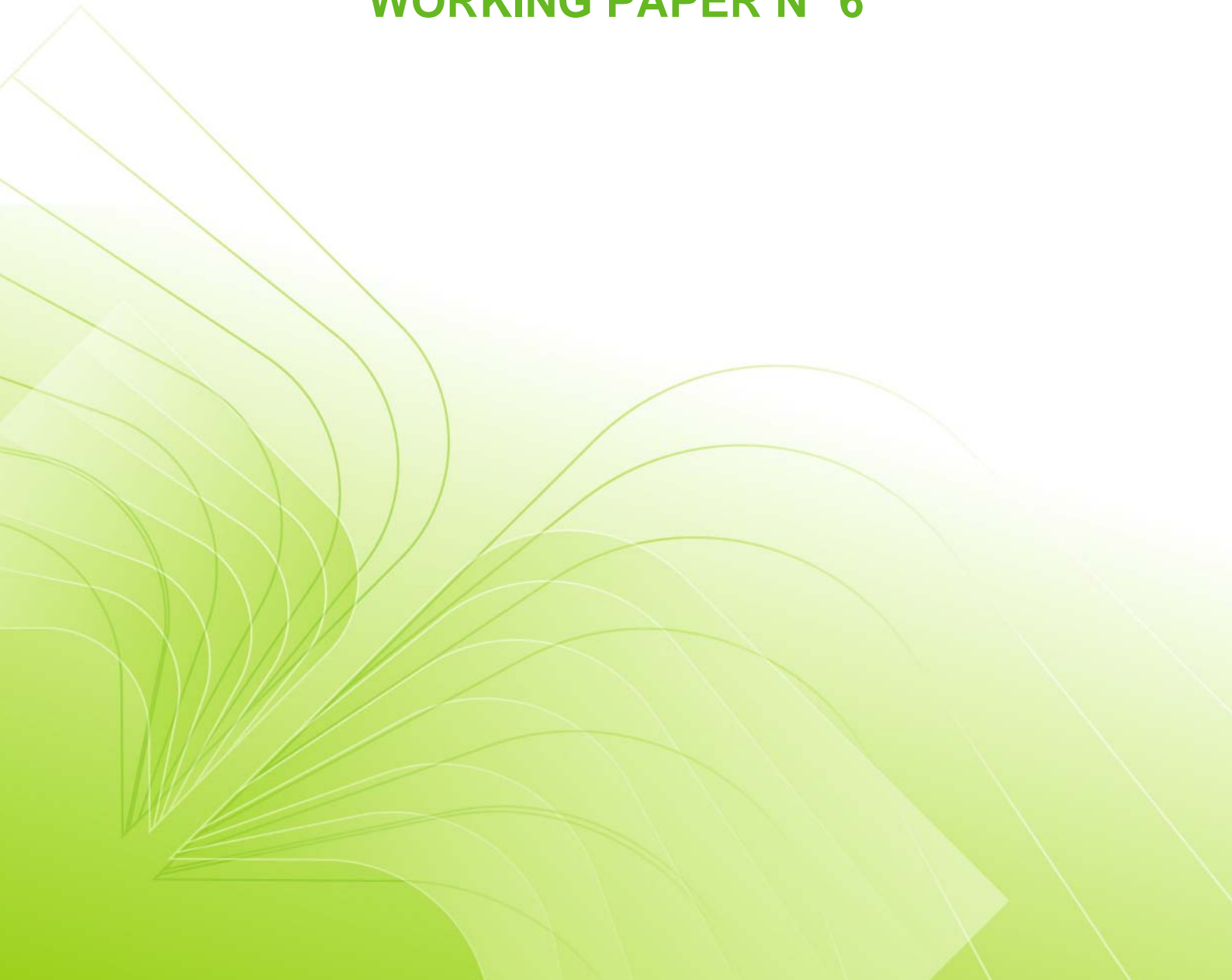


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Lifelong Learning Policies in Hungary

LLL2010 SP1 Country Report

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This Working Paper is published in the Working Paper Series of an international research project “Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the Contribution of the Education System” (acronym LLL2010) to reflect state of the art results of the research still in progress.

