
A European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning

Hungary – By Cohen Zoon
(ECORYS-Netherlands)

ECOTEC
Research & Consulting Limited

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

Tel: +44 (0)121 616 3600
Fax: +44 (0)121 616 3699
Web: www.ecotec.com

CONTENTS

Comment [CA1]: Table of Contents automatically generated from Headings

1.0 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN HUNGARY	1
By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS-Netherlands).....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector	1
1.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector	4
1.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector	5
1.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	6
1.6 Conclusions	6

1.0 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN HUNGARY

By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS-Netherlands)

1.1 Introduction

In Hungary, the validation of non-formal and informal learning is clearly in a developing stage. This national overview relies on the scarce information about the current situation in this country. ECORYS-NEI has expanded its current knowledge and information by contacting representatives from the Ministry of Education and other educational bodies in Hungary.

The individuals we have spoken to draw the same conclusion: the validation of non-formal and informal learning is a Hungarian policy goal for the (near) future. So far little has been accomplished in this particular field, but there are some encouraging developments: as stated by the Adult Training 2001 Act: “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”. On this basis the National Institute for Adult Education has prepared software promoting the identification, assessment, validation and recording of prior learning. At present there are 50 accredited adult training institutes using this system.

Following this section we will describe what has been accomplished on a national level by the public authorities. Due to the lack of information concerning sectoral organisations, individual companies, general output and third sector, we have only made general remarks regarding these areas. The chapter then goes on to provide an overview of the present stakeholders that work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. The last section of the chapter presents the conclusions about the national overview of Hungary.

1.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector

1.2.1 General situation

In the report ‘The learning continuity’ by Colardyn & Bjørnåvold¹, the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary is described as a situation in which ‘there are legal possibilities for assessment and recognition of professional experience. They are available for specific purposes or in specific occupations (mostly, crafts and skilled worker level)’. The authors also mention the possibility of Hungarians preparing for vocational examinations. Adult learners have the right to request a preliminary assessment of knowledge and skills when applying for training.

The same report also states that currently, Hungary is the only country in Eastern Europe that is in the process of developing a new approach towards validation of learning and recognition

¹ Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J., *The learning continuity*, 2004.

of competences. Although this remark sounds promising the report also concludes that an expansion of the concrete application of legal provisions in Hungary is yet to start.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a relatively new and undeveloped concept in Hungary. This is reflected by the remarks given by Mr. János Sz. Tóth, the director of the Budapest Link Office of the European Association for the Education of Adults. In 2001, a new law on adult education was passed by the Hungarian Parliament. The law promotes the validation of non-formal and informal learning, but concrete initiatives have not reached the implementation stage yet.

As one of the accession countries of the EU, Hungary has been placed in the so-called Concrete Objectives Work Programme of the European Commission in 2003. It is expected that through this programme, the validation of non-formal and non-formal learning will be given priority status and will become more professional in the following years. Several expert groups are working on lifelong learning and adult education. These bodies advise the Minister of Labour and have given the recognition of non-formal and informal learning priority on their policy agendas.

The National Adult Training Council has published reports in which the validation of non-formal and informal learning is stressed as a point of attention². Nevertheless, in Hungary validation of non-formal and informal learning is hardly found on the work floors of enterprises.

Although this report has mentioned that there are only some sporadic examples of the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary, it is worth mentioning some general projects and initiatives. From this perspective it is important to say that in Hungary, most of the policy formulation is centralised on a national level. The Ministry of Education is the primary initiator for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

So far in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there are two particular projects which can be detailed³.

1.2.2 The Oracle Project

The Oracle Project is funded under the EU Joint Actions: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and the Youth Programme. The theme under which the project was submitted is the 'construction of bridges between qualifications: a system of transfer and accumulation of training credits for lifelong learning'.

The Oracle Partnership is spread across four countries: Portugal, Italy, Hungary and Ireland. An International Team, under the leadership of the University of Coimbra co-ordinates and

² National Adult Training Council, *Tasks to be accomplished in preparation for the accession to the European Union*; discussion paper

³ This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

provides expertise for the project partnership. The local partners each have formed a team of local actors to ensure the successful delivery of the project objectives.

The West Pannon Regional Development Agency coordinates the Oracle project in the Hungarian Region of Western Transdanubia. Local actors involved in the project include local authorities across the region, trades unions and employment agencies. The project is supported by Hungarian Ministry of Education.

The Oracle Skills project aims to identify and code tacit knowledge, implicit skills and latent abilities with special concern for the recognition and coding of non-formal and informal knowledge skills and abilities and their validation as the basis for the transfer of recognised credit standards for employment between EU member states as a means of increasing social inclusion.

