

**National ReferNet report
on progress in the policy priority areas
for Vocational Education and Training**

Hungary

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Theme 1. National political and socio-economic context

1.1. National political/policy context

The key legislative documents in education – the Public education act, the Higher education act and the VET act – were passed after the change of the regime, in 1993 and 1994. Although these acts are usually modified every two years, a stable legislative environment is guaranteed for education. The 2001 Act on Adult Training and the 2003 Act on Vocational training contribution – a sort of VET tax, payable by enterprises in the value of 1.5% of the gross wage bill – complemented this legislative background.

There have been frequent changes with respect to the ministerial administration of VET and adult training, due to the governmental changes every four years following the general elections. In 2002 the supervision of adult training was transferred from the Ministry of Education (ME) to the then Ministry of Employment and Labour (MEL). After the set-up of a new governmental structure following the 2006 general elections, supervision of VET was also taken over by the reorganised Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour from ME. This resulted in two significant changes in the conditions. On the one hand, employment and social policy, VET and adult training were all placed under the supervision of one minister, which, on the long run, creates better conditions for a coordinated policy building on synergies as well. On the other hand, the management of these policies was reallocated to a lower level, resulting in a decrease in their weight. During the 2002-2006 term adult training was directed by a department at MEL, and VET was supervised at the Ministry of Education by a state secretariat (within that, by two departments), since 2006, however, the two fields have been supervised by one department only, with a decreased number of civil servants working in the field. This is one of the reasons, and might also be a consequence, why more and more governmental tasks are being delegated to economic actors (see chapter 5).

Given that school-based VET falls partially on the period of compulsory schooling, thus forming part of public education, it is necessary that the ministries responsible for education and employment cooperate on related legal and financial issues; their cooperation is also prescribed by a legislative provision. Activities related to lifelong learning are also characterised by the shared responsibility and cooperation of the two ministries.

In the past years the government approved a large number of strategic documents in the fields of employment policy, VET and lifelong learning. These included The Strategy of Lifelong Learning, adopted in summer 2005, and the National Action Plan for Growth and Employment approved in December 2005. The revised Lisbon action plan and, within that, the new employment priorities, were approved in October 2006. The relevant key documents setting the framework of receiving Structural Funds assistance – the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (HRDOP) in the 2004-2006 National Development Plan, and the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) as part of the 2007-2013 New Hungary Development Plan – were approved in 2003 and 2007, respectively. These strategic documents may be seen as improved versions of one another, however, changes in the terms used and shifts in emphasis often make orientation regarding policy priorities difficult.

Priorities include the intention to increase labour market participation and employment rates, as well as the facilitation of labour market entry, especially in the case of certain target groups: the low qualified, disadvantaged groups, the Roma, older workers, etc. Improving the content and efficiency of education, together with supporting lifelong learning, are included among the priorities of employment policy as well.

The expansion of Hungarian secondary and tertiary education has been extremely rapid in the past fifteen years. As a result, VET has become much less attractive for young people, since a wider range of social groups are given the chance to attain a higher education degree which is better rewarded in the labour market than vocational qualifications. VET programmes are often “chosen” by less successful students who are unable to get into secondary, then to tertiary education. As a consequence of poorer skills and a low level of motivation, VET is less effective and economic actors are expressing increasing dissatisfaction.

	Policy priority	Main causes and reasons	Policy approach
1	A more efficient institutional structure	Too many institutions are providing VET, the system is inefficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitating the creation of the system of the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres (see 6.2.2.1) - concentrating development resources (see 6.3.1. and 6.3.2.1.)
2	Increased reflection on labour market demands	Training does not always respond to the quantitative and qualitative demands of the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing the role of the chambers (see 5.2.2.) - facilitating student contracts (see 5.3.2.) - the new composition and decision-making competence of the regional development and training committees (see 6.4.2.) - operating professional consultative boards (PCBs) (see 6.2.2.2.) - introducing financial incentives for training in vocations in short supply in the labour market
3	Improving the quality of VET	Economy is only moderately satisfied with the output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating a modularised, competence-based qualification system and content development (see 3.2.2. and 7.2.2.) - Vocational School Development Programme (see 2.2.) - Adapting and disseminating CQAF (see 4.2.2.)
4	Balanced VET administration	Occasionally partial interests dominate, state influence is still very strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the new composition and decision-making rights of RDTCs (see 6.4.2.) - operating PCBs (see 6.2.2.2.)
5	Facilitating access to VET, supporting the training of disadvantaged people	High rate of drop-outs and high rate of unqualified young adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competence-based entry into VET (see 2.2.2.1.) - “Step One Step Ahead” programme (see 2.2.2.2.) - The road to a vocational qualification (see 2.3.2.1.) - Labour market integration programmes containing training elements as well (see 2.3.2.)
6	Development of	Access to career-	- Development of career-

	career-orientation and guidance	orientation services is random, the system is not co-ordinated	orientation databases (see 3.3.1.) - Development of career-orientation services (see 3.3.1. and 3.3.2.1.)
7	Feedback for the administration on the efficiency of VET	There is insufficient information to support planning and management	- Operating a career monitoring system (see 8.2.)
8	Improvement of VET infrastructure	A part of the buildings and equipment is outworn and outdated	- Turning RIVTCs into centres of state-of-the-art technology (see 1.2.1.) - Renovating the school buildings from the Structural Funds

1.2. Socio-economic context

Due to low and declining birth rates and relatively high mortality rates the population of Hungary has been decreasing and ageing since 1981. As a consequence, the number of school-aged children is declining and will continue to do so also in the next decade: the number of population aged 14-17 which was 510 thousand in 2002 is forecasted to decrease to 462 thousand by 2010 which may have dramatic consequences on generally low-esteemed VET. Natural decrease of the population is partly counterbalanced by migration gain, although in international comparison the absolute number and proportion of migrants – the majority of whom are well-qualified, Hungarian-speaking citizens of neighbouring countries - is low and (especially since Romania joined the EU) declining. This too explains the fact that questions related to the education of migrants have so far played only a marginal role in education policy. Though Hungarian labour is less mobile than the Polish or Romanian, the emigration of qualified people – both graduate and skilled workers – to Western Europe is accelerating in the current depressed economic situation.

The economy of Hungary is small and open, its structural changes are determined by world economy processes, and accordingly, employment rates are constantly decreasing in agriculture and industry and increasing in the services (the figures in 2006 were 5.16%, 32.31% and 62.53%). As a result of radical structural change in the 1990s, the rate of high-tech sectors – dominated by foreign capital investments – is outstandingly high within the manufacturing sector, but this ultimately means mass production of the assembly type, although knowledge intensive activities with higher value added have also begun to gain significance. However, the key role in structural modernization is played by international companies, whilst the vast majority of Hungarian enterprises are micro (95.1%), small (4.1%) or medium (0.7%) enterprises with significantly lower productivity level, which employed 65% of employees, produced half of gross value added, and made 36% of export sales in 2004. In respect of economic development, the earlier favourable position of Hungary at the millennia in comparison with the other ascending countries has by now become the least favourable. Hungary's economic growth is the slowest in the region, its budget deficit is the highest, its national debt exceeds 60% and keeps increasing, and inflation is among the highest.

Permanent shortage of skilled workers in certain sectors, vocations and in the economically more developed regions (in and around the capital and in Western Hungary), and the inadequate quality of human resources, the lack of key competences are important barriers to economic development, while participation of employees in CVET is low and correlates strongly with company size.

In international comparison the most salient feature of the Hungarian labour market is the low employment rate, especially among the low qualified, the disadvantaged, women and the elderly. Employment rate in the active aged population is the lowest among EU members apart from Malta, it was 57.3% in the population aged 15-64 in 2007 (64.0% among males, 50.9% among females), and following a slight increase it currently shows a decreasing trend again. Unemployment is approaching the EU-25 average (rates in 2007 were: 7.4%, 7.2% and 7.7% respectively, but 21% in the population aged 15-24), whilst the rate of inactive people is high, though activity has increased in the past years due to government measures, partly because of the increasing number of job-seekers. Labour market status correlates strongly with educational attainment, and the individual returns to education is also very high. Significant regional and settlement type-specific inequalities and low sectoral and geographical mobility are further important features of the Hungarian economy and labour market.

In the past years considerable resources have been devoted for the labour market integration of the low qualified, the inactive, and the population aged over 40-50, but without convincing results so far. Promotion of non-typical employment forms has been typically campaign-like, there is no significant increase in this area. Compared to the national average, employment is extremely low (about its half) and at the same time unemployment is high (40% on average, but might be as high as 90% in some disadvantaged regions) among the Roma people. The implementation of cohesion policy, the social integration of Romas has, however, slowed down, also in the educational sector, whilst according to forecasts the proportion of Roma youth increases in the school-aged populations. Nevertheless, the New Hungary Development Plan defining the framework of utilizing EU Structural Funds assistance has earmarked considerable sources for this objective.