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia. Further information on the project is available online <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO LLL

After the World War II a state-socialist system started to build in Hungary that provided steering from the top of all major economic and social spheres, including education and training. The traditional approach to education and training was 'state support to state institutions' (e.g. public schools, universities and company training centres). The basic structure of the school-system (including adult education) was established in this period. Three pillars of the system are primary, secondary and tertiary level formal adult education. These forms of part-time education (called general school of working adults, and evening or correspondent courses) are identical with regular full-time education in terms of the structure, content and objectives. The curriculum is identical with that in compulsory education at all levels of the school system, however it is somewhat reduced in practice, the requirements are generally lower. The qualification they provide is legally equivalent to that in full time programmes.

Until the late sixties the dominant functions of adult education were to increase social mobility and to eliminate social inequalities by providing a second chance for offspring of low status parents as well as to expand vocational training. The adult education institutions had also considerable role to relieve the demographic pressure (two important demographic waves affected the system due to the baby-boom of the first half of the 50s and that from the end of 60s). The school-based adult education (especially at the secondary and third level) played an important role in increasing the educational level constantly in the last four decades. One third of those having a tertiary level diploma gained their qualification in adult education.

The non-formal adult learning institutions (mostly company training centres) were either state-owned or state-controlled through the licensing of institutions (e.g. language schools). The real training market – with a boom of private training providers – started to emerge from the beginning of the nineties due to the cessation of state monopoly in education sector. The education and training are more and more considered as a service, where the role of the state is to create the legal framework for this special market including the consumer protection, i.e. the increasing student rights.

Since the nineties the most important demographic feature influencing (adult) education has been the declining numbers of young people entering school and the labour market is also shrinking while the population is ageing in Hungary.

Hungary can be characterized by important regional differences. While these differences always existed, market-driven change processes throughout the 1990s have resulted in the partial widening of gaps. The regional differences are present also in the distribution of training opportunities.

There are several types of institutions of the non-formal education in Hungary, a large number of local institutions such as cultural centres, libraries, tele-cottages, folk-high schools, which are not part of the education and training infrastructure.

The proportion of migrants – in an international comparison – is relatively low (1,5% of the population, and nearly 2% in the labour force).

The largest group of minorities is the Roma population. Their proportion is estimated around 5% of the total population and growing constantly. The Roma can be characterized by the lowest educational level and the very low rate of participation in the labour market (only 29% of men, 16% of women have been employed in 2003).

The weak adaptability of the school system, especially the school-based vocational education plays an important part in the demand for adult education. In fact, adult learning plays a role where it corrects the low quality of full time education or the wrong direction of vocation training.

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

One of the most important features of the Hungarian lifelong learning literature is that the different education sectors appear to be separated from one another. It is very typical - even from a general standpoint - that the different sectors like compulsory general and vocational education, higher education, school based adult education, or labour market training and other types of learning are organized separately. This kind of description suggests that lifelong learning means a simple aggregation of the separate educational sectors operating under the control of separate ministries.

The literature on the Hungarian lifelong learning consists of mostly background analysis for policy papers or historical descriptions and less of academic type theoretical analysis. Three specific approaches can be identified in the literature on the Hungarian lifelong learning.

1. The first one can be labelled as traditional adult education approach. It is represented mostly by university people (teaching educational sciences) and often called “andragogy” (pedagogy for adult learners). The focus of this approach is on the basic level of adult education (as a second chance institution for disadvantaged social groups) and the search for innovative methodology. The representatives of this stream stress on general cultural aspect of education and the need for reorganizing the local cultural institutions. They insist on supporting folk high schools or other forms of education and training providing general development programmes and transferring of everyday knowledge and collective learning opportunities for local communities. At the same time they criticize heavily the strong labour market orientation of the government’s adult education policy.

2. The second separable approach in the literature on Hungarian lifelong learning has been taking shape in the so called transition period (from the 90s). The mass unemployment has been the most urgent challenge for education policy especially for the vocational education and training sector. The enhancement of the employability became the main concern of the education policy. This approach focuses on one specific aspect the adult education and training namely on the labour market needs and employment. This approach tends to rely on the EU employment policy as a legitimating background. In this approach the education programmes are evaluated mostly on the base of the short term labour market success of school leavers or adult learners.

3. The third marked approach of the lifelong learning is represented mostly by education experts and ministerial officers (mainly related to the Ministry of Education). This concept is closely connected to the European Union’s lifelong learning policy and to documents released by the European Commission in the last years. Beside the EU as the main reference organization the OECD also influenced the concepts on education. Hungary participated in several thematic review projects conducted by the OECD (Lifelong Learning in 1997, and Adult Education Thematic Review in 2003).

