institution accreditation procedure, ATAB examines the documents prepared during the deployment of the quality assurance system. The detailed rules of the simplified procedure shall be determined in the Order of Procedures.

- The institution accreditation is valid for a period of four years, and it is terminated after that date. The adult education institution shall submit to ATAB its training plan for the following year,

accepted by its professional consulting body, until 30th November of the reference year. If the institution fails to meet this obligation, ATAB shall revoke its accreditation. The starting date of the validity of the accreditation is the day of the issue of the certificate.

Applications for accreditation shall be submitted directly to the ATAB secretariat, which reviews their adequacy. The applicant is provided a maximum of 30 days to correct any deficiencies. If the applicant fails to act on the relevant notification, the application shall be rejected. ATAB starts to develop its opinion on the date when of the applications meeting the formal requirements in every respect is submitted to the secretariat. The applications are evaluated in order of receipt, unless the Minister requests an extraordinary procedure. ATAB evaluates the applications according to the system of requirements in effect on the 90th day before its submission to the secretariat.

- **ATAB takes** its accreditation decisions at the board meetings; the accreditation may be granted, refused *or* revoked. The decision is incorporated in a resolution, with justification in case of rejection or revocation. If the application is rejected, ATAB can specify certain requirements, and declare that, provided that the institution satisfies them by the relevant deadline and submits a novel application, the next ATAB procedure will be limited to checking the fulfilment of the requirements concerned. The representative of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee shall be present at the ATAB meetings in advisory capacity. The meeting shall have a quorum if two thirds of its members are present. It shall take a decision, to be prepared, if necessary, by a special committee established for that purpose, with majority votes. The members of the special committee shall be invited by the President of the ATAB from among the members of ATAB or from among other experts. The composition, operation and order of nomination of the special committees shall be determined under the Code of Operation and Organisation.

ATAB or its special committee can delegate a committee of experts to perform on-site inspection. The visiting committee shall audit the implementation of the tasks prescribed for the institution under the system of requirements. The experts are selected by open tender. They have to meet the requirements specified under the call for application. The adult training institution shall be informed about the composition of the visiting committee at least 30 days before the visit, and the head of the institution can submit a justified objection based on conflict of interests against any member within 15 days. The committee draws up a report on its activities.

- If, during the inspection, ATAB comes to the conclusion that the institution or the programme does not meet the accreditation requirements, it will revoke its previous resolution and issue a new one, to be published in the official MoEC gazette. The granting of the accreditation as well as its term of validity shall also be published.

Students will finish their studies in university or college-level undergraduate education and in postgraduate specialisation training by a final examination and in accredited school-type higher-level vocational training by a vocational examination. The final examination checks and assesses the acquisition of knowledge (skills) required for obtaining the higher education certificate. The candidate has to demonstrate his ability to apply that knowledge.

The final examination consists of the following:

- preparation and defence of the thesis (diploma work),
- written and oral examinations as specified in the qualification requirements,
- specific practical exercises in certain branches of study.

Conditions of admittance for final examination:

- fulfilment of the examination and other study requirements specified in the curriculum, or acquisition of the required number of credits.
- certification of the acquisition of the foreign language skills prescribed by the institution.

The qualification requirements specify the type of final examination to be taken and the manner of the calculation of the results, depending on the type of the examination. In accredited higher-level vocational education and training within the school system, a vocational examination shall be taken according to the rules of the Act on Vocational Training. The final examination is to be taken before a board of examiners. This board shall have at least two more members in addition to the chairman. At least one member of the examining board has to be an external expert. The method and the manner of assessment of the final examination shall be determined by the Regulations.

On the basis of the successful final examination, the higher educational institution issues a diploma for the student. The diploma is a document with the arms of the Republic of Hungary, testifying that the recipient has earned a degree in the line of study specified in the document. The higher education institutions issue diplomas according to their traditions, in a controllable and identifiable form. The diploma includes the name of the issuing higher education institution, the recipient's name, place and date of birth, the name of the qualification or the awarded degree and of the line of studies (subject, vocational qualification), of the training form and the place and date (year, month, day) of the issuing of the certificate (the graduation). Furthermore, it contains the original signature of the rector (director) of the higher educational institution (or the name of the head of the respective institution or faculty specified in the Regulations) and of the chairman of the board of examiners or the doctoral board of examiners, the seal of the institution and all the other details that the institution has to indicate according to its Regulations. The name of the qualification specified by government decree shall be used only by higher educational institutions accredited for delivering training in the given line of studies. The diploma has to be issued in the Hungarian language or in the Hungarian and Latin languages, in the case of the national or ethnic minority training in the national or ethnic minority's language, besides – in exceptional cases in accordance with the decision of the institution – in the language of the training.

Upon request, a foreign-language diploma supplement can be issued for the purpose of use abroad, which informs about the most important details and the results of the educational attainments.

Persons with a higher education qualification obtained in Hungary shall use the following English titles abroad, with an indication of their line of studies:

- college qualification - Bachelor (abbr. BA, BSc.),
- university qualification - Master (abbr. MA, MSc., etc.),
- doctoral (PhD) title - Doctor of Philosophy (abbr. PhD),
- master qualification - Doctor of Liberal Arts (abbr. DLA).

The higher educational institution issues a certificate testifying the earning of a vocational qualification specified in the NQR on the basis of the passing of the vocational examination in accredited higher-level vocational education and training within the school system. The doctor's degree testifying university qualification is awarded to doctors, dentists, veterinarians and lawyers (the relevant abbreviations being dr. med.; dr. med. dent.; dr. vet.; dr. jur., respectively).

