

# European Inventory

on validation of informal and  
non-formal learning



# European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning Hungary

C3342 / December 2007

ECOTEC Research & Consulting Ltd.

Anna Drozd and Jo Hawley

Update based on the Hungary chapter for the 2005 Inventory by Cohen Zoon,  
Ecorys Netherlands

► Priestley House  
12-26 Albert Street  
Birmingham  
B4 7UD  
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)121 616 3600

F +44 (0)121 616 3699

[www.ecotec.com](http://www.ecotec.com)

# Contents

PAGE

---

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	Legislative provisions.....	2
2.2	Recent policy developments .....	3
2.3	Current validation initiatives in practice .....	4
2.4	Future developments .....	5
2.5	Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	7
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	Industry sectors .....	9
3.2	Individual companies.....	9
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>12</b>

# 1.0 Introduction

---

In Hungary, the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still in a developing phase. Although some initial legislative provisions are in place, their implementation is still in its early stages<sup>I</sup> and there remains considerable work to be done. Moreover, in spite of the existence of major legislative provisions, the means of their implementation and control have not yet been developed<sup>II</sup>. The existing practices enabling validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning are scattered and currently, there are more opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning within the adult education system. However, no uniform system, similar to the French VAE, exists<sup>III</sup>.

In its main policy documents in the field of education and training, the Hungarian government refers explicitly to the need to establish a framework for recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning, mainly through the introduction of concrete tools such as Europass, the competence card or the adult education card<sup>IV</sup>.

The main obstacle in the development and implementation of the coherent system of validation of informal and non-formal learning is the dominance of formal qualifications in Hungarian society. Another significant factor is the unwillingness of training institutions to recognise and validate qualifications and skills acquired outside their own programmes. This unwillingness is particularly strong among higher education providers<sup>V</sup>.

It appears that there has been little action at the level of individual actors within the private and third sectors, perhaps due to an expectation that the state will lead on the development of such an initiative.

It is thus clear that there remains work to be done, in order to further develop and implement the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Hungary.

<sup>I</sup> Conclusion drew on the basis of the stakeholder interviews carried out in the framework of this study

<sup>II</sup> National report on the progress in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2005, p.12

<sup>III</sup> Refernet (2005-2006), Accumulating, transferring and validating learning, Hungary, published by Cedefop

<sup>IV</sup> National report on the progress in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2005, p.13

<sup>V</sup> National report on the progress in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2005, p.13

## 2.0 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector

---

### 2.1 Legislative provisions

Although there is no uniform system of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary, there are already several elements of such a system. As a result, Hungary is viewed as a country where a legal framework for assessment and recognition of professional experience, including non-formal and informal learning is already in place.<sup>I</sup>

The most important measure that enables recognition and validation of prior learning is one of the provisions of the Vocational Education and Training Act (2001) which stipulates that *adults entering for training may request preliminary assessment of his/her skill level, which the training institution is obliged to identify and take into consideration*<sup>II</sup>. Recognition of prior learning, even in training programmes awarding a state-recognised qualification of the National Qualifications Register (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ*), is guaranteed by the fact that the number of teaching hours is not centrally defined (only the maximum number specified in the OKJ) which provides opportunity for the adjustment of programmes to the participants' actual needs.<sup>III</sup>

The Act on higher education<sup>IV</sup> does not contain any *explicit* reference to recognition and validation of knowledge previously acquired by informal and non-formal methods<sup>V</sup>; however, one of its updated sections stipulates that *the requirements prescribed by the curriculum do not need to be fulfilled if the student has previously acquired them and can provide authenticated proof of such acquisition. For the recognition of requirements fulfilled based on work experience the institution must obtain proof of acquired knowledge by verbal, written or practical tests*. In this way, there is a formal basis for recognition of informal and non-formal learning, although it does not contain these specific terms. However, as stated at the beginning of this report, there are obstacles on a practical level whereby the higher education providers, namely teachers and managers of the study-related administration, are unwilling to embrace these new methods<sup>VI</sup>.

<sup>I</sup> Colardyn D., Bjørnåvold J. (2004). The learning continuity: European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning – National policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning

<sup>II</sup> Ministry of Education (2005). Report of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Hungary to the 2006 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the EU Work Programme on Education and Training

<sup>III</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

<sup>IV</sup> Higher Education Act. Government Decree 79/2006

<sup>V</sup> Ministry of Education (2005). Report of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Hungary to the 2006 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the EU Work Programme on Education and Training

<sup>VI</sup> National report on the progress in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2005, p.13-14

## 2.2 Recent policy developments

The Hungarian strategy for lifelong learning (LLL) - in accordance with the European concept of LLL - focuses on the concept of knowledge and a broader interpretation of learning, the development of individual competences. The Hungarian LLL strategy was adopted at governmental level in autumn 2005 and is intended to apply for the period ending in 2013, similar to the support term of the EU Structural Funds. Nevertheless it comprises several goals whose implementation is envisaged for 2010, in conformity with the EU Lisbon Strategy. The recognition of informal and non-formal learning is referred to within the strategy as a key area for development.