It is worth to emphasising that lifelong learning as a term serves to express a new vision on schooling as well focusing on individual learning paths and not only on the systematic supply of the educational and training provider institutions. In our view lifelong learning policies must be more sensitive to national learning traditions.

2. INFLUENCE OF CONCEPTUALISATIONS & DRIVERS ON LLL POLICY & PRACTICE

Labour market orientation of the Hungarian lifelong learning policy was dominant in the last years and remained the key drivers of education policy. The economic aspect of education especially of vocational education and training is a constant and strong element of all policy documents.

Two factors played part in the change of focus of the national education policy. The massive unemployment in the nineties and the very low employment rate at present time represent a great challenge both for the labour- and the educational policy.

It can be considered as a special context that the division of responsibility for lifelong learning policy development has changed several times between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour in the last 5-6 years. The role of education and training is considered constantly as a key element in improving the labour market supply.

There is an important pressure from the European Union to Hungary since years for developing the national strategy of lifelong learning which is in harmony with EU lifelong learning concept (not only in employment related education and training policy but also in a larger concept of the LLL).

Two decisive documents represent Hungarian lifelong learning policy today. After an important delay a National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper has been prepared jointly by the Ministry of Employment and Ministry of Education at the end of 2005. (See: "A Magyar Köztársaság..., 2005.") This strategic paper of Hungarian Government can be identified as the most important policy document on lifelong learning for the moment. The measures formulated in the document focus on the following elements: the development of the institutional and methodological background of adult education and training; basic competences development in the public education; the development of vocational education and training system in order to fit better to the economic demands; and assisting higher education to adapt to the requirements of the changing economy. While this strategy paper reflects the requirements of the European Union concerning a larger concept of lifelong learning, the vocational adult education remained the focus of the strategic approach.

The other important policy document is the II. National Development Plan formulating nearly the same objectives in its Human Resources Development chapter. The objective of social inclusion (in the form of special programmes for the most disadvantaged groups in order to reintegrate them into the labour market) appeared in these documents as a specific element of the policy. As for the personal development – as a policy goal – the emphasis is on the skill development which can enhance the employability. Other important aspect of personal development in the documents is the increase of motivation and further capability for learning, which has to developed during the first years of the compulsory education.

In sum, two weak points can be identified both in the practice and in the policy:

1. The lack of participation of the social partners (and other important stakeholders e.g. civil organizations) in the lifelong learning strategy development can be identified as an important gap. Both strategic documents of the government mentioned above represent – at least verbally – a new approach compared to previous policy papers. However these documents and the programmes formulated in them are not result of a consensus of different stakeholders. It was developed and formulated in the relatively close circles of experts and responsible officers of different ministries, so the text can not reflect the views of all relevant stakeholders.

2. The limited scope of learning can be identified as another weak point of lifelong learning concepts. Beside the institutionalized forms of learning other kind of learning activities (what is called informal learning including self directed individual learning) are neglected in the different policy documents.

3. UNDERSTANDINGS & OPERATIONALISATIONS OF LLL

Lifelong learning is a relatively new term and used very often only as a slogan. It is used also in many cases in a very limited sense as a synonym of post-compulsory formal or non-formal adult education.

The governing of school based (formal) education (responsibility of the Ministry of Education) and the non-formal adult education and training (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour) are completely separated. The two ministries are often in competition for financial resources what makes usually difficult to create the coherence in a comprehensive national strategy.

Manifestly there is an old routine among policy makers to limit the education and training policy into the institutionalized provision. Policy makers tend to consider that they have competences and tools to orientate only the institutions they are responsible for. Informal learning is practically out of scope in any policy papers until today. So it seems that non-institutionalized forms of learning are not “represented” in the policy thinking at the government level, and consequently there are no initiatives for stimulating individual learning activities.

By contrast the idea that the most decisive period of the individual educational path is the first grades in the compulsory education, because this is the time when the most important competencies and motivation for the further learning are developed. This became a constant element of the strategy with large emphasis and is an important junction of the public education and lifelong learning policy.

But at the same time the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour consider that lifelong learning policy documents’ role is to give a legitimate frame to realize sector-policies (for public education, for vocational education, for labour market training sector) and the National Strategic Plan, the National Development Plan respectively give opportunity – providing important financial resources – to realize these separate sector-related programmes. But the separate ministerial objectives do not cover all aspects of the lifelong learning as a system and they are not enough to rebuild the whole system of education and training for the long run.

