



PIN project country report /Hungary/

I. National legal framework, system or policy on validation

It is not yet possible to speak of a functioning nationwide system based on uniform principles and procedures for the validation for non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. A system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still under development.

Partly as a result of European Union initiatives, several national policy documents have now included the objective of the recognition of non-formal learning. The most important of these documents is the government's Lifelong Learning Strategy, which was produced in 2005. The document set out the main approaches and formulated the development goals for which funds are provided in the context of the relevant operational programmes of the First National Development Plan (2004-2006) and the New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013).

While the strategic documents offer a comprehensive description of the need to introduce a validation procedure, there are very conspicuous sectoral differences in implementation, a feature that generally characterises the Hungarian education and training system and developments. Thus the connections between the management of public education, higher education, vocational education and training and adult training have been very weak to date, and as a result developments in the various sectors are separated from one another. Of these sectors VET and adult education and training are most receptive to validation. In 2006 a new competence-based and modular structure of VET was introduced, together with the flexibilisation of the input requirements of VET programmes, all of which has created favourable conditions for the development of validation systems, although these developments have not yet commenced.

As for the legal framework, according to Section 17 of the Act on Adult Training, which came into effect in 2001, "*adults applying for training may request the preliminary assessment of their level of knowledge, which the training institute shall evaluate and take into consideration*". The Act formulated the assessment of prior learning as an individual right. This is limited to adults entering into a general, vocational or language training programme provided by an adult training institution operating under the Act on Adult Training. This regulation does not concern adult education organised in higher education. The Act obliges adult training providers to assess the knowledge of applicants in relation to the programme and to tailor provision accordingly, but the way in which this should be done has not been regulated. There is no uniform, regulated procedure in force: training providers carry out assessments according to their own training profile, practice and options. Although this solution is often seen as an early (sometimes premature and inconsistent) form of assessment and recognition of existing knowledge, the original intent of the legislators was to ensure that the needs of adults participating in adult education and training programmes are better addressed. However, customisation of training is greatly hindered by the current organisation of training (i.e. Group-based training due to the need for cost effectiveness). In practice, the assessment of existing knowledge in adult education and training works in much the same way as the assessment of other applicants, against the set entry requirements and following similar procedures.

Concerning higher education, a system level development will be implemented within TÁMOP (SROP) 4.1.3. Currently this is the biggest government development programme to address validation. The project was launched in July 2009 in the context of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the Second National Development Plan, entitled New Hungary (2007-2013). The project is managed by the project managers of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and it aims to develop a validation model that can be implemented in higher education, as well as formulating proposals regarding its introduction. The main goal of this project is the development and testing of a 'validation model' operable in the conditions of Hungarian higher education. The model to be developed can provide a basis for building a

validation practice in the Hungarian higher education institutions (on a voluntary basis). The actual duration of the project work is from July 2009 to October 2010. The organisation responsible for the project is the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development.³ In summary, in Hungary there is no nationwide validation system based on uniform principles and procedures; however, several isolated validation procedures have been in use for a long time. At present major development projects are being implemented in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan although very few of these go beyond the boundaries of the various training sectors. Hungary is also characterised by simultaneous and somewhat congested development of several preconditions that would be important for a validation system (NQF, development of the competence-based approach in public education, the slow shift to the learning outcomes-based programme description, Lifelong Guidance system building)

II. Relationship with the existing / developing qualifications framework and information on standards used for validation

The Hungarian National Qualifications Framework is currently under development. The development of the NQF and the validation system are interconnected. This close connection is reflected also in the fact that the two development projects are organised under the same project management. However the most important common point is the use of a learning outcomes-based approach in the formulation of the education and training requirements. The same learning outcomes constitute the reference for the validation.

The New Hungary National Development Plan (2007-2013)⁴ mentions the need to create connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning at several points, for instance as a means of creating labour market flexibility (p.114). With regards to increased effectiveness for the public education system and the use of innovative solutions, it states the following: *“It is necessary to develop a national qualifications framework, integrated into the creation European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which will provide recognition for competencies acquired by non-formal and informal means in the formal education system and on the labour market. A system for assessing output has to be developed.”* With regards to the task of improving the quality of higher education, the formulation of a system and procedures for validation are indicated as tasks to be carried out.⁵ The Hungarian government has supported the efforts to create a qualifications framework from the very outset and has been actively involved in the related policy consultations and expert activity. Based on the joint proposal of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment, the government passed a resolution in mid-2008 supporting Hungary's accession to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that would be compatible with the principles and structure of the EQF. The development of the NQF is headed by the education administration and is carried out as a priority project in the context of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) of the New Hungary Development Plan. The experts working on the projects are striving to forge a close professional cooperation between the various VET sectors so that the national framework should rely on uniform principles. However, the fact that the current concept of Hungarian public and higher education is far from the learning outcomes-based approach to education and training presents a serious challenge to the development of the NQF. The Hungarian education system, including higher education, has been characterised by the tradition of a content-based approach to education and assessment (of course with substantial differences concerning different study fields and programmes). The shift in approach brought about by the Bologna Process at various levels is slow to permeate the micro-level activities related to the development and implementation of training provision. It is rather difficult to achieve full methodological and content developments simultaneously with complex and large scale structural and cultural ones.

Currently it is the qualification standards applied in VET and the adult education and training sector that are closest to the competence-based and learning outcomes-based training programme descriptions. In higher education, the description of programmes in terms of learning outcomes is connected with the implementation of the multi-cycle study structure. The new training and outcome requirements are also outcome based but only in an initial stage, and it makes the acceptance of credits achieved elsewhere sometimes very difficult even in a functioning credit transfer system.

