

Reduction of Early School Leaving of Young People

Work Package 2

Country Analysis & Reports

HUNGARY

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Country overview

Introduction to the national situation in Education

The Republic of Hungary occupies 93,030 square km of territory and has approximately 10 million inhabitants. The number of inhabitants has been declining due to natural attrition for the past 28 years. Population density per square km is 107.8 persons. About 70 per cent of the population lives in towns and urban communities, with Budapest and its agglomeration accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the total population. The official language is Hungarian, which is the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority (over 97%) of the population.

Since the restructuring of public administration in 2010, the education sector belongs to the Ministry of National Resources. The Ministry is responsible for education (kindergartens, schools and higher education institutions), culture, social affairs (including crèches), health care, youth and sport. Vocational and adult education/training is the responsibility of the Ministry for National Economy.

The Structure of Education

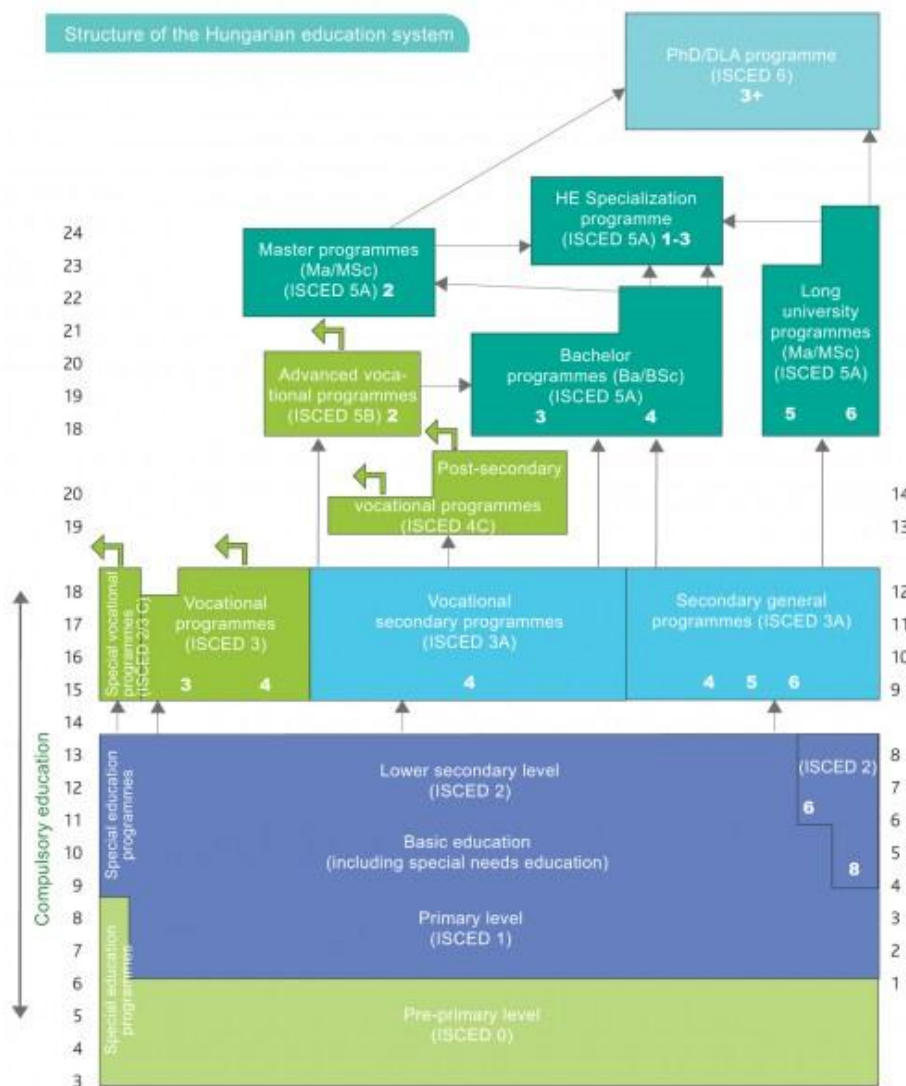
Kindergarten education and care is available for children aged 3-6 and is compulsory from age 5. Primary and lower secondary education is provided in 8-grade single structure schools. However, general secondary schools are also allowed to offer single structure programmes starting from Grade 5 (8-grade secondary programmes) or Grade 7 (6-grade secondary programmes).