The government’s lifelong strategy paper reflects the requirements of the European Union concerning a larger concept of lifelong learning, but the vocational adult education remained the focus of the strategic approach. Until now, the most important target group for the education and training consist of the unemployed persons.

Accreditation of training providers (regulated in the Act on Adult Education) has been introduced in order to assure the quality of the training provision but it did not resulted in higher quality of education in practice.

As for the certification of learning outside of formal learning the Act on Adult Education of 2001 contains a reference to the recognition of experience based knowledge: “Adults when they apply for admission in a training programme can ask prior assessment of their learning level. The training provider institute is obliged to take into account the result of the

assessment.” Despite this entitlement of the participants recognition is not yet in operation. There are separate initiatives in experimental phase in some training provider institutions (for example in some regional training centres).

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF KEY CONCEPTS IN LLL POLICY

As it was presented above the Hungarian lifelong learning policy is not focused on citizens or learning itinerary of individuals. In addition the key elements of the lifelong learning policy can change – depending on which ministry is responsible for national LLL policy. The responsibility changed several times in the last decade – and it resulted in slightly different focus of the policy concept. General education and formal education is much more in the centre of the policy when the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing the policy documents and non-formal labour-market oriented training is in the focus when the Ministry of Labour is the responsible agent for the policy paper.

Knowledge society is a new term used more and more frequently in the different policy papers and education related discussions. But in many cases using of this term is not more than part of a general slogan on the growing importance of education. The Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper of the Government (2005) also refers in its introduction part to the “challenges of the knowledge- based society” as a theoretical background or driving concept – but does not explain the content of it.

Regional aspects are more and more present in the education policy and lifelong learning policy but using different terms. Based on the new regional development concept (approved in 1998) seven administrative regions are under development. Regional development councils have been established in each region and these agencies represent a new concept of planning. They work out regional development plans and try to involve all stakeholders in the development process. The higher education institutions as “regional knowledge centres” and “knowledge transfer agents” are given a particular role in these regional plans.

The learning city as a term is not widely spread but the concept is known and there are some local initiatives (launched by local governments) related to development of e-government. “Smart cities” and “smart region” initiatives focus on building local electronic networks and interactive services (information services and data bases) for small enterprises and for local citizens. In the frame of these initiatives there are also small-scale e-learning programmes or stimulation of individual learning activities (by creating a data base of learning programmes for instance). These types of programmes have also a learning content by stimulating citizens to get acquainted with the PC and internet as a potential learning tool.

Learning organization as a concept and practice is related to the workplaces especially to big international companies operating in Hungary. The companies represent a relatively close segment of the adult training sector – there are very limited opportunities to get a clear and general picture of their activity (particularly on new initiatives concerning the training of their employees and knowledge management practice). Mostly some case studies offer fragmented information on this world. Workplace-learning and the stimulation of training of employees in private companies was always a difficult area of vocational training policy (not only in Hungary). Isolated incentives (e.g. tax reduction opportunities) have lead to modest results.

5. LEGISLATION & POLICY

Since 1996 the compulsory schooling age limit has been raised to 18. From 1998 students can only enter the vocational training after the age of 16 (after accomplishing the 10th grade).

The Act on Adult Education in 2001 regulated non-formal adult training along with services associated to the training in a framework-type piece of legislation. Three joint key elements of regulating the adult training were: compulsory registration of training providers, institution-accreditation and programme-accreditation. Since 2003 only accredited institutes can get state support. Participants in training at an accredited institution can get a tax reduction. The Act requires the training provider to conclude a written contract with the adult learners. Evaluation of the changes can state that these regulations had little impact on the quality of the training provision.

The structure of governmental institutions has changed constantly since the beginning of the nineties in Hungary and this fact had a rather negative effect on the policy development and implementation. In fact, there were governmental changes almost in every 4 year when a new coalition came to power after the elections. Within the new structure (from 2002) the Ministry of Employment and Labour Affairs has taken over the responsibility for non-formal adult education and training from the Ministry of Education. Responsibility for adult education (this is the term used in everyday practice instead of lifelong learning) changed several times also in the last years.