Another important policy development in Hungary has been the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, and in particular measure 3.2.1, which aims to renew the system of vocational qualifications by decreasing their number in the 21 occupational areas (in OKJ) and linking them better to the occupational (job) classification system (*Foglalkozások Egységes Osztályozási Rendszere, FEOR*), as well as the introduction of the modular system<sup>I</sup>.

A recent policy document setting out the strategy for the economic and social development of Hungary<sup>II</sup> underlined the importance of providing opportunities for validation and recognition of skills acquired either in or outside the education system. To this end, a system of independent examinations is going to be developed, which is also to ensure objective assessment and evaluation.

Finally, the Ministry of Education initiated the drawing up of a concept for developing the national qualifications framework (NQF) in April 2006. The finalised concept emphasises that the framework is to be regarded as a strategic tool suitable for supporting individual learning and career planning on the one hand, and for helping training providers in developing their programmes as a reference on the other; thus aiding a more successful harmonisation of the training outcomes between the various sectors and subsectors (general education, vocational training, higher education). At the same time, devising and introducing the NQF may provide an opportunity to extend the practice of acknowledging the results of non-formal and informal learning and to increase awareness thereof.<sup>III</sup>

Strategic preparation work, based on the above-mentioned concept, is being carried out with the involvement of the ministries concerned. The strategy for devising the National Qualifications Framework must be submitted to the Government in November 2007.

<sup>I</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

<sup>II</sup> New Hungary, Freedom and Solidarity, The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Hungary for a Successful, Modern and Just Hungary, 2006-2010

<sup>III</sup> National Report on the Progress in The Implementation of the Education And Training 2010 Work Programme 2005

The introduction of the EQF and the development of a national qualifications framework will mean that the traditions of the Hungarian education and training system must be adapted to an outcome-oriented approach. This is a significant challenge and lies behind the reservations and doubts expressed by the majority of the representatives of the training institutions in Hungary.

The strategy acknowledges the fact that the development of the necessary conditions and the developments themselves will take several years (some experts believe it may take seven to eight years). Based on the agreement of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Culture, the developments laying the foundations for the NQF, and the development and introduction of the NQF have been integrated at several points into the National Development Plan II for the period of 2007-13.

Background activities intended to strengthen professional support and the wider acceptance of the outcome-oriented approach must also be noted, such as the series of professional events planned in the near future in the framework of a cluster for the recognition of learning outcomes, which is linked to the “Education and Training 2010” programme (workshop and PLA).

### **2.3 Current validation initiatives in practice**

The procedure of the assessment of the level of knowledge that participants may request in adult training is not regulated by the law, although such services must be provided by accredited adult training institutions. In language learning, for example, applicants can be divided into groups based only on the assessment of their knowledge.

The main method of validating prior learning (including informal and non-formal learning) continues to be the examinations that award state-recognised vocational qualifications<sup>I</sup>. These exams include<sup>II</sup>:

- master examination (mestervizsga);
- training regulated by the public authorities (hatósági képzés); and
- language proficiency examinations where the relevant regulations do not require participation in preparatory training.

Although imported, the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) system is thought to work well in Hungary and is a good example of a method of certifying skills.

<sup>I</sup> It should be noted here that these are the only possible qualifications which can be validated/recognised.

<sup>II</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

The actual methods applied in adult training for prior learning assessment are rather varied, due to the lack of uniform standards concerning even the tests or examination requirements of the modules of a given vocational qualification. Therefore adult training providers usually apply the practical assignments, theoretical examination questions, test sheets of the subject or the module/final exams used in the course of their training programme also to assess participants' prior learning.<sup>I</sup>

#### National Institute for Adult Education – A project on the assessment of prior learning

The National Institute for Adult Education (*Nemzeti Felnőttképzési Intézet*) launched an experimental project (through tendering) with the participation of 50 accredited adult training institutions. The aim of the project was to realise the assessment of prior learning in a uniform computer-based framework, and to obtain information on the practice of prior learning assessment of the participating institutions, namely, on:

- the vocational, subject or module fields in which they apply it;
- the test sheets they use;
- the number of adults participating in it; and
- the results obtained.

The analysis of this information would be used for the improvement of the system, the long-term goals being to make the system of prior learning assessment more uniform and credit-awarding, make prior learning recognisable partly or completely in the training programmes. This would increase the opportunity to adjust training to individual needs and to develop shorter and more efficient training programmes.