Upon completion of lower secondary education, students continue their studies at upper secondary level in general secondary schools, vocational secondary schools or vocational schools. General secondary schools provide general education and prepare for the secondary school leaving examination which is the prerequisite for admission to higher education.

Secondary vocational schools provide general and pre-vocational education in grades 9-12, prepare for the secondary school leaving examination, and provide admission to vocational post-secondary non-tertiary programmes starting in grade 13.

Vocational schools provide general and pre-vocational education in grades 9-10 and vocational education in grades 11-12 and may also provide remedial lower secondary general education for those who have not accomplished lower secondary education. Vocational schools do not prepare for the secondary school leaving examination. In September 2010, three-year 'early VET' pilot programmes started in some trades, which provide an opportunity for applicants to start vocational training as early as in grade 9.

Higher education programmes are offered by universities and colleges (nonuniversity HEIs). ISCED 5B advanced vocational programmes may also be offered by secondary vocational schools. They do not provide a higher education degree but 30-60 of their ECTS credits can be recognised for relevant Bachelor programmes.



Source: The System of Education in Hungary, Ministry of National Resources

Latest trends in Education

In Hungary, 81% of adults aged 25-64 have earned the equivalent of a high-school degree, higher than the OECD average of 74%. This is truer of men than women, as 84% of men have successfully completed high-school compared with 77% of women. This 7% difference is higher than the OECD average of 2% and suggests women's participation in secondary education could be strengthened. Among younger people – a better indicator of Hungary's

future – 86% of 25-34 year-olds have earned the equivalent of a high-school degree, also higher than the OECD average of 81% .

Hungarians can expect to go through 18 years of education between the ages of 5 and 39, more than the OECD average of 17 years. This level of education expectancy echoes Hungary's good performance in the educational attainment of its 25-34 year-old population. The average student in Hungary scored 496 in reading literacy, maths and sciences, close to the OECD average of 497. On average, girls outperformed boys by 9 points, in line with the average OECD gap.

The best-performing school systems manage to provide high-quality education to all students. In Hungary, the average difference in results, between the top 20% and bottom 20%, is of 133 points, much higher than the OECD average of 99 points and the largest gap amongst OECD countries. This suggests the school system in Hungary tends to provide higher quality education for the better off.

Statistical data (state and regional data and some specifics)

DATA SET	VALUE	YEAR	SOURCE	COMMENTS
SIZE OF POPULATION (IN MILLIONS)	9,976	2012	Statistical office of the Hungary	
GROSS-DOMESTIC-PRODUCT (GDP) (IN MILLION €)	195.640	2011	-II-	
GROSS-DOMESTIC-PRODUCT (GDP) (PER CAPITA – IN €)	19,254 EUR	2012	-II-	
TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (IN %)		2012	-II-	
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (IN %)	12,1	2012	-II-	
EDUCATION SPENDINGS (% OF GDP)	5,5	2011	-II-	
EDUCATION, PRIMARY COMPLETION RATE	94	2011	NationMaster.com	
ENROLMENT RATIO, SECONDARY LEVEL (%)	87,2	2011	-II-	
TERTIARY ENROLMENT (%)	59,61	2011	-II-	
PROGRESSION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL (%)	99,3	2011	-II-	
UNEMPLOYMENT WITH PRIMARY EDUCATION (% OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT)	33,5	2011	-II-	
UNEMPLOYMENT WITH SECONDARY EDUCATION (% OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT)	61,9	2011	-II-	

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.NATIONMASTER.COM](http://www.nationmaster.com)

Country Report

Description of National Educational System

Public education

Participation in education is mandatory between the ages of 5 and 18. In the school year of 2009/2010 775 thousand students were involved in primary and lower secondary education and 513 thousand in upper secondary education. Approximately, 328 thousand children attended kindergartens, the final year of which is compulsory.