In addition, the interdepartmental co-operation is “traditionally” a weak point in the governmental work in Hungary. The classical form of it is the cross-check of different documents. As an impact of the EU requirements some new elements of content coordination appeared (e.g. interdepartmental coordination in teamwork) during the elaboration of the National Development Plan. The control of vocational education and training is also dissected on governmental level. Every sub-sector has a person responsible for a given function, though numerous tasks have been left without a person in charge – and very little real efforts have been formulated up to now in terms of interdepartmental or over departmental tasks.

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004 and became eligible for support from the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund. (These funds intend to help reduce the disparities in development between Member States and regions). Hungary had to prepare a national strategic document, the National Development Plan as a legal framework of support. This task and the EU policy requirements (or at least the government willingness to fit to EU policy goals as a new candidate country) played a very important role in development of national education policy. Policy expectations or requirements of the European Union were referred to in many internal policy discussions.

Hungary became an EU member state in a period when the role of coordination of educational policies within the European Union is of an increasing importance. Participation in the ‘Lisbon process’, aimed at achieving the ‘future common objectives’ of educational systems, forces Hungarian decision-makers and educational experts to reconsider the future of public education system in terms of quality and effectiveness,

access to education and training, and equal opportunities. The National Strategy of Government (2005) identified the main points of intervention as it follows: basic skills and competency development in the compulsory education; enlargement of supply in the vocational and higher education and in adult; learning opportunities as a key element of enhanced adaptability; continual enlargement of the learning opportunities; guidance services for individuals and follow-up of school leavers; recognition of non-formal and informal learning; support for the most disadvantaged social groups and those in risk on the labour-market; developing and disseminating a new teaching and learning culture.

The strategic policy document contains very important element of the further development but there is no strong social control built in the programme (and the government is now already late according to the schedule set for the implementation). The social partners and the civil sector engaged in the human resources development could play a part in the social control of the implementation but they have very limited role in the policy development at this time. Instead of involvement in the concept development and identification of the key elements their role is limited rather to the additional consultations.

Hungarian government had great ambitions in the first half of the nineties for becoming a leader of the East-European region in the informatics and related economic areas. The informatics and the internet as a learning tool have been also subject of large scale plans. The e-government and the internet as a learning tool are constant elements of the different governments' vision on the future since the early nineties. The Ministry of Informatics was established in 2002 to realize these objectives. Despite of the great expectations Hungary have lagged behind even among the new EU members. There is a marked discrepancy between the slogans on importance of e-learning and the modern learning media and the rate of Hungarian population profiting of this opportunity (only 19% has access to the internet at home in 2005 – see Lakossági Internethasználat, 2005).

6. MAIN PATTERNS OF PROVISION & PARTICIPATION

Formal adult education in the single structure eight grade primary schools (ISCED 2), in secondary schools (grammar school: ISCED 3a, vocational training giving nationally recognized qualification: ISCED 4c) or in tertiary institutions (ISCED 5a) provide the same qualifications and certificates as what are available in full time training. In this respect, full time education and adult learning do not produce different students.

From the nineties an extended training market emerged – comprising interrelated sectors of initial training in the school system, profit oriented training providers and the partly closed sector of workplaces. As for an answer to the challenge of the massive unemployment (around 13-15%) in the middle of the nineties new type of adult training institutions have been also established by the state, 9 regional training centres.

Each sector can be characterized by dominance of young participants. The state continues to be the largest customer in the training market – primarily in the form of training programmes subsidised by labour market mechanisms – therefore, competition between the institutions providing training services is aimed mainly at winning orders financed from public funds. An important oversupply characterise the training market until now.

Beside the school-based adult education and the labour-market oriented training providers, other institutions of non-formal education and training also operate all over the country: local cultural centres (among other activities organizing courses in different crafts), folk high schools offering special programmes for the farmers, tele-cottages or tele-houses (a network of more than 1000 units offering access to ICT, that is PCs and internet and related learning opportunities).

Participation rate in organized adult education in Hungary (especially in job-related continuing education and training) is low compared to other European countries and to the OECD average. According to the Labour-Force Survey of Eurostat 3,2% of the Hungarian adult population (25-64 years old) participated in some training programme (4 weeks prior to the survey) in 2002 compared to 12,4% of the average of all participating countries. (See: Promoting... 2005.) This participation rate is increasing slowly; it was 4% in 2003 according to the preliminary data of OECD Education at a Glance 2006 edition – not published yet.