The original goals of the project were modified due to the launch of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme Measure 3.5.1. (see above) which involves the development of a large number of modular adult training programmes and materials as well as measuring tools for prior learning assessment in 200 vocations. The experiences and results of the prior project (see above) were used in this new programme to inform the development of national standards for prior learning assessment.<sup>II</sup>

The three year project ended with very modest results. Less than 100 assessed persons registered in the 50 pilot institutions and there has been no assessment of the project outcomes. The application of the provisions relating to validation of prior learning within this legislation thus appears to be still in the early stages of implementation and the regulation is considered so far to have been relatively 'relaxed'.<sup>III</sup>

## 2.4 Future developments

The implementation of the action plan for the strategy for Vocational Education Development, together with the LLL strategy could constitute a substantial move in the development of validation of informal and non-formal learning.<sup>IV</sup>

<sup>I</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

<sup>II</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

<sup>III</sup> Information provided by Eva Tot, Hungarian National Education Institute

<sup>IV</sup> Implementing the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2005 Progress Report, Hungary

The development and introduction of a modular system of vocational qualifications are prerequisites of the recognition and validation of prior learning in Hungary. Support from the European Social Fund is currently being used to implement the development of the system of new training modules, partial and full vocational qualifications established on the basis of trade group analysis, the creation of the competence-based vocational training structure, the development of the system of documentation for vocational qualifications, the setting up of a system for the assessment and validation of competence-based vocational education and formerly acquired knowledge (through formal, informal and non-formal learning), as well as the drawing up of methods for the measurement of preliminary knowledge, which provide a basis for the system-level introduction of the validation of preliminary knowledge.<sup>I</sup> Again, this development could therefore contribute to progress in the sphere of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

However, in other areas, further work is required and certain barriers to the implementation of validation of informal and non-formal learning can be identified. For example, although the 2001 Act on Adult Education provided for the assessment of the level of prior learning and its consideration during training as a right of the participants in adult education, in practice no regulation regarding the means of its implementation or control was linked to the legislation.<sup>II</sup>

Inter-ministerial cooperation and in many cases cooperation between internal departments within the same ministry are in need of essential improvement. In many key areas - including the measurement, assessment, recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning outcomes - the specific education policy measures are still waiting to be introduced. These are typical areas, where a number of ministries are concerned; therefore, further enhancement of cooperation is needed.<sup>III</sup>

In higher education, great aversion to the appearance and introduction of the assessment and recognition of knowledge and skills gained through non-formal and informal learning can be perceived (mainly teachers and managers of the study related administration). However, the establishment of validation centres in the framework of the NHDP serves precisely the purpose of making the organisational, methodological and financial conditions available to this end. Apart from the above legal provision, no other measures in this field of higher education have been taken on the part of the Government.

<sup>I</sup> ibid

<sup>II</sup> National Report on the Progress in The Implementation of the Education And Training 2010 Work Programme

<sup>III</sup> ibid

Moreover, Hungary is lagging behind in building the system of lifelong learning (i.e. the creation of a rich range of learning opportunities consisting of elements building on each other). This is because, although the various educational subsectors are becoming increasingly open towards the needs of students and groups interested in the quality of educational services, this, however, results in further divergence rather than stronger links between the elements of the education sector. One element of this backlog is the under-evaluation of knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning and, as a result, the under-development of means enabling its recognition.<sup>1</sup>

The biggest obstacle is the continuing dominance of formal qualifications in Hungarian society. The other unavoidable factor is that the educational and training institutions at present are not interested in recognising learning activities which are conducted outside their own programmes. Arising from this behaviour, typical of the training system and its players, it is to be expected that the practice of the validation of informal and non-formal learning will develop by integrating into the formal qualification system or will become closely connected with it.

## **2.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

The following institutions each play a role in the development of the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Hungary.

### Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry oversees the pedagogical, professional and educational efforts in public education. It is responsible for drawing up the necessary development plans, creating the legislation required for such operations and ensuring that the institutions work at the required standard of quality. To this end, it organises pedagogical, professional assessments, examinations and surveys in the field of public education. It ensures that children are supplied with high-quality textbooks by elaborating the order and conditions of schoolbook registration.<sup>11</sup>

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the coordination of the lifelong learning national interministerial working group and the OECD Recognition of non formal and informal learning project.