The law on Public Education ensures the right to minority education and the right to be educated in the mother tongue. The National Core Curriculum recognizes several types of programmes for teaching minorities: instruction in the minority language (mother tongue programme), bilingual education, Hungarian as the language of instruction with minority language taught as a foreign language and intercultural education programmes. In accordance with the law on freedom of religion and belief, students are free to choose a denominational or other private school for education.

Public education institutions may be established and maintained by the state, local governments, minority local governments (hereinafter public sector schools) as well as legal entities (foundations, churches, etc.) and natural persons. The state provides public education maintainers with a budget subsidy for the performance of their tasks.

About 90 per cent of children attend public-sector institutions, primarily municipal kindergartens and schools. Public sector schools must not be committed to any religion or ideology, while private institutions may operate as denominational kindergartens or schools. Decentralisation is a key feature of the administration of public education in Hungary.

The *central government* sets the legal framework for operating educational institutions, establishes the criteria and conditions for public education, operates the examination system and provides quality control through the Educational Authority.

Municipalities are responsible for providing education from kindergarten to secondary education. If maintaining a secondary school presents difficulties, the task can be transferred to or shared with county governments. Municipalities control the legality of operation and management; make decisions about the establishment of an institution; specify the budget; supervise the finances and legal operation and the efficacy of professional work. In the case of state-funded education, municipalities often act as maintainers of the educational institutions. The maintainer appoints the heads of public education institutions and exercises employer's rights over them. Within the local and county governments, town clerks exercise the rights of authority.

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An important development of the past few years has been the establishment of microregional associations of municipalities, which eases the way to set up regional co-operation on a voluntary and multi-purposive basis. The most common duties of micro-regional associations in the field of education include the substitution of teachers, in-service training, evaluation and assessment, special education services (i.e. speech therapy), special education of the gifted and consultation services.

Public education institutions have autonomy in organising pedagogical work and in recruiting students.

Higher education

The Parliament is responsible for enacting the Act on Higher Education, setting the directions for development, granting state recognition to or depriving the same from higher education institutions. It also specifies the funds allocated by the state from the central budget for developing and operating higher education.

The Ministry of National Resources is responsible for establishing general policy, regulatory and control related tasks in line with the provisions of the Act on Higher Education. It is the Government's duty to submit to the Parliament proposed legislation and medium term development plans for higher education, to determine the total number of students admissible to state financed courses in any one year and the distribution of the same across training areas and levels. The Government is entitled to establish scholarships.

Higher education institutions can be established by the state or by private entities. To become a state recognized higher education institution, the institution must undergo an accreditation procedure. State recognition is necessary for an institution to issue diplomas which are recognized in Hungary. Higher Education institutions enjoy a high level of autonomy both in financial and in professional matters.

The main directions of development of the public education system

There are two fundamental principles of education administration. One is the preservation of valuable traditions, the other is an education policy focusing on reality and changing needs. Adhering to both of these principles, the ministry has published the conceptual framework of an Educational Reform Act, which would start a reform of educational administration, the financing of education, quality assurance, and the revitalisation of teacher career prospects.

On the basis of the conceptual framework document, a wide-scale policy debate has been started with the participation of practitioners, school administrators, researchers, parents and the wider public.

During the past 20 years many policy models and tools have been tried, some of them worked, others had more negative side-effects than anticipated. The present government has

drawn the conclusions from the experiences of the past two decades and has sufficient political support to make the necessary changes.