The results of the PISA survey proved that – compared to other countries – the influence of the social background in school achievement is very strong in Hungary and the very selective school education instead of compensating reproduces the social disadvantages. The same can be said on the post-compulsory education and training. The distribution of training opportunities is very unequal. So those with higher educational level profit much more from the education and training programmes than those who need the most – as underlined by Education at a Glance, 2002, pp. 248.

The age is also an important factor in access to adult training opportunities. The younger adults (between 25-34 years) spend much more time (twice as much than on average) in continuing training than the older generation (55-64 years old). The difference between

men and women participating in adult training programmes is not substantial, only 1-2 % in favour of women. (See Education at a Glance, 2002, pp. 251.)

As for the statistics, data collection on adult education is not comprehensive. The existing statistical data gatherings on formal and non-formal adult education are organized in two separate systems with different concepts and methods without a common framework or common definitions. Data on school-based adult education – since it is considered as part of the education system – are collected and presented by the Ministry of Education. These publications give reliable statistics on the number of students. As for the non-formal vocational training, a separated data-collecting system has been established in 1995, but it is still not complete until now. These data collections cover the training activity of training providers but do not collect individual data on participants but only on training programmes and provide group statistics on aggregated level. The National Statistical Office also collects data on adult education in the frame of regular European Labour Force Survey. Hungary also participated in the ad hoc module on lifelong learning, which was part of the LFS in 2003. Consequently certain statistical information is missing, while others differ if they come from different sources.

7. BROADER SOCIAL POLICY & LLL

As it was mentioned above, the Hungarian lifelong policy has very strong relation to the employment policy. This is not a new phenomenon – the interrelation of employment and education has been a standard element of the education policy documents and practice for a long time. Education and training, and especially adult education and training, is considered as an important tool for reintegration of unemployed people or undereducated population to the labour market (or give prevention from risks in the labour market). The employment strategy of the Ministry of Labour (developed in harmony with the European Employment Strategy) stresses on increasing the number of participants in adult education, especially in retraining programmes. It also emphasises developing special programmes in order to integrate disadvantaged social groups.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the government is not a separate policy document. It relies on other policy documents and results of those policies. There is a series of other strategic sector policy documents serving as the background analysis of the government's strategy paper explicitly related to LLL.

The Mid-term Education Strategy developed by the Ministry of Education – stresses on the importance of development of competences and the restructuring of the curriculum of the compulsory public education. Special target programmes are also launched such as the Equity programme aiming at decreasing the social inequalities by the school education.

The recent development programme of vocational education system – focuses on creating a new module-based system of training provision and the modernization of the content of curriculum. Vocational education policy programme by the modernization of the National Vocational Qualification Register (the Register has to define the content of vocational training) effects directly on the non-formal adult training.

The Hungarian Universitas Programme – among many other objectives – aims at getting closer the economy and higher education institutions and opening the institutions for adult education programmes.

As for the social policy related to lifelong learning strategy the National Action Plan for the Social Cohesion developed by the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities represent a new approach of the development policy. The main aim of the Social Cohesion Action Plan is to create and launch complex regional and local development projects.

Roma population – as the largest minority – is the group with the most social disadvantages in Hungary. They can be characterized with several social disadvantages at the same time (effecting in a cumulative way). They live in large proportion in small villages, important part of Roma population has very low level of education, the unemployment rate is very high among them, they live usually under very poor living conditions and the social discrimination is also an important element in their situation (including the discriminative practice in many public schools). The need for special programmes to change their situation is declared in the Social Cohesion Action Plan. The

education and training can be just one element of these complex programmes aiming at develop the settlement itself including the employment and living conditions.

In the lifelong learning policy the older population is subject of special protection. There is a new measure under preparation (relying on propositions formulated in the lifelong learning policy papers) to give the opportunity for adults over 50 to gain a new vocational qualification financed by the state.

The II. National Development Plan (2007-2013) of Hungary – especially its Human Resources Development Operative Programme Chapter – can be considered as one of the most important implementation tool of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy. By the European Structural Fund it provides very important financial resources to realize a complex list of different policy objectives. But there are critics at the same time saying that the project-based development programme does not guarantee the systemic reconstruction of the entire national education and adult learning system.

Gender equality is not a hot issue in lifelong learning policy. Participation rate of men and women are slightly different (in favour of the women) and there is no urgent need for intervention. However some specific area can be identified. The special needs of women on childcare are recognized in different policy papers. Enlargement of part-time work opportunities and related allowances and special e-learning programme or specially designed child care services for learning mothers are on the agenda.