Hungarian citizens may study abroad in a higher educational institution without Hungarian official authorisation. State scholarships can be granted by application for studying abroad in higher educational institutions. The rights and obligations of the applicants are defined under the agreement concluded between the applicant and the state agency having issued the relevant call for applications.

Recognition of foreign studies in Hungary

The detailed rules applicable to foreign students are established by higher educational institutions. Foreign students, unless ordered otherwise by the provision of law or international agreement, have to pay tuition, cost reimbursement and other fees.

The institution makes a decision about the inclusion of (partially) finished foreign studies on the basis of the comparison of the study requirements. The inclusion of partially finished studies conducted abroad may be made recommended or obligatory by international agreement or by an agreement between institutions concluded on the basis thereof.

A diploma or degree (hereinafter: diploma) obtained abroad can be recognised by

- naturalisation,
- recognition of the obtained qualification,
- recognition of the certified vocational qualification.

Naturalisation is assigned to the scope of authority of the higher educational institution, while the recognition of certified qualifications to that of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The naturalisation of foreign diplomas testifying undergraduate or postgraduate specialisation training is possible by the higher educational institution if:

- the graduation certified by the diploma is recognised by the Ministry of Education and the said qualification is equal to *or* higher than that obtainable in Hungary and testified by a corresponding diploma,
- the diploma certifies vocational qualification which is obtainable in the proceeding higher educational institution,
- the study requirements accomplished by the person applying for naturalisation are equal to, or with additional conditions can be made equal to, the study (qualification) requirements specified in Hungary for the completion of the given line of study and for obtaining a diploma.

For a Hungarian university it is possible to naturalise a foreign scientific degree as a doctoral degree if the requirements of obtaining the diploma are equal or, or by setting supplementary requirements, they can be made equal to the requirements for a PhD degree. The legal scope of the diploma naturalised by the higher education institution is identical with that of the diploma based on the studies accomplished in the naturalising higher education institution.

With the recognition of certified qualification levels testified by a foreign diploma, the Ministry of Education and Culture acknowledges that the foreign diploma:

- testifies equal qualification to the Hungarian university or college qualification, and
- testifies higher education (university or college) qualification.

Recognition of a qualification testified by a foreign diploma certifies that the owner of the diploma has the attested qualification and the necessary knowledge for obtaining the given vocational qualification. Recognition of a qualification is attained if:

- the diploma cannot be naturalised, or
- the owner of the diploma does not want it to be naturalised.

A foreign higher-level vocational qualification is accepted as equal to an accredited higher-level vocational qualification obtainable within the school system subject to this Act if:

- the certificate (diploma, degree) has been issued by a recognised foreign institution,
- it attests higher-level vocational education/training by reason of the foreign country's law as well,
- the requirements of the foreign vocational qualification are equivalent to the corresponding Hungarian vocational qualification requirements.

The unconditional equivalence of higher education diplomas and of higher-level vocational qualifications can be declared by legal regulation or international agreement. The legal scope of such a diploma or higher-level vocational qualification is equal to that of the diploma or higher-level vocational qualification obtained in Hungary. The clause testifying that is indicated in the diploma by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

A foreign higher education institution can provide permanent undergraduate, postgraduate specialisation or doctoral training (independently, or in the framework of or in co-operation with another institute) and issue a foreign diploma in Hungary if:

- in the country where its seat is registered, the institution is officially recognised as a higher educational institution and the diploma (awarded degree) issued by the institution is officially recognised as a higher educational diploma (degree) and the institution can prove this officially,
- the operation of this foreign higher education institution has been authorised by the Minister of Education on the basis of the opinion of HAC.

The foreign higher education institution can co-operate with a Hungarian higher education institution in common undergraduate, postgraduate specialisation and doctoral education if the foreign institution meets the relevant requirements. This kind of co-operation shall be reported to the Minister of Education and Culture. The Minister issues a decree about the naturalisation and Hungarian equivalence of foreign diplomas authorised by the Minister of Education and Culture. The appendix of this decree lists all the institutions and their faculties which belong to the scope of this decree.

7. International integration

Beside the internal processes, the international integration of Hungary and the strengthening of its international economic relations have intensive effects on the development of the national employment and labour market structure and, through this, on the vocational training needs. The labour market effects of international economic processes are most obvious in four fields: the flow of capital, goods, services and labour.

The EU Member States are obliged to prepare an annual National Employment Action Plan (NAP) in accordance with the directives of the Council of the Union. The four pillars of these directives are as follows:

- improvement of employability,
- enhancement of entrepreneurship,
- development of the adaptability of enterprises and their staff,
- consolidation of the policy of equal opportunities.

Hungary, too, worked out a National Employment Action Plan to promote the integration of the country into the European Union, and within the first pillar, several directives and programmes targeted the improvement of the situation of the career-starter youth:

- Elaboration of the quality assurance system of vocational education in order to increase training efficiency and transparency.
- Modernisation of the vocational system to realise a better match between the vocational qualification structure, the knowledge and practical skills of the youth and the requirements of the economy and the employers, in order to improve their employability.
- Improvement of the effectiveness of vocational education and training to improve the placement chances of the youth.
- Improvement of the vocational education and training infrastructure.
- Support to promote the spread of the technologies of training in order to develop knowledge and training forms adjusted to the demands of labour market.
- Development of a career orientation and correction system, in order to understand the prospective placement chances.

Employment policy is a priority issue within the community policy of the European Union. Its principal financial instrument is the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF, as a part of the Structural Funds, serves such aims as regional development, the catching-up of the deprived regions and social integration. For Hungary the ESF is especially important, because it can balance the labour market disparities, overcome long-term unemployment and develop human resources.

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