With a new act on public education, the government intends to set the framework for change, while detailed regulation will be implemented by lower order legal regulations. The issues tackled in the Reform Act are, among others, the following:

- The fragmentation of school maintenance – at present this task is assigned to municipalities irrespective of their size – will be reduced by organizing local school authorities responsible for the maintenance of schools in a larger area. This change is aligned with the reform of state administration. Local school authorities will cooperate with the local government of municipalities in deciding on school mergers or establishment of local schools. The idea is that small local schools at the primary level should be maintained as far as possible. At the lower secondary and secondary level, cost-effectiveness and access to quality teaching are the guiding principles in organizing the local school system.
- Modelled on the Chamber of Medicals, a Chamber of Teaching Professionals would be established with obligatory membership and vested self-governance. The Chamber would be the main forum for policy debate, and its elected leaders and professional organisations will be partners to be consulted before taking strategic decisions.
- The school inspectorate system abolished in 1985 is planned to be reinstated in a somewhat different role. The main aim will be to support teachers and school development. The new system is hoped to combine the merits of the old school inspectorate and the current quality assurance system. The inspectors are meant to act as counsellors and disseminators of 'good practices' rather than authorities 'controlling' the teacher's professional qualities. At the same time, the inspectorate will also evaluate the quality of implementing the pedagogical programmes of schools on a case-by-case basis according to a common set of criteria and values. The counselling role of the inspectorate will be emphasized in this respect as well.
- The law requires teachers to participate in continuous professional development. The current system has to be more aligned to needs assessed by the new inspectorate and by the teachers themselves. Currently, a very liberal market of in-service training programmes is available for teachers for free or at low cost. However, teachers find many of the programmes irrelevant for their work, whereas research shows that their needs for more training in areas like handling multicultural classes, using computers in the classroom, or using student centred instructional methods often remain unsatisfied.¹
- The National Core Curriculum, which is a set of competence standards, will be complemented by a framework curriculum specifying required common content of learning. This will serve as a guideline for schools and textbook writers alike. Schools will still have room for local decisions regarding content up to about 10 percent of the instruction time.
- The government plans to reduce the number of licensed textbooks and provide loan textbooks for children who want or need them. The present textbook market, which is based on a large variety of curricula, is too large and is of inconsistent quality. It is too expensive to maintain because of the state support required, and because some of the textbooks chosen by teachers are unaffordable for poorer parents.

Separate from the education act planned to be passed in the spring of 2011, a strategic paper was published on teacher career policy. This has also been put out for debate to teachers, school administrators, school maintainers, parents and researchers. Once finalized, the implementation of the teacher career strategy will require a longer time, partly because of professional reasons, partly because of financial consequences. However, it emphasizes the government's commitment to improve teacher quality and make teaching an attractive career.

Definition of Early School Leavers

Who are the Early School Leavers?

Early school leavers constitute a homogeneous group, and the effects of early school leaving are greater in some countries than in others. Their reasons for leaving school prematurely are highly individual and also differ from one country or region to another. Nevertheless, there are certain patterns that indicate who the early school leavers are.

Early school leavers are in general more likely to:

- Come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable groups,
- Have had a history of disengagement from school, for instance of absence, truancy and expulsion, and achieved poorly in school,
- Come from minority or migrant backgrounds,
- Have experienced frequent mobility– both residential mobility and school mobility,
- Be concentrated in particular areas with low educational achievement
- Be male rather than female.