1.2.3 National Development Plan - Human Resources Development Operational Programme

Hungary has prepared a National Development Plan (NDP), which sets the framework for the utilization of Structural Funds assistance. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the economic and social situation of the country, the NDP has identified the objectives and priorities to be supported from Structural Funds sources in the period 2004-2006. The overall objective of the NDP is to reduce the income gap compared to the EU average. In order to achieve that, the strategy is implemented through operational programmes. One of them is Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP).

Development is based on job description analysis. The exact tasks, competencies and competence profiles generate requirements and common, specialised modules. Along with the process of modularisation, measurement and assessment methods are being elaborated. A separate form of adult education system is being developed within the framework of the National Development Plan, which is harmonised with the above mentioned efforts. In the case of some registered vocations, there is a possibility for the citizens to apply for and take successful professional exams on the basis of informal and non-formal learning without fulfilling formal requirements. To keep up with economic change, a flexible system of training will be required that is able to meet the needs of the significantly growing number of individuals taking part in training programmes. The necessary co-ordination and adult education institution systems as well as methodology must be developed or created in areas where they do not exist yet. Within the framework of the open learning environment the measure exclusively supports the objectives of the non-formal (not school system) training developments. Much attention will be paid to the whole of flexible learning system, as modules, prior learning assessments, certification, portfolio and electronic learning environments.

Policies in Hungary are often presented in the context of lifelong learning, which has become one of the policy priorities in the last 2-3 years. A report by the European Commission emphasizes that the introduction of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary should be

promoted for securing people's employability, particularly after they've started working⁴. A Portfolio-system seems to be a practical tool for accomplishing this. Another goal, which is attached to the validation of non-formal and informal learning is the prevention of social exclusion.

1.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector

1.3.1 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 sectoral level that initiatives will be taken by the government and national bodies (ministries)⁵. There seems to be a centralized approach at work here. It functions very much top-down instead of bottom-up (coming from the industrial bodies or industries themselves).

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 way 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 is not corresponding to the standardized 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 activity⁶. With a fair amount of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) in Hungary, there seem certainly possibilities for this country in expanding the use of systems of validating non-formal and informal learning.

In the context of strengthening the innovation of industries, the European Commission has pleaded for more attention on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. From the perspective of the Commission, it could 'awaken' variety in the labour force. Therefore, it is definitely in the economic interest of the Hungarian industry sectors to introduce the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁷.

4 European Commission, Hungary, Report on the Consultation Process Concerning Lifelong Learning

5 This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

6 Source: The Avignon Academy

7 Source: European Trend Chart on Innovation, 2002. The same remarks are made in the program of the European Commission for engaging people in active citizenship in central and Eastern Europe.

1.3.2 Individual companies

Like the industrial umbrella organisations, there are not, as far as we know, a significant number of Hungarian companies, who 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 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.

1.3.3 General output

While the concept of validation of non-formal and informal learning is still at the beginning stage, no reliable output material can be presented here.

1.4 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 or voluntary sector. It would appear that in the following number of years, Hungary has to work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in both public and private organisations. Activities like the completion of an infrastructure for the recognition of skills have to be fulfilled, before the thoughts regarding the voluntary sector can be presented. In 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 is clearly not the first step to be taken in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning..

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 respondents⁸, 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 sector⁹.

⁸ This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

⁹ Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J., *The learning continuity*, 2004.

1.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities

1.5.1 Ministry of Education

The ministry is the responsible national body for formal vocational education and the system of state recognized vocational qualifications.

1.5.2 Ministry of Employment and Labour

The recognition of skills is particularly a subject, which plays a 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.

1.5.3 National Council of Adult Education

The National Council of Adult Education is an advisory body for the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education. It is currently working on steps that have to be taken to allow Hungary to meet the standards set by the European Commission on adult education.

1.5.4 National Vocational Education Council

In the light of directing tasks, the council operates as a preliminary, professional decision-maker and it has a reporting and an advisory function on a national level. The council consists of representatives of employers and employees, chambers of commerce, maintainers of schools, and representatives of ministries responsible for vocational education and training.

1.5.5 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 documents¹⁰.

1.6 Conclusions

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has not developed significantly in Hungary yet. The first policy outlines have been presented, particularly in the context of Hungary as an accession country of the European Union. So far, there are no concrete examples from practice.

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

¹⁰ National Adult Training Council, *Tasks to be accomplished in preparation for the accession to the European Union*; discussion paper

While initiatives have not been undertaken yet, there is no material that gives insight in the general output of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

So far, there are no developments within the third or voluntary sector regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning at all. Nevertheless, in Hungary this is perceived as a possibility for the future (after introducing non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian industries).

In general, Hungary is in the first stages of introducing the validation of non-formal and informal learning between its borders. There are certainly signs that the concept is going to be used in the following years, but this has not been made concrete. Policy makers seem enthusiastic about the chances for employers, employees and Hungary as a state in itself.