Religion – as a separate subject – is not discussed in the documents on lifelong learning.

8. EFFECTIVENESS OF LLL POLICIES

Rates of participation in adult learning (and in training programmes inside the companies) are increasing very slowly and remain far below the European average. According to the Eurostat's 2nd Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2) in 2000, Hungary ranked as high as 17th out of the 21 countries from the European Union with an average of only 37% of the Hungarian companies providing training, for the employees. (See: A munkahelyi képzés... 2002) However, it seems to be very important to emphasize that the low participation rates in organized training programmes does not mean obviously the lack of learning itself. There are many important learning activities and contents being out of scope of the statistical data collection. Informal learning – especially different forms related to the workplace – can “replace” the courses or play the same if not more important role in the competence development process or in adaptation to new demands.

As for the effectiveness of policy measures the image is composite. The important efforts to reach and involve the most disadvantaged groups into adult education have led to very modest results until now. More effective methods and complex projects are needed to step further in this field. Some small- scale local projects (initiated and supported by civil organizations) show that the clear objectives and appropriate tools (and well-prepared participants, continuing co-ordination of different agents and efforts and important financial resources) are necessary elements of the success.

Some other training support programmes offer also important lessons. The enlargement of the training opportunities is just one of the necessary elements in the most difficult areas. In a given region characterized by the economic depression and massive unemployment – solely the education can not contribute to the increase of the level of employment. The training programmes – especially if the participants are given additional financial support – are attractive but first of all for those being unemployed for years and not having other resources for survival. Only complex programmes – training and investment, or general local development projects – can achieve the objectives.

In the labour market oriented adult training system – especially in the state funded training provision – the requirement of the cost effectiveness predominates. It results in mass training programmes in such areas where there is no real labour market demand. In the training provision the supply driven activities are very typical, certain training programmes are launched on the ground what kind of teachers with given competences are available. It is also typical that the labour market demand is overestimated in certain fields or certain types of training become “trendy” and will be supported by international programmes. In the last years the bulk of the supported retraining courses have been organized in two fields: social welfare workers and workers for maintenance of public parks. These training provisions rely on the premise that the local governments can enlarge their social activities and environmental protection efforts and they will employ these retrained people. However, local governments may not have the necessary funding for such actions even if such activities would be important and useful.

In some cases the policy measures are not adequate and lead to the opposite direction as it was intended. Some target programmes were beneficial for population in advantaged position and did not help to decrease the disadvantages.

The Hungarian Government introduced tax allowance in order to enhance the participation in adult training. According to this measure employed people voluntarily engaging in further training may take advantage of an indirect public support in the form of a training-related tax allowance regulated by a separate piece of legislation of 2002. It provides that from 2003 an adult in employment, if studying in an accredited institution of adult training, may reduce his/her personal income tax by 30% of the tuition fees spent in that year. This measure is profitable mostly for those with sufficient resources to pay for training.

A very similar tax allowance scheme was introduced in 2003 in order to increase the number of home computers. This programme gave important financial support for middle class families to buy new PC-s at a reasonable price but did not increase at all the rate of population using the new technology (and especially did not ease the access to it for the social groups in need).

9. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the real new elements of the lifelong learning concept is to develop further the individual perspective of learning. There is a need for development of a comprehensive national framework of all learning activities and different incentives. This framework must cover the reorganization plan of the whole learning related information system.

It would be important to pass the sector-bounded approach of lifelong learning. It ought to be more than an aggregation of separate sectors of education and training. As it was mentioned above, most of the policy analysis concerning the lifelong learning present very often the adult learning as a simple combination of different sectors of education. A “EU-conform” lifelong learning concept is a policy framework of different learning paths provided for the citizens and a transparent system of supports accessible for organized and individual learning activities.

The competition for the financial resources between the different parts of governmental structure (especially the different ministries) is stronger for the moment than the intention for the co-operation. There is a need for a special national level co-ordination agency. A national level agency could provide the co-ordination for initiatives of different departments, involve the social partners and all relevant stakeholders, and provide the communication of the objectives and initiatives to the different target groups. Involvement of social partners and all other stakeholders, especially the civil organizations, into the process of developing such a concept is indispensable.