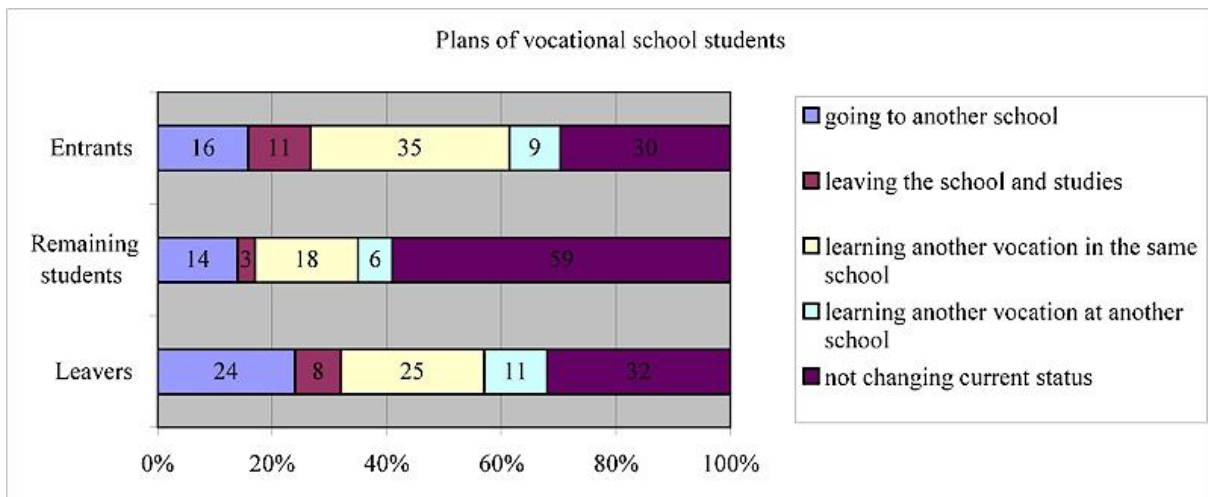
(Commission Staff Working Paper, 2011)

Main reasons and causes for leaving education

Following the expansion of secondary education, in Hungary and internationally alike, one of the main objectives of education policy has been to reduce the number of students who drop out of education. But Hungarian education statistics today provide no data on dropout rates. There is even disagreement on what exactly should be considered as dropping out or school failure: definitions differ in each country and in international comparative statistics as well.

Thus, the aim of a recent study was to clarify what is meant in Hungary by dropout and to investigate the current dropout rates via empirical research conducted by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development.

The results of the study point to significant fluctuation. On average close to one third of the surveyed students left their classes for other classes or schools between two school-years. The majority of those who dropped out had already had problems in primary school as well. School failure is often accompanied by behavioural problems, the most frequent being absenteeism. The research also highlighted differences among dropouts. Some students can be easily reintegrated into the school system once they were given sufficient support: these students are keen on attaining a vocation and qualifications but had simply not found the training course that was right for them. But some dropouts wish to leave the education system for good. The majority come from families with low educational attainment and they are likely to remain on the same social level as their parents. The diagram below indicates that among leavers and new entrants the proportion of those who wish to change their school and/or vocation or to quit studies for good is very high.



Fehérvári (2008)

Note: based on data from two school years, the following groups emerge: remaining students - those who were in the same class both in the 9th and 10th grades; leavers - those who studied in the surveyed classes in the 9th grade; entrants - those who did not study in the surveyed classes in the 9th grade.

The survey confirms that students do not receive appropriate support. Schools would rather let problematic youth leave than keep them. There seems to be a tacit agreement between schools about exchanging the problematic youngsters between them. Personnel conditions in vocational schools also are not helpful in lowering dropout: in many schools there are too few trainers available to teach vocational subjects at a high standard, and the employment of professionals other than teachers/trainers (psychologist, social-pedagogues) is very rare.

Although several successful innovative projects and experiments have been carried out in vocational training in Hungary to re-integrate early school leavers into education, it seems that their experiences have not been translated into practice in the education system. In the majority of schools we have not seen pedagogical or methodological reforms; only catching-up programmes and tutoring have become more widespread.

National policies, national bodies and strategies developed and implemented to combat early school leaving

There are and were many different types of measures in Hungary for preventing early school leaving. There are two main areas in this field:

- legislation
- support programmes

Two main points of legislation should be mentioned here: the length of compulsory education and connection of state support to school attendance. The compulsory school attendance age was 16 years under the communist era and after the transition until 2003, when it was increased to 18 years. In April of 2011 the Ministry of Education introduced a conception of Education Act in which the compulsory school attendance age was planned to reduce again to 16 years – in a previously issued economic policy plan (Széll Kálmán Plan) the proposed compulsory school attendance year was 15. Parallel with latter the number of state supported students in higher education decreased by 5% in 2011, while the number of applicants to HE was 141 thousands. These two tendencies suggest that the government try to save money in the education sector. On the other hand the family support (a type of normative state support connected to the number of children) was parted into two distinct supports (in the summer of 2010): the condition for schooling support is bound to the school attendance of the children.