1.2.1. Examples of policy measures

1.2.1.1. The establishment of regional integrated vocational training centres (RIVTC) as high technology base places

Employers have been long unsatisfied with the quality of vocational education and training in Hungary. The reason for this, besides other factors, is the uneven quality of the technology used in training, and especially that students only very rarely encounter high technology in the course of their training. Practical training only rarely takes place at large companies with strong balance sheets, and maintainers of small enterprises and schools cannot afford to invest in expensive technology and use it in training. Therefore, parallel to the organisational concentration of vocational training institutions (about this see 6.2.2.1), support of equipment of central training places with high technology has begun within the framework of HRDOP Measure 4.1.

The antecedent of this concept is the system of training centres run by chambers in Germany that was formed in the 1960s and 1970s and has had a growing importance since. According to the concept, students will complete only a small part of their practical training in these technological centres when they are learning the module connected to the technology these centres provide. In this way, one centre can accept students from several schools and thus become a knowledge centre that keeps pace with technological changes.

The design of the HRDOP programme was completed by 2003 and started to provide financial support from 2004; by that time VET policy had committed itself to this solution. Beneficiaries of the 2005 tender could establish the first 16 regional vocational training centres (RIVTCs). As in most cases construction works preceded the installation of high technology, this latter was usually only realised from 2007 on. For the time being this affects only the largest qualification group, mechanical engineering; in other qualification groups

investment in high technology is even more prolonged. On average, each RIVTCs invested EUR 1-1.5 million in high tech equipment.

Operational programmes defining the use of European Union resources for the planning period 2007-2013 incorporate continuation of developments of the earlier phase, and the first call for tender for the new budget period has already been announced. Resources will be similar in volume to earlier ones, or will be only slightly less. All-in-all EUR 50 million is available for building infrastructure and technological investments, EUR 1.5 million for each accepted application.

The finances of high technology investment will be ensured by the so-called vocational training contribution (VET tax amounting to 1.5% of gross wage bills) after the phase-out of European Union resources. Previously this was available for more than a thousand vocational training institutions, from now on, according to pre-estimates, for 100-150 RIVTCs at maximum (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.1.). Pursuant to a legal amendment in the summer of 2007, a part of investment resources - approved by the government in power and the social partners - will only be available for RIVTCs. RIVTCs can use these resources for technological developments in further qualification groups.

RIVTCs are planned to be technological centres for VET provided within the school system and adult training as well. Formation of methods and conditions are yet underway, but the services will be available for companies and adult training institutions as well.

Applying installed technologies in training in the first 16 RIVTCs could only be started in the current school year; therefore there is no available information on their functioning as yet. The measure enjoys considerable support in professional circles. The complete system of RIVTCs will be built up in the following years, but the technological upgrade of training centres will be felt sooner, owing to the European Union resources. Further development opportunities and, in the medium term, the technological quality of the training centres depend on the future decisions of the Professional Consultative Boards (PCB) operating with majority representation from the world of economy and of the Regional Development and Training Committees (see chapter 6.4.2. for more details), and co-decisions with governmental and social partners, besides the RIVTCs.

1.2.1.2. Promoting training at micro and small enterprises (2007)

Participation of employees in CVET in Hungary is low compared to the EU average and correlates strongly with company size. In order to promote training in enterprises, since 1996 a part (originally at most 0.2%, since 2000 0.5%) of the vocational training contribution (VTC, see 6.3.) can be used by the enterprise to finance the training of its employees (charged to their VTC, in 2006 enterprises spent HUF 7,8 billion/EUR 32,1 million on training altogether 104,494 employees). This measure could not however improve significantly the training activities of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) because of the small amount of their VTC.

The objective of developing MSMEs and supporting the further training of their management and employees appeared in government programmes even before 2002 (the principles of development were recorded in a law in 1999), though the development of education and training was given more emphasis in the SME-strategies of the majority of EU member states than in the Hungarian strategy. However, the new SME strategy for the period 2007-2013, whose implementation will be supported by programmes of the New Hungary Development Plan, assigns a particularly important role to training and information supply in enterprise development. Under the comprehensive objective of „*Development of entrepreneurial*

knowledge” it defines the sub-goals of „*Extending the knowledge of entrepreneurs and employees*” and „*Development of entrepreneurial skills*”, assessing success in the first case by the representative enterprise survey of the ministry of economy and transport (MET): the goal is to increase the proportion of SMEs whose management or employees participate in any kind of training from the 2007 data of 27.6% to 35% by 2013.

Since the vast majority of Hungarian enterprises are MSMEs which employ more than two thirds of employees, increasing their competitiveness and employment potential is equally important for economy and employment policies. Since 2002 the government has supported the training of MSMEs in several different forms and schemes, with the coordination of various government agencies. The ministry of economy provided support from the SME dedicated budget allocation within the framework of the Széchenyi Enterprise Development Programme (2003-2006) to improve the entrepreneurial culture and to prepare and assist enterprises to join and catch up with the EU (e.g., in 2003 the project assisting catching up received altogether HUF 922.940.800/EUR 3.691.763, in 2006 provision of trainings was supported by HUF 100 million/EUR 400 thousand). Several tender opportunities for the training of MSMEs were offered by the Public Employment Foundation (e.g., in 2004 it launched a tender in this subject with a budget of HUF 400 million/EUR 1.6 million), and by HRDOP Measure 3.4. “*Training promoting job-creation and the development of entrepreneurial skills*” with a total budget of EUR 66,752,815 (whose output indicator defined the number of training participants in 112 thousand) as well as the RDOP (supporting region- and sector-specific trainings) and ARDOP, launched in 2004 with EU Structural Funds assistance. The efficiency of these measures was, however, limited by the lack of coordination between the concerned government agencies, parallel and not coordinated projects, lack of comprehensive impact analysis, and a definition of educational goals not substantiated by objective goal-oriented researches and often inadequate to actual needs.

The latest measure to increase the training activities of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and thus to raise the number of employees participating in training was raising the proportion of VTC which can be used for the training of employees. Pursuant to the amendment of the VTC Act, from 2007 these enterprises can use 60% instead of the former 33% of their VTC for the external or internal vocational or foreign language training of their employees. The efficiency of the measure is increased by the fact that in this case it is the enterprise who defines what trainings it needs, and since 2006 the approval of the labour council is no longer a precondition of writing off the costs of training programmes which do not award a qualification of the National Qualifications Register neither are accredited.

Whether the enterprise is an MSE has been recorded at the settlement of accounts only since 2007, and the 2007 data will be available only after 20 June 2008, therefore currently there are no data available on to what extent the proportion of MSEs taking advantage of this opportunity has increased as a result of the measure. According to the representative survey of the ministry of economy conducted regularly among MSMEs, compared to the 2005 survey, in 2007 the proportion of enterprises participating in (further) training has increased on the whole by 4%. By company size, the increase was 4% at enterprises without any employees, 0% at micro, 12% at small and 30% at medium enterprises.

Participation of entrepreneurs and employees in training and further training by company size in 2007 (%)					
	number of employees				
	0	1–9	10–49	50	Total
Participated in any training	23.6	29.7	59.7	86.7	27.6
Not participated	76.4	70.3	40.3	13.3	72.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: MET representative enterprise survey, 2007.

The measure's impact may be limited by the fact that high training costs and lack of finances is only one and even not necessarily the most important reason for the not providing training: in the 2005 Continuing Vocational Training Survey in enterprises coordinated by Eurostat, more than four fifths of Hungarian respondents answered that they were happy that the skills and competencies of their existing staff matched their jobs, and besides high costs, most of them explained the lack of training by preferring the recruitment of new, qualified employees and by the heavy workload of employees. Although the lack of adequate, tailor-made training content and forms (alternative, e.g. e-learning, delivery modes providing a solution for the problem of substitution when there is only a small number of employees), or the quality problems of adult training due to substantial oversupply and price competition as well impede the increase of MSMEs' training activities, it seems a considerable change of the attitude of enterprises, their recognition of the need of continuing training would be required to change the status quo.

Theme 2. Improving access to and equity in VET

2.1. National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET

It is a permanent tendency in Hungary that young people entering vocational education and training programmes either at ISCED 3 level or above are increasingly less prepared and have more disadvantaged social background. Expansion of secondary and tertiary level education, due to the earlier lag compared to economically more developed countries, was much faster in Hungary. The result of radical labour market transformation was that the labour market remunerates higher level school qualifications much more than vocational qualifications.