The lifelong learning as a strategic programme can not be realized if the activity is limited to the government agencies. It is very important to communicate the concept and the main objectives – not only slogans or individual programmes – towards the largest public. As a part of it, it is vital to translate the general objectives and strategy steps into the perspective of the individual citizens. Only the transparency of the different learning opportunities and a general information system on the various learning incentives can help individual citizens to make their personal choices or rethink their learning itinerary. For this purpose larger and more professional guidance of the services is crucial.

Regarding the special place that mass media has in the everyday life of Hungarian population (nearly 4 hours per day spent on watching TV) it is reasonable to rethink the role of the (publicly funded) television as a stimulating tool of individual learning.

Important efforts are necessary to reduce the inequalities in access to adult education and training opportunities. Special targeted incentives must be introduced in order to involve the less educated social groups into the adult learning. There is also need for developing new training methods to realise this objective.

The focus point of present lifelong learning strategy of the government is the labour market. This approach sometimes neglects that individuals are not only work-force but they need special knowledge for existing in the modern societies and this knowledge is often considered as being out of the competency of the formal compulsory education. Enhancement of the social cohesion, quality of life and improvement of citizens' life are similarly adequate objectives of a national lifelong strategy. However, these objectives

cannot remain only slogans in the strategy papers but they ought to get developed to specific programmes within the concept of adult learning.

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GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE LLL 2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

In March 2000, the then 15 European leaders committed the European Union to become by 2010 “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment”. The Lisbon strategy, as it has come to be known, was a comprehensive but interdependent series of reforms, which has significant implications for a whole range of social policies, including policies for learning.

As part of the Lisbon strategy, the European Union has set the goal of raising the number of adults participating in lifelong learning to 12.5% by 2010. However, the proportion of learning adults in Europe differs widely across countries. The project "**Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the contribution of the education system**", which forms part of the European Commission’s 6th Framework Research Program, is dedicated to identifying the reasons behind these differences and to studying the policies and practices related to adults’ participation in and access to lifelong learning in a number of European countries (see project’s web-page <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>).

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia.

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

- Show to what extent the countries differ in terms of patterns of lifelong learning.
- Reveal how these differences depend upon specific institutions and policies of each country.
- Assess the contribution of each country’s education system to the development of lifelong learning.
- Trace the ways institutional and policy prerequisites for lifelong learning have been developed in European countries.
- Identify the barriers to participation in lifelong learning in terms of policies, educational institutions, enterprises’ practices and potential learners’ motivation.
- Identify the best solutions and most successful practices in terms of participation in lifelong learning and to decide to what extent these would be applicable in other countries.
- Propose changes, which would enhance adult participation in lifelong learning and decrease social exclusion.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

Potential impact

Project is expected to contribute both to competitiveness and cohesion of the EU by (a) developing and carrying out a joint agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of enlargement of the EU and globalisation, (b) identification of best practices and suggestion of ways for implementation in order to reach the objectives for lifelong learning. The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

The plan for disseminating the knowledge

The project aims to examine and report on national differences in approaching formal lifelong learning, but also to assist policymakers and practitioners in learning appropriate lessons from contrasting practice in other countries. Therefore, disseminating knowledge to relevant audiences – individuals, institutional actors and policymakers – is of the core issues within this project, and so dissemination activity will take place throughout the life of the project.

The preliminary results will be discussed in the workshops and conferences and introduced to national as well as international audiences. The results of the different research projects within LLL2010 will be presented in five comparative reports – one per subproject – and a final report, and two books will be published as a result of the project. A Conference “The Contribution of the Education System to Lifelong Learning”, scheduled in the end of the project, is aimed at discussing findings, conclusions and expert opinions on a European level.

To contribute to scientific discussion and enhance comparative studies in the field, further analysis of the results of the research will take place in articles published in specialized and interdisciplinary journals. As LLL2010 will undertake a number of original studies, the data, questionnaires and codebooks, and all the other relevant materials generated in the project will be made available to the scientific community at large.

Results achieved

The present summary covers the findings of the team during the first Sub-project, ‘Review of Literature and Policy Documents’; the full comparative report of the results of this Subproject will be made available on the project website by the end of 2007. The Subproject undertook comparative research on lifelong learning policies and practices. The aim was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Purpose & Methodology of Sub-project 1

The purpose of the first Sub-project was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. The nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing, were investigated. The report considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union’s thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each

country. It also considers how far actions of different areas of policy and government support lifelong learning, or hinder its development.

The Sub-project applied a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning, through analyzing national policy documents and addressing lifelong learning in participating countries.

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