The state supported programmes have been changing over the time, continuously and implicit targeting Roma students and students living in disadvantaged areas.

There is a long lasting debate about the efficiency of the Hungarian education system on preparation for work. The general view is that after the transition the system of vocational training was ruined, and the fast increase in the number of students in higher education (without changes in the system of teaching until Bologna process started) worsened the quality in the tertiary education as well. On the third field, re-training and reorientation the state built up a system of support for unemployed people but many researchers debate the effectiveness of it (the main question is whether participants get the proper training that can enhance their chance for reintegrate into the labour-market or not).

Due these debates many measures were initiated in this field: rearranging the system of vocational training, connect it to the business sector, starting the Bologna process, initiating internship in higher education institutes, etc. These measures all can be seen as preventive tools for young people.

Desegregation policies

Hungary has a large Roma minority with worrying education indicators: 15% of the Roma pupils do not attend school beyond primary level and only 2% attend higher education. Early

school leaving and repetition rates are very high. Many Roma pupils attend segregated schools or segregated streams within schools and therefore education results remain low.

In order to change the situation in 2006, the government, in co-operation with the Hungarian Institute of Educational Research and Development and the Roma Education Fund, promoted the development of “integrated education” through grants and technical assistance.

Schools benefitting from this programme must ensure their school population reflects the socio-economic balance and composition of their district. They take a fixed quota of multiply-disadvantaged students and foster school quality by e.g. extracurricular activities.

(Commission Staff Working Paper, 2011)

Identification of best practices and ESL case studies

Programmes in primary education

MAG-Program (Bognár, 2005), Lépésről lépésre program-Step by step (Glauber, 2008)

Compensation-Intervention

The Dobbantó Programme

According to the latest survey the rate of drop-out in Hungarian vocational schools is as high as 30%. It is of major importance to reduce this extremely high drop-out rate and help the group concerned to (re)integrate into society. That was the reason why Dobbantó (Springboard) Programme was launched by the Public Foundation for Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities. The programme is based on national (in Hungary registered as SZFP I-II.) and international good practices (Copenhagen Youth School, APS-International and E2C - from Europe; and TBRG from Canada). The goal of the programme - covering the period from 2008 to 2011 - is to provide a springboard for early school-leavers and students with special needs, (Schmitsek, 2010)

Dobbantó provides an extra year in school to give a second chance to these adolescents to continue their career according to their individual needs. This signifies:

to return to first chance education

- to start vocational training in a mainstream training school
- to start a vocational training programme in adult education
- to gain employment.

The programme offers professionals (edu-coaches, changing facilitator mentors, five working groups such as institutionalization, student support, bridge to the world of work, curriculum and course material design, school improvement and the management), trainings with

innovative methods and new educational content to help the teachers and school leaders of the vocational schools concerned.

As a result, teachers can facilitate differentiated activities adapted to students' needs and offer career guidance based on personalised career plans made in cooperation with the students. Professionals also help young adults with a series of failures behind them to finish their studies and acquire competencies required by the labour market. The programme helps school leaders in establishing and developing successful cooperation with relevant local partners.

Edu-coaches provide leaders with support to be able to assess the current situation and implement a school improvement plan. The programme encourages the participating vocational schools to develop a regional network, (Schmitsek, 2010). Dobbantó uses different resources of support.

In the student- teacher relation students receive: personal development plan, student contract, individual learning pathways, and life-career model. In the teacher- changing facilitator mentor relation teachers receive: use of adaptive and differentiated teaching methods, learning support/resources, self-improvement and reflection, mentoring, career guidance.

In the school management- edu-coach relation the school management receives: school improvement plan and its evaluation, improving personal management skills, relations to the world of work. On the institutional level the programme provides the given schools with analysis of present state, differentiated school improvement, competence-based programme package, resources for implementation.

The programme helps the changing facilitator mentors and the edu-coaches with regular trainings, meetings and case discussions.