As a consequence, the gap has increased between entrants into general versus VET programmes, and into VET programmes of different levels and varying prestige, and the attractiveness of vocational programmes is continuously decreasing. Students enter VET on the „principle of the rest” and not following their own choice, having below the average motivation as a consequence. They regard their participation in VET as a failure, and thus they are more likely to leave the programme without obtaining a qualification or leave their chosen occupation after obtaining qualification. Many of them continue their studies instead of starting to work in the vocation they had studied. Three-fourth of those who start studying in a vocational school wishes to obtain a secondary school leaving exam certificate later, and at least a third of them indeed obtains the certificate. A very large number of young people do not even get to enter vocational or secondary education. A fifth of them obtain neither a vocational qualification nor a secondary school leaving exam certificate by the age of 25. They are victims of mechanisms of the previous training levels (ISCED 0, 1, 2) which are unable to cope with inequality. Most of them are inhabitants of impoverished villages, sub-regions or towns, living on the margin of society with their unemployed parents, and many of them are Roma. They see no hope of outbreak from this situation for want of positive examples and without a perspective they lack motivation for learning and achievement. Vocational schools constitute a segregated group of institutions educating mainly disadvantaged students with special educational needs and they strive with their problems without getting priority attention from VET policy and the financing of their extra tasks.

Increasing access to VET was ranked among the problems to be treated by the policy a few years ago. Social integration through VET is a declared objective with substantial resources. Nevertheless, social environment is a major obstacle in the way of diminishing inequalities and the integration of marginalised social groups. Solidarity with the losers of the social transformation is rather weak in Hungary, and the labour market does not expand permanently or only slightly does so. Incomes of the least qualified supplemented with aids and occasional illegal work are hardly at all competitive. Therefore, the chance of social integration of low qualified Roma people, those living in isolated villages, and unemployed adults living from aids are hardly increased solely by their enrolment into VET.

2.2. Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET

2.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The provision of labour supply both for skilled workers and at higher educational levels is a growing problem that can be explained by the permanent decrease in the attractiveness of VET. Treatment of this problem is constantly on the agenda, a sign of which is that in the Strategy of VET development approved by the government in 2005 the objective ”Improving Access To All” is declared right at the beginning of the document. The paper categorises the tasks to be done in 7 sub-points. These include general objectives such as diminishing the

number of drop-outs and improving access, but also more specific ones, such as developing a modular National Qualifications Register (NQR) - the elaboration of which was already underway at that time - and related content development (see 3.2.2). Measure 2.1. of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme titled “Ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged pupils in education” served fully the policy priority of improving access to VET. The title of priority 3 of the Social Renewal Operational Programme for the budget period 2007-2013, “Ensuring Quality Education and Access to All”, shows that providing access continues to be a high priority for policy makers.

The main challenge at the skilled workers’ training level, that is, the shortage of skilled workers in certain vocations and/or regions, results from the fact that these vocations are not attractive enough for young people to enter training and for the older generation to remain in their profession and build a carrier within it. Reasons being mainly the market (low wage) and lack of motivation (hard work, uncertain perspective), VET policy can have only minor influence here. The measure to provide significant financial benefits for those undertaking training in vocations in short supply in the labour market has been one of the attempts to solve this problem since 2007 (see 6.4.2).

Post-secondary level VET has become less attractive because of the expansion of tertiary education, as a result of which young people can quite easily enter higher education institutions which offer higher qualifications and thus higher income. In principle, the sphere of action of policy is larger here, but due to the sectoral division of education administration (VET – tertiary education) it is not, however, realised. Recently the increase of quotas on the number of students in state-supported tertiary education has been stunted, nevertheless it does not change the competitive situation between post-secondary and higher level vocational education and training on the one hand, and tertiary education, on the other hand. Credit recognition rules foster entrance into tertiary education instead of entrance into the labour market (see 7.3.2)

Participation in adult learning in Hungary is low in international comparison: it was 4.2% in 2005, slightly above 6% in 2007, and the national target by 2013 – as opposed to the EU target of 12.5% - is 8%. One of the reasons for this low figure is that adult learning activity is concentrated in the more educated and younger population who are also more motivated to be trained. For the lower-qualified and older employees there are specifically designed programmes, especially in the form of labour trainings organized by the labour organization and financed from the Labour Market Fund and in some measures supported by the Structural Funds. Participation of those with a maximum qualification of 8 grades of primary school in labour training increased in 2006, from 22.8% to 25.5%, compared to the previous year. Participation according to age groups has not changed; almost half of the participants were under 30 years of age.

Policies aiming at the enhancement of the attractiveness of VET are in a certain sense characterised by uncertainty. It has been recognised that there are complex social problems at stake that can only partly be treated via direct measures, but there is no experience in learning more complex techniques. First opportunities for this have been provided by the National Development Plan and the New Hungary Development Plan.

2.2.2. Examples of policy measures

2.2.2.1 Introduction of competence-based access requirements in VET

Also in Hungary, there is a high proportion of people who experience serious school failures before the age of 16, that is, the time when VET can start at the earliest. As a consequence, many young people did not obtain the minimally required school qualification, or got poor

school qualification that entitled them to start only such vocational training that did not match their ambitions and abilities. These young people got into VET unmotivated, and therefore they dropped out or left the profession upon completing the training more often than the average. As a consequence, a fifth of young people in their early twenties do not have an ISCED 3 vocational qualification, or they have a vocational qualification/school certificate that hardly promotes their integration to the labour market.

VET administration, in accordance with the social partners, wished to relax the conditions of entering VET, making it possible that a larger proportion of the relevant age groups could start studying in programmes providing a vocational qualification. At the same time, they wished to increase the proportion of those starting VET with the appropriate competences. This measure aims at easing the entrance to all programmes below the level of higher level vocational education and training. The preferential target group is young people lacking the appropriate school qualification and wishing to enter programmes preparing them for blue-collar jobs.

Entering VET without the required qualification was made possible by the decrees 14/2005 and 1/2006 of the Ministry of Education. In 2005 17, in 2006 40, and in 2007 nearly 60 schools that gained support within the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP) launched one-year preparation programmes the completion of which makes it possible to start VET in several vocations preparing for blue-collar jobs. About 700-800 students are studying in the programme currently. The programmes, aimed at developing competences necessary for entering VET, were supported by the VSDP both professionally and financially.

The measures are in accordance with the new, modular qualification system (see 3.2) and the competence-based approach and content development that are gaining ground both in public education and VET (see also 7.2).

So far 10%-15% of vocational schools have launched such programmes. Hopefully a wide circle of secondary vocational schools and also adult training institutions will seize the opportunity, but no preparatory programmes are available as yet for them to do so.

In the course of the programme about every fourth student drops out; all-in-all almost half of the students enter the vocational training programme after the course. The impact assessment of the programme will be carried out in the autumn of 2008. First informal feedbacks suggest that these students are not less capable of starting a vocational training programme than their peers who have the appropriate school qualification.

One reason of the success of the preparation programme could be that it is 100% based on the project method and thus is tailored to the needs of the target group. However, it presents a problem that the human resource and material needs of that exceed those of traditional education methods.

Problems to be solved include the introduction of the per capita financing of the task and the extension of the system to at least a wider circle of institutions training for blue-collar jobs. Teachers/trainers and other professional competences capable of performing the task are currently in shortage in vocational schools, especially in the most disadvantaged institutions and sub-regions. It creates a conflict situation to be solved that within the same institution traditional programmes, based on classes and school subjects, and 100% project-based shorter programmes may both lead to entering the same vocational programmes. This causes an unclear competition situation within the institutions and could bear harmful side effects. In addition, preparatory programmes for starting jobs that require the secondary school leaving certificate are yet to be developed and it will probably not happen in the near future.

2.2.2.2. The „Step One Step Ahead” (SOSA) program

Employment rate is significantly lower in Hungary than the European Union average. Among higher education graduates it is equivalent, among those with secondary qualification only slightly lower, but among those not having a secondary qualification only slightly exceeds the half of the European Union average. Low employment rate in Hungary is caused by the fact that it is difficult to enter the labour market with a low qualification, as even for jobs not requiring a qualification, qualified employees are preferred. The proportion of low qualified people is high: 40% of all people in the working age, more than 2 million people. The “Step One Step Ahead” program was launched as the 3.5.3 measure of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme to handle this situation.

The main objective of SOSA is to increase the educational level of the working-age adult population, enhancing their chance to find employment, and in this way to help a part of unemployed and inactive people to enter the labour market as well as to diminish the workforce demand in certain vocations in short supply.