III. Role of the formal education and training sector, including providers

Under Section 17 of the 2001 Adult Education and Training Act, the assessment of prior learning is entirely the task of accredited adult training providers (operating outside of initial education and training).

Role of existing information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

The Hungarian guidance system is very fragmented and each sub-sector in education (public education, VET, HE) and the labour market operates their own system. There is no specific information, advice or guidance system regarding the assessment of prior learning and exemption in HE. Information on the credit transfer system is usually found on the websites of the individual HEIs.

Adult training providers also give some information on the procedure for the assessment of prior learning assessment on

their websites (as part of the information on training programmes and service provision). Under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the National Guidance Committee was established in 2008. The role of this Committee is to develop a national strategy for LLG and to coordinate the activities of different stakeholders. The Employment and Social Office, steered by the Committee, is carrying out a Social Renewal Operative Programme project to develop a network and the human resource background of the guidance service.

IV. Validation in the private sector and the role of private sector actors

As noted in the previous European Inventory report for Hungary. Hungarian umbrella organisations on a sectoral level have not really begun to set up concrete initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In general, there seems to be an expectation that the initiative will be led by the government and national bodies (ministries). There seems to be a centralised approach in operation - which is top-down instead of bottom-up (coming from the industrial bodies or industries themselves). Informal and non-formal learning is usually recognised without any formalised procedure in the labour market, through facilitating access to certain jobs (the requirement of several years' professional work experience is included in most job advertisements) and also through promotion. It has not been possible to identify Hungarian companies which have started to set up processes for the promotion or implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (at least under this name). Presumably companies currently interested in or working on their own "validation procedure" are primarily multinational companies but information is not available on this topic. According to small-scale research in this field multinational companies have well designed independent training and skill certification systems as part of their company development strategy and they do not wish to disclose information on these to the public. In the frame of the TÁMOP (SROP) 4.1.3 HE validation model development project the experts initiated consultation with employer representatives. Some important organisations delegated members to the meeting in June 2010 (National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers, Confederation of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists) and also some small companies took part. According to their statements these employer organisations are in the phase of getting the first information on validation in general. They are rather reticent to opening up the formal VET system and recognising the outcomes of the experiential learning.

V. Validation in the third sector and the role of third sector actors

So far very few attempts have been made to introduce validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian third sector. At present, only examples of experimental methods can be identified, as there is no research on the sector and NGOs practices concerning validation. Here, some examples can be identified of new initiatives and increased awareness within the sector. For example, the National Volunteer Centre provides downloadable documents for individuals to create a "volunteering portfolio", in which they can record experiences gained through volunteering. Nevertheless, growing attention has been paid to voluntary work. *Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Voluntary Activity to the Benefit of the Public* defines volunteers as important actors shaping society. The experience gained in the course of volunteer work and its recognition in the labour market or primarily in higher education, has been an explicit need articulated by some of the more active NGOs.

VI. INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

Adult education and training providers give information mostly on their websites to their expected clients on the assessment of prior learning, as it is part of the obligatory adult education and training services.²⁴ As there is no functioning validation system, there is no guidance on validation apart.

Awareness raising activities will be important in the current and future validation system development projects organised in the frame of the New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013). This kind of information can be in the near future part of the information provided by the Lifelong Guidance System (also under development in the EU co-funded project of TÁMOP (SROP) 2.2.2). As the guidance service focuses on individuals and their learning path, the idea of validating competences gained in different learning environments can become one of the central point in this service.

VII. Provision of guidance and support

Adult education and training providers (trainers, teachers, training advisors) provide preliminary information on the process and give help to the adults/students if it is needed. As mentioned above the newly developed network of guidance providers is promising to offer a wide range and professionally well based guidance service at all levels and for any groups of learners.

VIII. Initiatives focused on specific target groups

There is no concept/ plans to target migrants or any other disadvantaged groups. In the VET system the new modularised qualification structure (developed mostly in 2006) opens up some entry paths for students without the basic school certificate in some specific trades (but under a different name – and this is not yet part of a validation system).

IX. Evidence of benefits to individuals

There is no evidence-based evaluation on the benefits to individuals. There are only assumptions concerning these benefits and the motivation of the individuals (i.e. that it is a shorter and more cost-effective way to get a qualification).

X. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

Quality assurance in the Hungarian educational system is sectoral. There is no quality control of the prior learning assessment. Only the existence of this service provision is controlled. Neither the Adult Education and Training Act in 2001 nor any other document relating to its implementation expresses how the assessment procedure should be carried out, how it should be paid for, what is actually meant by “take into account” (i.e. take into account prior learning) and what would happen if the institution did not carry out any kind of assessment. According to the amendment to the act (in 2006), the County Labour Centres are authorised to monitor whether the activities of a given organisation comply with legal regulations and as a part of this, whether the organisation provides assessment of prior learning and takes such learning into account for programme content or for altering the process to suit the individual. If the activities of the training and education provider do not meet the criteria provided for in the Act (including those provisions relating to assessment), then a much higher fine could be levied than was previously the case (approximately EUR 2,000), or the provider could even be banned from adult education.

XII. Quality Assurance Framework

As there is no system in place, there is no established national quality assurance framework for the validation procedures at the time of writing.

XIII. Quality assurance systems / procedures

The evaluation of the training providers' practice (assessment of prior learning) is part of the adult education and training accreditation system and consists of the control of the operation of this service.

XIV. Evaluation framework

As there is no national system, the evaluation is not systemic.

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