<sup>1</sup> National Report on the Progress in The Implementation of the Education And Training 2010 Work Programme

<sup>11</sup> Taken from the website of the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture, [www.okm.gov.hu](http://www.okm.gov.hu)

### Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

The recognition of skills is a subject, which plays a particular role in making the labour market more efficient. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour cooperates with the Ministry of Education on the promotion of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The National Council of Adult Education and the National Vocational Education Council have been integrated under the new Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

### Structural Funds and European Social Fund

For developing and implementing the validation of non-formal and informal learning it is expected that Hungary will partly rely on financial resources coming from these Funds. The role of these funds is also to be found in official policy documents<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> National Adult Training Council, *Tasks to be accomplished in preparation for the accession to the European Union*; discussion paper

## 3.0 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector

---

### 3.1 Industry sectors

Hungarian umbrella organisations on a sectoral level have not really started to set up concrete initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. There are no particular sectors which are currently working on this topic. In general, there seems to be an expectation on the sectoral level that initiatives will be taken by the government and national bodies (ministries)<sup>I</sup>. 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).

The European institution for craft and small businesses, the Avignon Academy, has developed a tool for small and craft enterprises that is nowadays used in Hungary for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. According to the Avignon Academy, non-formal and informal learning may be easier in small and craft enterprises than in larger companies. First of all, the informal method of acquisition of competency in small and craft companies is prevalent for a large number of competencies. Secondly, the workers of craft enterprises have a high degree of knowledge in competencies even if this knowledge does not correspond to the standardised disciplines. Thirdly, the worker is able to perform an activity even if he is not able to decode which are the elements of standard knowledge related to the activity<sup>II</sup>. With a fair amount of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Hungary, there seem certainly possibilities for this country in expanding the use of systems of validating non-formal and informal learning.

### 3.2 Individual companies

Informal and non-formal learning is usually recognized on the labour market through facilitating access to certain jobs (the requirement of several years' professional work experience is included in most job announcements) and also through promotion.<sup>III</sup>

However, like the industrial umbrella organisations, it has not been possible to identify a significant number of Hungarian companies, which have started to set up processes for the promotion or implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The companies which are currently working on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary, are primarily West-European multinational companies. They have introduced general international concepts amongst their networks. The Hungarian Ministry

<sup>I</sup> This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

<sup>II</sup> Source: The Avignon Academy

<sup>III</sup> Refernet overview Hungary

of Education hopes the possibilities for Hungarian employees in French (Renault and Danone), Italian (Fiat) and German (BASF) organisations may eventually lead to a greater interest in the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungarian companies as well. However, foreign companies often have training and skill certification systems which they do not wish to disclose to the public.

## 4.0 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector

---

So far, there have been very few attempts made regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian third sector. It would appear that in the years to come, Hungary needs to work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in both public and private organisations. Activities such as the completion of an infrastructure for the recognition of skills must be fulfilled, before the thoughts regarding the voluntary sector can be presented. In some other European countries we see that only after the introduction of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the public and private sector, the introduction into the voluntary sector can take place. In that sense, the voluntary sector may not be the first step to be taken in relation to the validation of non-formal and in-formal learning.

There are voluntary organisations focusing their work on social groups with a low level of education. These organisations can play an active role in “introducing” the concept of validation, for example through a special procedure, into this unique field of training.<sup>I</sup>

Nevertheless, the Hungarian ministry of Education is aware of the fact that much of non-formal and informal learning takes place during voluntary work. According to one of our respondents<sup>II</sup>, the ministry assumes that this is a possibility for sustaining efficiency advantages in the labour market. In the following years targets will need to be set to validate aspects of learning in voluntary work. According to the authorities, a good way for expanding the possibilities of non-formal and informal learning in the voluntary sector are possibly found in the youth sector as in other European countries, the achievements in the youth sector are promising.

Much will depend on the speed of the process in the public and private sector. If Hungary succeeds in developing a basis for non-formal and informal learning in a couple of years, this may lead to an interest for initiatives for the voluntary sector<sup>III</sup>.

<sup>I</sup> Comment by Eva Tot, Hungarian National Education Institute

<sup>II</sup> This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

<sup>III</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J., *The learning continuity*, 2004.

## 5.0 Conclusions

---

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has not yet developed significantly in Hungary. The first policy outlines have been presented, particularly in the context of Hungary as an accession country of the European Union but so far, there are few concrete examples from practice.

Sectoral umbrella organisations and individual companies are still not involved in setting up initiatives. It appears that these bodies await national initiatives for starting up the implementation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary.

So far, no developments within the third or voluntary sector have been identified regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Nevertheless, in Hungary this is perceived as a possibility for the future.

In general, Hungary is in the first stages of introducing the validation of informal and non-formal learning between its borders. Although a number of solutions working in isolation can be identified (for instance, the ECDL examination system works with great success), and there are some experimental projects, but there is no unified system or standard process nationwide.