Target groups of SOSA are people without the primary school certificate, those with only the primary school certificate, people whose vocational qualification is out-of-date or who wish to take part in CVET, and people who have obtained the secondary school leaving exam certificate but no vocational qualification. 50%-60% of the beneficiaries are unemployed, while the others have a job, and at least 70% of them do not have a vocational qualification. The SOSA programme provides training free of charge in vocations considered to be in short supply in the given county, at least in 150 hours and at maximum in 1.000 hours; upon successful completion participants receive a monthly minimum wage.

The programme started in January 2006 and quickly became popular as it provided more favourable conditions than the usual labour market trainings, because of the training premium. Typical training programmes were the same as in other trainings organised for the unemployed (shop assistant, sales entrepreneur, light machine operator, heavy machine operator, financial and accounting assistant, personal and property guard, computer operator (user), social caretaker and nurse, cleaning man/woman). The available resources were 8% of the resources allocated for adult training in 2006, but later in the year that sum was increased by resources allocated originally for other purposes. Thus instead of the planned 11.000 people, 15.000 people could take part in the programme.

Naturally, the programme was most popular among those having a higher prior qualification: training places for those having the secondary school leaving certificate and a job were filled in first, while those who have not completed even the 8 years of primary school typically did not enrol in the programme, only 2%-3% of all participants belonged to this target group instead of the originally planned minimum 10%.

Evidently, the programme is popular among accredited training providers as well, as it resulted in market increase for them; in addition, the administrative burden of SOSA is said to be favourable.

Drop-out rate in the programme was only 2%, and the rate of satisfaction was high among the participants. 60% of the participants could find a job following the training, which is similar to the rate of trainings organised by labour centres. The scheme is very advantageous for all participants - training providers and training participants -, but it attracts people who are motivated to participate in training anyway.

An indication of the success of the programme is that the 2.2.1 measure of the Social Renewal Operational Programme continues the SOSA programme in the first two years of the 2007-2013 budget period with a slightly increased budget. This can provide support for the training

of an additional 22.000 people in two years for this programme which matches the lifelong learning approach even by its name.

2.3. Improving equity for specific target groups

2.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

The issue of diminishing educational inequalities and the question of equity first appeared as an important objective in the 2002 government programme, but not in the relation of VET. The 2005 Strategy of VET Development also emphasised the importance of access, but the questions of inequalities and equity were not explicitly addressed. At the same time, as a consequence of placing the increase of access in the foreground of the policy, several development and tendering programmes have been created that had an objective to increase the participation of certain social groups and enforce the principle of equity.

The Vocational School Development Programme set the objective of diminishing drop-out rates. Following the impact assessment due in the second half of 2008 we will know more about its efficiency. It seems probable, that the programme can only slightly affect drop-out rate, its reasons being deeply rooted, and mainly of societal, and only to a lesser extent pedagogical nature.

Students dropped out from secondary education are taken care of by some educational institutions applying alternative pedagogy but there is no institutional system of second chance education. Furthermore, they get a chance and support to acquire a vocational qualification in projects run by the labour organization and non-profit organisations (see 2.3.2). It is not seen yet how the extension of compulsory schooling from 16 years to 18 years of age that is currently underway will influence drop-out rates and the career of those who experienced school failure.

One component of the Vocational School Development Programme expressly focuses on the poorest achieving students, those who could not start a vocational programme for want of a formal school qualification (see 2.2.2 about this).

The government decided to introduce an integrational per-capita support in the autumn of 2002 that institutions with students in the first, fifth and ninth grades upon meeting certain conditions could apply for; among these institutions there were some vocational schools as well. The grant aimed at promoting the integration of socially disadvantaged and Roma students with the introduction of the so-called "integrational pedagogical system" and in practice it gave a contribution of an annual EUR 240 per student. Opinions about the real and possible effects of this measure are split.

The programme called „Path to a trade” provides modest support for disadvantaged students learning a vocation in short supply in the labour market and for their teachers, as part of the programme „Útravaló” (“Provision for the trip”) that contains several components (see 2.3.2.1). The government wishes to support adults without a vocational qualification to acquire one through the „Step One Step Ahead” programme, a programme that is in conformity with the concept of lifelong learning even in its name (see 2.2.2.2). A measure of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (HRDOP) aimed to support women wishing to re-enter the labour market, primarily after maternity leave, an element of which could be the provision of training.

HRDOP Measure 1.1. (“Preventing and tackling unemployment”) aimed to integrate groups vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market with a budget of HUF 30 billion (EUR 120

million), targeting to involve 25000 people in the programme. It has become easier for those with low qualification to acquire a state recognized so-called „partial vocational qualification” as students dropped-out from vocational training can get a certificate of a partial vocational qualification upon completing a certain number of modules in the future. Programmes leading to a partial vocational qualification can be launched in adult training institutions and in institutions accepting graduates of primary schools offering special needs education and they create a chance for the most disadvantaged to acquire a vocational qualification.

Currently the main problem seems to be the non-transparency of the effects of the measures, the weak publicity of monitoring results, and the very small number of impact assessment studies and follow-ups.

The group most difficult to integrate into IVET and CVET is the population of regions lagging behind where unemployment rate is above 50% and participation in training is discouraged by the habit of living without work and bad socialisation patterns. The proportion of Romas is especially high among them, the employment of whom is also set back by prejudices, should they get a qualification.

2.3.2. Examples of policy measures

2.3.2.1. Labour market insertion programmes with training components

Since the early 1990s the Hungarian labour market is also such that a relatively large group of low qualified and/or disadvantaged people cannot enter the labour market without support. The most important shortcoming is low qualification. That is why training is a sine qua non component of support aiming at lasting employment.

Since the late 1990s the Public Employment Foundation has launched several pilot programmes in which, similarly to the EQUAL Programme, experimentation and innovation were in focus. The aim was to disseminate and institutionalize those models that fit the best to the groups at risk. All pilot activities are based on complex support that might include training, subsidized job, mental support, financial benefit, career guidance etc. depending on individual or target group needs. In the majority of cases vocational training concludes in a state recognized qualification at the end as part of the programme. In fewer cases training only aims at delivering key competences indispensable for starting a vocational programme. In any case, all programmes have a training component that strengthens the employability of beneficiaries.

Among beneficiaries youth at risk and Roma ethnic minority are preferred, but other well defined target groups of specific disadvantage are also included.

By the beginning of the current decade the piloting of the so-called “Transit Employment Programme” delivered much experience. The elaboration of the model reached such a high level that the dissemination could get a start. New measures from 2004 on were financed from the Structural Funds.

Calls for application were made public in 2004 and projects started in 2005 as part of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (HRDOP). In the piloting phase (1997 to 2003) 8 to 10 project promoters got supported, in HRDOP the number of subsidized organisations almost reached 100. Project promoters are typically associations and foundations, they all belong to the “third” or “civil” (not public and not private) sector. All project promoters must work in consortium where cooperation of public, civil and private institutions takes place and a large range of professionals of specific knowledge get involved.

The evaluation of the piloting phase took place in 2002, and evaluators verified the viability and efficiency of the model. The projects were monitored from the beginning to the end. Programme indicators regarding training activities and successful qualification exams were realized, but several project promoters failed to meet the insertion indicators. It is a consequence of the unexpected negative turn of the labour market supply and demand balance in the last two years. Project promoters are obliged to follow the career of the beneficiaries for 6 months after participants finish vocational training, but to date there is no information on their careers after this deadline.

The programme reflects the following principles of the successful and lasting labour market integration of disadvantaged people:

- It is based on complex support
- Enables people to get a qualification
- Offers individualized support
- It is based on the cooperation of many professionals and institutions.

These principles appear in many policy documents on education, employment and social welfare, and they are of growing importance in the culture of policy-making.

This programme based on tendering is flexible enough to meet the needs of the different target groups and the local labour market. The problem is that only a minority of potential beneficiaries, those who are motivated to change their life can be involved. The applying civil organizations skim the marginal groups of potential participants. They focus on involving the most motivated as they have to answer the expected output indicators (e.g. 70% of participants must be employed after 6 months following the project's end). As a result, those who are the neediest stay outside from this kind of support activities.

2.3.2.2. "Path to a trade"

The Hungarian education system is one of those that cannot effectively reduce the social differences of pupils. The Hungarian public got to face this in international comparison unfavourable fact by the PISA-reports. Since 2002 the equity issue has got more and more attention in the government's education and employment policy.