Dobbantó provides multi-component solutions for early school leavers to integrate into society. It has to be mentioned though that the actual composition of the population, culture and education of a given Dobbantó (Springboard) school determines the way and extent of reducing the drop-out rate. (Schmitsek, 2010)

Second chance programmes: Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítvány Foundation

The **Tanoda programme** (it is hard to translate the word 'tanoda' which is an old work for school) was started in 2003 when the programme was included in the Education Act. The roots of Tanoda programme go back to the middle of 90s when first NGOs started with very similar programmes but without governmental recognition. Actually most of NGOs participating in Tanoda programme is supported by EU Fund. After the support from EU fund will be finished (in 2011) the future of the programme is questionable, the most likely that some of participating NGOs will be able to continue the programme. In the last funding period 60 applicants from all regions of Hungary got support in the frame of the Tanoda programme, the total amount for two years for the 60 applicants was about 4,5 Million Euro.

The target group of the programme is the disadvantaged students (age 10-14 (18)), mainly Roma children (number of affected students about 1800-3600 begin_of_the_skype_highlighting 1800-3600 end_of_the_skype_highlighting children in the last two years). The programme supports personal mentoring, catch-up groups, organizing free time activities, identity preservation activities. There is an evaluation research about the programme from 2008-2009 (Németh, 2009), but unfortunately it doesn't contain any information about the success in the field of reducing early school leaving.

The research concentrated mainly on the working conditions, problems and maintenance of the program. There was only one block of question that investigated the efficiency (by self evaluation). In this block the leader of Tanodas were asked about how their institutes help children in different kinds of aspects. The answers showed that Tanodas were most successful in developing skills such as communication, problem solving and creativity. On the other hand the self-reported success was lower in those fields that are connected to longer perspectives (learning after secondary education, becoming independent after education, finding job after education).

The **Digital High School programme** was started as pilot project in 2003 in the North-East part of Hungary (HU31-32) as in that part of the country the rate of Roma population and NEETs are among the highest in Hungary. The target group of the programme is the not school age people without final exam in secondary school. The pilot project was financed by the state (Ministry of Informatics and Telecommunication). After change in the Education Act the participants in the programme can get normative support from the state.

In 2010 the programme was started country-wide, 15 new school joined to the programme, over 1000 students started to learn in the programme (in the pilot programme about 420 students participated and 129 finished successfully until 2009). The programme provides both online learning portal with regular online feedback and help and also usual classroom consultations.

The learning places organized in a hierarchic way: one central school in which the students enrolled, classroom consultation places (in centre of micro regions where students live), internet access points with mentors (in almost every settlement where students live) to let students access both classroom consultation and online learning materials as easily as possible (more details about the national programme started in 2010: Apertus Közalapítvány, 2009). While complete analysis of the programme is not available, statistics of the pilot programme are available (e.g. Kovácsné, 2010)

Conclusion

In order to fulfil the strategic objectives set by the European Union for 2020, the National Reform Programme of Hungary contains three major measures to increase the proportion of the young population:

- i) It is essential to improve the graduation rate by reducing both the drop-out rate of students and the average graduation time. To that end stricter entry requirements

to higher education will be set, increasing the weight of the advanced-level secondary school-leaving examination and aptitude tests in the admissions procedure. By amending regulations concerning student assessment, students will be encouraged to complete their studies in due time.

- ii) Since one of the major obstacles for Hungarian students to obtain a higher education degree is the lack of foreign language skills, the quality of foreign language teaching in public education will be improved and specialist language teaching will be provided in higher education.
- iii) In order to enhance the horizontal and vertical diversification of the structure and supply of higher education and meet the increasingly diverse demand, the multi-cycle structure will be reviewed, professional (vocationally oriented) and academic programmes will be differentiated more clearly and the supply and proportion of short cycle programmes will be increased. In order to support entry to the labour market, career counselling, career tracking and the participation of institutions in adult education will be strengthened. At the same time, the social and economic relevance of higher education will be reinforced both at the national and the regional level. Where justified, market conditions will be taken into consideration.

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