The Programme "Útravaló" ("Provisions for the trip") was launched by a governmental decree (1016/2005) in February 2005. Its aim was to assist the successful socio-economic integration of children coming from socially disadvantaged families afflicted by poverty or lasting unemployment. Target groups are pupils characterized by cumulative social disadvantage, coming from corrective boarding schools, cared for by professional mothers, getting aftercare etc. This priority order was applicable in case the number of applicants exceeds the amount of available funds.

The Programme "Útravaló" ("Provisions for the trip") consists of 3 sub-programmes. These are: "Út a középiskolába" ("Path to secondary school"), "Út az érettségizéshez" ("Path to the secondary school leaving exam") and "Út a szakmához" ("Path to a trade"). The first one offers opportunity for primary school pupils, the other two for students of secondary levels. Students and their mentor teachers/trainers can apply in pairs for a monthly allowance. The amount is HUF 4000 (EUR 16) for students and mentor teachers alike. Contracts are drawn up with the primary or vocational schools of pupils, not with students, parents or mentor teachers.

In summer 2005, in the first round 21000 students applied, the next year 16000. In the latter case 7000 application got support. From the 7000 only 1050 attended a vocational course. In 2007 a further 23000 students applied and 3415 of those came from VET. The yearly budget of the whole “Útravaló” Programme is about HUF 2 billion (nearly EUR 8 million) and one-seventh of this amount goes to vocational schools. There is a restriction for students of vocational schools. The Programme only supports those students who learn a vocation in short supply in the labour market. That is, helping the students and families is not the only aim of the sub-programme, but it is equally important to increase labour supply in trades which, because of low wages and/or unfavourable labour conditions, are not popular even among the poorest students and underachievers.

The Programme “Útravaló” is not the only measure that tries to give a better chance for disadvantaged students. It is just an additional social allowance and professional help for them.

There is no information available on the effectiveness and the popularity of the Programme, it is not monitored. It is only a vague judgement that the not very high budget and low per capita grants limit both the number of beneficiaries and the impact.

Theme 3. Lifelong learning through VET

3.1. National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET

The notion and approach of lifelong learning presently characterizes only a narrow circle of experts. At least a slogan-like reference to the notion can be traced in the educational policy documents, including the Strategy of VET Development approved by the government in May 2005. The government also approved a document about the strategy of lifelong learning in the autumn of 2005 which nonetheless had no real effect on VET policy.

The last decade has been very eventful as many regulations and developmental innovations have taken place at system-level in the area of vocational education and training and adult training. Although these changes were not motivated by the lifelong learning approach, a substantial part of them are in conformity with it.

Among the two most important investments in VET development, the development of the modular structure of the National Qualifications Register is in accordance with the notion of lifelong learning. In principle it can motivate a wide spectrum of individual training paths within less time, through the system of the so-called „built-on” and „branch”-type qualifications by completing new and new modules. The other major investment is the support given for building out the system of Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres, which in principle can also facilitate the system and concept of lifelong learning with many of its elements, such as switching between the modules and programmes offered by different member institutions, better access to suitable programmes due to career guidance and a larger supply of programmes; but the motivation for creating this system was different from this, and the direction of development it will take is yet to be seen. The Vocational School Development Programme, that has so far brought changes in the life of 160 vocational training institutions, is also in conformity with the lifelong learning concept. Many of its components aim at fostering the development of competences, some expressly of key competences. Focusing on competences is characteristic also of several measures of the Human Resource Development and the Social Renewal Operational Programmes (HRDOP, SROP). The growing extent of assigning tasks previously performed by the state to economic chambers is a change though that may have a negative effect on the learning motivation of students as it focuses on specialized knowledge necessary for entering a job immediately.

Career guidance and the recognition of prior learning are two neuralgic areas. The former is continuously on the agenda, but developments have so far concentrated only on some segments of education and educational policy, and systematised operation and access have not yet been worked out. Nonetheless, it is a permanent policy priority and substantial resources have been allocated for this purpose by the SROP to be realised from 2007 on. Recognition of knowledge and skills acquired in a non-formal or informal way was included in the Adult training act in 2001 as a right of the individual, but so far there have been no regulatory procedures and mechanisms developed. Cases for recognition are rare and incidental, no explicit policy has been outlined yet.

3.2. Facilitating transfer between VET pathways

3.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The harmonization of educational and vocational pathways, opening and fostering new training opportunities have been on the policy agenda since the 1990s. There have been attempts to make progression flexible at several training levels. At the same time, some policy

declarations and measures have made progress and career change more difficult for certain target groups as unintentional side effect.

The individualisation of training paths and the possibility of planning flexible professional careers may in principle be facilitated to a large extent by the new, modular National Qualifications Register (NQR) issued in 2006. Development work renewing the whole structure continued in 2004 as a sub-measure of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (HRDOP) financed from the Structural Funds and was completed two years later by issuing the new register (see 3.2.2 for more detail). A wide circle of stakeholders support the principles of the new system, but they are divided about the content of this large scale development carried out in such a short time. It is also yet to be seen how modular training, that may require new organization of the educational process in several cases, will be realised at the institutional level, and whether the advantages offered by the system could really be felt.

One measure of the Strategy of VET Development issued by the government in 2005 set forth the development of modular adult training programmes as well. It was realised within the HRDOP 3.5 measure to a small extent. The enforcement of modularity in parallel with the definition of competence-based outcome can be regarded as an expressed policy trend.

Regulatory and content development bases of the system of higher level vocational education and training were already set in 2002 (see 7.3.2 for more detail). This training form that facilitates the transition to tertiary education with credits acquired in the course of vocational training has the support of the policy, and the quota on the number of state supported students is increasing from year to year. Vocational training has become institutionalised within tertiary education and is slowly gaining ground.

Among the measures assisting the flexible progression of the low qualified (see 2.2.2. for more detail) the Vocational School Development Programme launched in 2003 should be mentioned and within that the development that creates the opportunity to enter vocational training even without a school qualification if one has the required competences. In practice, entering a vocational training programme without the required qualification has been possible since 2006, with hundreds of young people seizing the opportunity annually. The labour market integration of the low qualified may be facilitated also by the opportunity that the so-called special vocational schools whose students mainly come from primary school programmes of reduced value (including students living with slight mental disabilities) can enrol students also in programmes awarding so-called partial qualifications included in the 2006 NQR.

Two important preconditions of flexible individual training paths are yet lacking from the system. These are career guidance services accessible in any situations in one's life on the one hand, and services to assess and certify individual competences, on the other hand.

Some individual characteristics of the education and training system act against flexible training paths as a side effect. The expansion of secondary education, otherwise considered successful, together with the principle of free choice of schools has contributed to the separation of the system of vocational schools at secondary level. Programmes leading to the secondary school leaving certificate, to further attractive training programmes have also become longer and thus more difficult to access for those who previously obtained a vocational qualification at ISCED 3 level. The growing distance between VET and other secondary level education programmes is also due to the extended time frame that can be filled with vocational training contents in the 9th and 10th grades since 2006. The system of special vocational schools built basically on the segregationist special needs primary school education that has a reduced curriculum and enrolls one-fifth of Roma pupils is also an

obstacle of the free choice of training paths. From this system students can get to the mainstream education system or even to vocational schools and thus naturally to the primary labour market only in exceptional cases. The absorbing side effect of the expansion of higher education is that enrolment even to vocational training programmes of higher standard is decreasing as young people avoid these learning pathways because they can expect more advantages in the labour market by completing higher education.

3.2.2. Examples of policy measures

3.2.2.1 Modular renewal of the National Qualifications Register (NQR)

The NQR first issued in 1994 was much criticised, and its renewal was constantly on the agenda. According to the criticism the number of qualifications (800-1000) was too large and the NQR did not specify the relations between them, therefore it lacked transparency and made the planning of further training and career change difficult. The task demanding considerable resources was finally achieved with the financial support of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme between 2004 and 2006. The ministerial decree containing the new qualification system was issued in February 2006 (1/2006. OM). Besides the transformation of the system structure, content renewal adjusted to the modular build-up was also planned and achieved in two qualification groups, mechanical engineering and commerce.

Qualifications listed in the renewed NQR are built from modules – this is the real novelty of the NQR. There are almost 3.000 modules, which belong to several qualifications, and each qualification is set up of several modules. Besides the 416 qualifications there are 436 so-called „partial qualifications” listed in the Register. If one cannot complete all modules required for a qualification, he/she may obtain a partial qualification with the modules completed. In addition, there are „branches” (321), i.e., when the qualification is supplemented by another module. There are an additional 118 so-called „built-on vocational qualifications”, when one can obtain a „new” specialised qualification upon completing further modules. The earlier system did not contain partial qualifications, branches and built-on qualifications at all, therefore these are novelties for the policy and the users of the system as well. So-called module maps inform about the build-up of the vocational qualifications.

The renewal of the Register effects both secondary and postsecondary school-based education and, to a lesser extent, tertiary education, adult training and all the actors of VET. Trainings with the renewed content and structure were launched in adult training in the two qualification groups in the autumn of 2006, but from 2008 they are mandatory in school-based VET as well. The renewal of central programmes and curricula based on the modular principle are under way, among others under some measures of priority 2 of the Social Renewal Operational Programme.

According to the official declarations of policy makers it is an innovation that largely influences the operation of the VET system as a whole. At the same time, no feedback is available and indeed it is yet not possible to have feedback on its effect on the practice. The training offer and the organization of the educational process of training institutions do not change from one day to another. Training providers are less optimistic about the quality of this rapidly implemented development and more sceptical about its possible impacts. It is also yet to be seen how fast opportunities provided by the new system – e.g. obtaining a new qualification through built-on and branch modules – will generate new demand in the population. The expansion of demand might be impeded by the fact that in Hungary only the acquisition of the first vocational qualification is free, and thus the modules necessary for a second qualification could only be obtained in self-financed training courses, except for disadvantaged groups who are exempt from paying fees. In addition, even if the demand is

there, it is still a question whether training providers will react or will continue to offer complete central programmes including all modules required for a qualification that are more profitable for them.

In order that the advantages of the new NQR could be exploited, probably the regulation concerning the acquisition of the first vocational qualification free of charge should be re-considered and, for example, the basis of free training could be the number of completed modules (credits). Another motivational force for obtaining a new qualification could be if some modules could be completed by distance learning and be given account of in front of an independent examination board. In addition, it should be examined what kind of incentives and professional services could facilitate the change of training offer and organization of the educational process of training providers required by the new system.

3.3. Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures

3.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Although the importance and need of improving guidance and counselling services were emphasized in all major strategic documents and government decrees, there has been no significant progress in this field since 2002. In spite of developments so far, the currently operating Hungarian career guidance and labour counselling system still does not provide adequate and accessible-to-all services, it „does not live up to the expectations, its impact on individual learning paths, on overcoming difficulties in the transition from education to work, and on finding employment in the labour market is insufficient” (*National Report...*, 2007).

Most developments since 2002 focused on creating information systems, labour market information databases and homepages assisting career orientation (see 8.1. and <http://www.epalya.hu/>, <http://www.palyainfo.hu/>, <http://www.npk.hu/public/index.php>, <http://www.taninfo.hu/>, <http://www.sulinet.hu/tart/kat/R> <http://www.palya.hu/>). In order to improve career guidance services provided in general education (7th-10th grades) within public education, the first comprehensive development programme concerning the institutional system was launched within the framework of Human Resources Development Operational Programme Measure 3.1. aiming at the improvement of key competences, including the competences required for career building, in order to make the foundation for lifelong learning. Improvement of career orientation provided in pre-vocational education in vocational schools to assist students' career choice and later career correction and employment was supported by a project of the Vocational School Development Programme focusing on the development of both knowledge of vocations and self-awareness of students (see 3.3.2.1.). New, hopefully better opportunities for career guidance will be offered by the career orientation workshops to be established in regional integrated vocational training centres as well as by the new institutional structure (see 6.2.1.1.).

Developments mentioned above and other smaller scale, independent pilot projects implemented in some educational institutions which have become known only in a narrow circle were, however, insufficient to significantly improve access to guidance and counselling services. There is still neither institutional nor professional connection between school-based career guidance, services offered by the labour organization, and career counselling to be introduced in higher education pursuant to a legal obligation, this field does not have a central system of administration, the initial and further training of practitioners providing these services are inadequate except for counsellors employed by the employment service, and a good part of potential users are unaware of even the currently available opportunities/services.

Nevertheless, at the end of 2007 a large scale development programme was launched within a focal project of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) with a budget of EUR 6.878 million aiming to create a national integrated system of guidance (career building). The establishment of a national career guidance system by the middle of 2009, to be built on online and traditional tools, developing current and newly established career counselling, guidance and monitoring systems and linking them to the labour market information systems, which can be connected into the EU-27 systems (EQF, EUROPASS, PLOTEUS, EURES, EuroGuidanceNetwork, etc.) is coordinated by the Employment and Social Office of the Public Employment Service. Within the Office, a Hungarian Lifelong Learning Career Guidance Policy Council was set up in early 2008. The development of a career monitoring system supported also by SROP will provide valuable information for guidance and will assist career choice (for more information, see 8.2.1.).

3.3.2. Examples of policy measures

3.3.2.1. Career guidance project of the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP) I. (2003-2006)

Career guidance was introduced in 2001 in vocational schools: pursuant to the framework curriculum of 2000 it could be provided in the 9th grade either as an independent subject in 74 study hours per year, or linked to vocational orientation in 198 study hours. Guidance activities were, however, usually characterized by the lack of up-to-date learning materials and tools and adequately trained teachers, while even the objective of career guidance was ultimately unclarified (it was unclear whether it should acquaint students with all vocations which in theory can be chosen or only with those that can be pursued in the school) and its development/extension was greatly hindered by the conflicting interest of schools (inasmuch as the student would choose another vocation and another school as a result of career guidance).

The objective of the career guidance project of VSDP I. was to improve guidance services offered in vocational schools. This three-year-long pilot project closed in 2006 involved the development of a competence-based career guidance curriculum, a student workbook and a teacher handbook, career exploration films, a multimedia DVD, the further development of the framework curriculum, and the organization of in-service teacher trainings and regional conferences providing opportunity for the exchange of experiences. The target groups of the project were vocational school students and teachers providing career guidance.

Content development was performed at central level, followed by piloting and provision of services in schools participating in VSDP which undertook to build career guidance in their local curricula. The career guidance project was part of VSDP I. which aimed to modernize vocational school training, reduce drop-out rates, improve the competences and labour market value of vocational school graduates and increase the prestige of vocational schools. Key actors of the project were the Project Consulting Body and VSDP Programme Office providing professional management, experts chosen through tenders developing the career guidance curriculum and learning materials and companies organizing the in-service teacher trainings, and teachers of career guidance testing the project products.

As a result of the project, career guidance was introduced and enriched by modern methods and tools in the participating 70 schools. The external monitoring of VSDP included the analysis of documents produced and a survey of the opinion and experiences of institutional component leaders and users (teachers) about the project products. The assessment of the new curriculum and learning tools was in general positive, but the dissemination of outcomes proved to be problematic. It suggests the limitation of the project' impact that only 5% of all

teachers questioned, and a quarter of those providing career guidance indicated that there had been a change in the use of study hours available for guidance since the launch of VSDP, and most perceived the essence of the change in that this subject was now provided to smaller groups of students. Nevertheless, the national dissemination of the outcomes is ensured by the fact that the developed competence-based, modular career guidance framework curriculum was built into the vocational school framework curriculum published by the ministry of education in 2006. The improvement of guidance activities is continued in VSDP II. (2006-2011) as part of component “Development of general and pre-vocational education (9th-10th grades)”, but this will not involve new content development.

The obstacles encountered during the project’s implementation were ultimately the same as those impeding the extension of school guidance services in general: teachers questioned during the monitoring emphasized the shortage of time and the lack of infrastructural conditions and teaching aids. The funding of career guidance is in theory ensured by the per capita funding of practical education in the general education grades introduced from school year 2006/2007, but the initial and further training of guidance teachers is still a problem to be resolved. On the other hand, as experiences of expert visits to schools during the project have also shown, the most important precondition of extending and improving career guidance activities is the commitment of school management to this subject area. As regards the retention of project outcomes, the higher level utilization of the project products in the schools participating in VSDP II (which have received the products but without organized assistance) would be facilitated to a great extent if the human and organizational framework of knowledge sharing between the schools involved in the two programme phases were established.

3.4. Validating (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning

3.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

Before 2002 only a few researchers and training professionals, policy makers with experiences gained abroad were interested in the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It was nonetheless attributed great importance and future in a narrow professional circle which explains how the 2001 Adult training act could include the provisions that „the training programme should be adjusted to the diverse prior learning and skills of the participants” and „the adult applying for training may request the assessment of his/her level of knowledge that the adult training institution must assess and take into account”. This, however, had no real impact on practice.

Important policy documents of the period since 2002 have touched upon the issue of non-formal and informal learning. In the 2003 Human Resource Development Operational Programme, which is the basic document of the use of Structural Fund assistance in the budget period 2004-2006, it is mentioned in several contexts, but the Programme renders only modest resources to this issue (see 3.4.2. about that). It is also mentioned in many contexts in the Strategy of lifelong learning, approved at government level in September 2005, but it is left out of the tasks plan issued in October 2005.

The Strategy of VET Development approved by the government in May 2005 already included among its measures that „the opportunity to recognise prior knowledge (acquired formally, informally and non-formally) should be created at all levels of vocational education and training” until the end of 2010. Since then no concrete steps have been made except for the creation of legal frames, but the opportunity is present, at least in principle. VET policy emphasizes the importance of the modularity of the NQR (see 3.2.2.) that may enhance the interest of training providers and participants in the recognition of prior learning. The way of

integrating the testing of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge into the current system of examination has not yet been elaborated.

Non-formal and informal learning is mentioned several times in the Social Renewal Operational Programme designed for the planning period 2007-2013, mainly because of the context. Some sub-programmes are directly connected to this issue, but this approach has not yet become a priority. The draft governmental decree on joining the European Qualification Framework and the creation of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) highlights that the creation of the NQF „considerably facilitates putting the paradigm of lifelong learning in practice by forcing the synchronisation of sub-sectoral developments and the acceleration of the formal recognition of knowledge and competences required in the frame of non-formal and informal learning” (see 7.2.2.1.).

Active presence of the terms in policy documents and the lack of specific measures indicate policy perplexity and that non-formal and informal learning are not regarded a significant potential, it is rather peripheral compared to current policy priorities.

In the practice of the adult training system the recognition of knowledge acquired non-formally and informally is sporadic, but is present in areas where it concerns large numbers of people. One area being the state-recognised foreign language exams, the other is the ECDL exams, but the master training of skilled workers could as well be listed here. The issue of recognition is only sporadically present in adult training. Training providers have no interest in the recognition of prior learning of their students, as if they recognised it, they would be able to sell only a smaller training package, and would face difficulties in the organization of educational process because of the differing entry levels. Testing procedures are only known within a narrow professional circle, and the culture of testing is (final) exam-centred. Foreign language teaching should be mentioned separately here as well, as the assessment of the level of knowledge is widespread practice here. More recently the assessment of prior knowledge is offered by some Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres.

The exam regulation issued in 2007 includes that those who do not/did not participate in training as well can take the module exam and can obtain a NQR vocational qualification.

In general, it can be said that in today’s Hungary no one among the influential actors, including employers’ and sectoral organizations or training providers have an interest in fostering the practice of assessing and recognising knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

3.4.2. Examples of policy measures

3.4.2.1 Project to pilot prior learning testing procedures

The practice of recognizing prior learning in Hungary is very infrequent. Besides counter-interests, its spread is hindered by the fact that the required professional-methodological culture exists only in a few places. Elaboration and introduction of a unified methodology is yet to be born. The way of recognizing prior learning has not been regulated either, it depends on the professional culture, traditions and local objectives of the various training providers.

A project was financed from resources of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme to try out the tests of a method developed by the National Institute of Adult Education in 2003. 53 adult training institutions took part in this project, among them all the nine regional training centres. In the frame of the project a testing software has been developed and substantial IT investments have taken place.

Within the frame of the project participants tried out the method in the area of English language teaching, mathematics, marketing, business communication and wood industry, but only a few of them incorporated it later in their practice. Many of them however worked out their own testing methods with using what they had learned as background knowledge, and thus the testing-recognition activity has increased in some of these institutions. Further spread of the testing method is hindered by its labour-intensity and by the fact that if testing, profit-oriented companies can expect less income from training.

Statistical processing of project results was not possible due to the small number of data (approximately 100 testing). No separate resources have been allocated for the evaluation of the project and drawing conclusions, therefore it has not been made.

The project was a single initiative, it was not linked to other policy measures. Action plan for the first two years of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the period 2007-2013 will provide resources for projects similar in volume and content.

To spread the method in a wider circle would require the unified regulation of recognition, tested methodological tools and the motivation of participants in order to turn the current counter-interests into positive interest.

Theme 4. Improving quality of VET

4.1. National policy context on improving quality of VET

In Hungary, in the last 8 to 10 years there has been an increasing amount of discussion about quality, effectiveness and efficiency of VET in the course of professional debates and the preparation of strategic documents and development directions. However, the means of reaching these goals are just being created, or will be created in the near future.

Some of the already implemented measures of the strategic documents (introduction and further improvement of a unified quality assurance system in schools participating in the Vocational School Development Program; adaptation of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF); the revised National Qualification Register and examination requirements) have created certain frameworks for quality development within VET. Further opportunities of quality improvement are provided regarding school-based VET by legal regulations prescribing the elaboration of institutional and maintainers' quality management programmes and the quality monitoring carried out by the maintainers and the chambers, the introduction of the national assessment of basic competences and the application of their outcomes in the course of school assessment, as well as the recommendations of the strategy titled *Unified Quality Assessment System within Public Education* accepted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2006. Appreciation and encouragement of the institutions and students with outstanding achievements is ensured - among others - by the Quality Award for Public Education, the annual National Vocational Study Competition, the "Outstanding Student of the Trade" Competition and the national and international contests of World Skills.

The law prescribes further training once in every seven years for teachers and trainers of school-based VET, the costs of which are paid mainly by the state. However, both participation in in-service training and the spread of the new teaching culture is hampered by the fact that in Hungary - similarly to other European countries - the average age of VET teachers is considerably high. And though the strategic documents consider the professional and methodological development of teachers as high priority and as the key to quality education, there are no radical changes planned currently in this respect.

Within vocational training outside the school system, the accreditation of training institutions and/or programmes ensures some kind of quality assessment based on self-evaluation, which can filter out the critically low quality programmes. Nevertheless the long term improvement of the quality level of accredited training programmes could be guaranteed only by an examination system independent of training providers. Though the importance of the establishment of independent vocational examination centres or system (see also 7.3.2) is emphasized by each of the three strategies which concern VET, there have not been considerable efforts to realize this goal so far. The improvement of the quality of adult training should furthermore include the regulation of the further training system for adult trainers, and the enhancement of the level of adult training methodology.

4.2. Improving quality in VET provision

4.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Quality development and quality assurance had been recurring topics in policy documents both before and after 2002. Decree 3/2002 of the Ministry of Education on quality development and quality assurance has been the most important regulator of this policy area to this date. The first chapter of the 2005 governmental Strategy of VET development bears the title "Quality VET for all". The primary objective here was to shape actual processes in VET

according to the needs of its users. To this end several steps had been planned, the first one is to make available for every VET institution a quality assurance system operating on the basis of the adaptation of CQAF. A Quality Award has also been established to be awarded in all of the seven regions for institutions whose graduates have been successful in finding employment (in the vocation they had studied) in the largest proportions. The following objective places emphasis on the importance of content development, while the final point sets the goal of modernising teacher training.

Separate measures have been made in an attempt to improve the quality of VET. Beginning from 2003 all institutions of public education have been obliged to prepare and develop a so-called Institution-level Quality Management Programme (IQMP). The documents have been prepared but they have hardly affected the actual processes of self-assessment or quality assurance at schools. The main reasons behind this include a failure in providing support for these tasks, which were interpreted as extra tasks, and the importance of which divided the schools. Those institutions which have been convinced of its importance carry out quality management anyway, regardless the governmental provision. Actions of the Comenius Public Education Quality Assurance Programme, which took place between 2000 and 2004, had more influence on the quality assurance practices of VET institutions than IMIP. As much as 40% of the schools took part in this programme. Another 25% of VET institutions have had experience with ISO, with the majority of these programmes continuing to operate up to now. One component of the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP) which has been running since 2003, also aims at the institutionalisation of quality assurance. Nevertheless, the spread of the culture of quality assurance has slowed down in recent years (see 4.2.2).

The Quality Award in Public Education was established in 2002 as the adaptation of the European Award for Excellence. Looking back on a longer tradition of quality assurance, vocational training schools have actively and successfully participated in the calls.

Content development is considered in Hungary as one of the cornerstones of policies aiming at better quality. Modernisation of the vocational curriculum has been carried out more or less continuously. The renewed and modularised National Qualifications Register (see 3.2.2) may indeed bring about improvement in the quality of training. The VET administration is expecting quality improvement indirectly also from optimizing the institutional system of VET (see 6.2.2.1.), which may lead to a more efficient utilisation of resources. Many of the measures implemented between 2004 and 2006 in the framework of the Human Resources Development Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan aimed at the elaboration of methods and curricula to be used in school-based VET and in adult training.

Taking the examination standards more seriously and introducing stricter regulations for the examination system also have positive impact on the quality level. The above-mentioned 2005 Strategy of VET Development ordered the establishment of a system of independent examination centres. However, this is not likely to take place in the near future. Instead, for the first two years of the implementation of the Social Renewal Operational Programme resources have been earmarked for elaborating the criteria for the accreditation of examination locations and examination organisers, as well as for developing the systems of self-assessment and quality assurance. With respect to adult training, it is also the preliminary assessment of input factors, i.e. the accreditation of institutions and programmes, which stands in the centre of quality assurance policy.

Although mentioned in strategic documents, the status of vocational teachers and trainers, as well as their role in quality VET, is systematically rendered to the background when it comes to the question of quality. Further training programmes are regularly organised for teachers and trainers, as to some extent it is compulsory in Hungarian public education, and all the major development programmes - such as the VSDP since 2003 - contain a strong further

training component. However, the labour market situation, the interests and the motivation of VET teachers and trainers put long term obstacles in the way of the quality renewal of this ageing qualification group.

4.2.2. Examples of policy measures

4.2.2.1. Adaptation of CQAF

The concept of quality assurance in VET began to spread in the second half of the 1990s. The process has sped up as a result of the actions organised in 2000-2004 in the framework of the Comenius 2000 Quality Development Programme in Public Education. Presently one quarter of the institutions hold ISO certifications.

The 2005 Strategy of VET Development set December 2008 as the deadline for enabling all VET institutions to use a quality assurance model based on CQAF. Adaptation work is at a phase where the conditions of its implementation, in principle, are given for every institution.

The 90 schools which in 2003-2006 took part in the Vocational School Development Programme adopted the Vocational School Self-Assessment Model (VSSAM). The programme takes an identical approach as CQAF but it is more ambitious in its details, although the section on measurement-assessment was not included in its original text. VSSAM covers all the activities of the institution. The second phase of VSDP was launched in 2006 with the participation of further 70 institutions. By now altogether 160 schools have been using a CQAF-compatible quality model which includes external evaluation as well.

The institutional system of Hungarian VET is in a state of radical transformation and permanent organisational concentration. The quality assurance systems introduced in the 16 Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres (RIVTC), established in 2005 (see 6.2.2.1), were shaped in light of CQAF and they are compatible with it. The tenders announced at the end of 2007, funded from Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP), will enable the establishment of further 32 RIVTCs. However, the call for tenders does not specify quality assurance as a requirement, therefore its use will be decided locally.

In the framework of SROP, HUF 600 million (EUR 2.4 million) was allocated for the implementation of quality assurance in VET schools, which will support the introduction of a CQAF compatible system. The fund available will allow supporting at least 100 institutions. The body responsible for the implementation of the programme will be the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education, which at the same time serves as the Hungarian Reference Point for VET Quality Assurance and is a member of the network of Reference Points.

The VET Quality Assurance Framework (VET-QAF), the Hungarian adaptation of CQAF, had been developed by February 2006. Some of its elements, such as the self-assessment models, had already operated before. QAF also plays an integrating role among the various quality development approaches.

A preparatory project was launched in the autumn of 2006 with the aim of adapting CQAF in the field of adult training, which would further develop the current system of accreditation-based quality assurance. The concept was approved by the competent ministry; therefore it is now possible to implement a CQAF-compliant quality assurance system in adult training as well.

The dissemination of CQAF in Hungary is facilitated by the fact that Hungary delegated one member into the board of the ENQA-VET network. Institutions are in great need of financial and professional support for the introduction of quality assurance system, as in the lack thereof

the majority of the institutions will not make any steps in this direction. A further question to be resolved is how to ensure a unified system of quality assurance in the entire education system, given the fact that school-based VET is partly supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and partly by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

4.3. Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing the attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions

4.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

The efficiency and standards of the work of teachers/trainers are inhibited by the fact that more than half of the vocational teachers currently employed by VET institutions are above 50 years of age, however they are deeply underrepresented in in-service teacher trainings due to their exemption from obligatory participation. The quality of education is negatively affected by the lack of evaluation of pedagogical work enforcing consequences, and the fact that 90% of teachers/trainers in Hungary are employed with civil servant appointment for indefinite term. While obligatory participation in in-service trainings are legally specified for teachers and trainers in school-based VET once in every seven years, there is no such a legal obligation for instructors working in adult training. Besides low wages, the lack of career building prospects also lowers the attractiveness of the teacher/trainer profession.

Since 2002, several national measures have been supporting the achievement of tasks defined at Community level¹ connected with the improvement of pedagogical work (high-level qualification, lifelong learning, mobility and building of partnerships). A considerable part of these measures are directed to the improvement of initial and in-service training of teachers, but simultaneously, steps enhancing the attractiveness of teacher career are also paid more emphasis and attention.

To increase the qualification level of vocational teachers, the new, 2006 Higher education act binds vocational teacher qualification to master level graduation, and also the training includes longer training teaching terms than before.

The further training of teachers and trainers is significantly supported currently by the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP) started in 2003. Each of its components contains in-service training elements: mostly methodological trainings, but foreign language, communication and information technology trainings are provided too. An interesting feature of these further training programmes is their being innovative not only in their content, but also in how knowledge is transferred. Besides traditional training methods, increasing importance is attached to peer learning, mobility and the principle of multiplication (when training participants pass on the newly gained knowledge in their institutions). The elaboration of the institutionalized further training system model for professionals working in adult training and the connected distance learning curricula has begun in the framework of HRDOP Measure 3.5.1.

Recent Hungarian research (Kadocsa, 2007) use empirical data to support the widespread opinion that a part of competences necessary for successful teaching is tied to personality, it is given and cannot be considerably developed. Consequently, besides training already active teachers, it is important to attract and retain efficient, competent workforce that is capable of individual innovations. This is what was aimed at by the wage increase of teachers in 2002 (see 4.3.1.1.). The attempts at the rationalization of teacher/student rates are indirectly

¹ Communication from the Commission and the Council and the European Parliament on Improving Quality of Teacher Education (COM(2007)392 final) ; Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications

connected to this aim as well by resulting that less teachers will be employed with more duties but receiving higher salary.. Pursuant to the 2006 and 2007 amendment of the Public education act, from the 2006/2007 school year employers are entitled to prescribe for teachers to teach 2 more classes per week beyond their ordinary working hours, and from 2007 on the compulsory number of classes has also been increased in certain teaching positions.

Such efforts may be observed in the “New Knowledge Programme” of the Ministry of Education and Culture, submitted for public debate in April 2008, which attempts to find solutions, among others, to the low wages and the lack of career prospect for teachers, which decrease the attractiveness of the profession. As a result of the proposed introduction of wage supplement for starting teachers and the scholarship for researcher-teachers, as well as the increase of the quality wage supplement, may altogether amount to a salary increase of HUF 40 000 (EUR 160) for teachers/trainers, which can effectively contribute to reducing counter-selection.

Questions relating to teaching professions have been central in several conferences, research and development projects in the past two years. The largest scale recent research project, commissioned by the National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education, titled “The state of vocational teacher training and its modernization”, was carried out in 2006-2007 with the co-operation of several teacher training departments of colleges and universities.

4.3.2. Examples of policy measures

4.3.2.1. National and international teacher further training programmes in the framework of the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP)

A significant challenge facing VET teachers/trainers (deriving partly from the decreasing prestige of VET) is the large number of disadvantaged students and students with learning and behavioural difficulties, which has become an especially acute problem in vocational schools. In the past fifteen years mobility programmes in the framework of World Bank, as well as PHARE and Leonardo programmes proved to be successful in the further training of teachers and trainers, providing inspiration for the planning of the first phase of VSDP 2003-2006. The programme involved 4 components (general education and vocational grounding, VET methodology, reintegration of disadvantaged students, self-development of schools & quality improvement) each of which involved further training opportunities for vocational school teachers/trainers in the framework of international mobility.

Although every further training programme was consistent with the objectives of the individual components, they all aimed at transferring professional competences which not only help efficient teaching and competence development of disadvantaged and under-motivated students, but also enable teachers to elaborate pedagogical methods and innovations adjusted to their local environment. An equally important objective of the programme was to motivate them, to strengthen their professional network and to change their approach to their role and to transform their teaching attitude. Participants had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with various innovative pedagogical methods, besides theoretical knowledge. Project work, co-operative techniques, consultations, debates, panels, peer learning, the open space technology (OST), study visits to institutions and regional conferences were also used besides traditional lectures.

Participants included teachers, instructors and managers from the 90 institutions countrywide (one quarter of all vocational schools in Hungary) which were selected to take part in VSDP through tenders. The broader target group included their students and other members of teaching staff; the aim was to have participants transfer the gained knowledge to their colleagues in their schools. The elaborated curricula, teaching materials and methodological

guidelines have been made available on the website of the programme, thus enriching every VET institution in the country.

The first phase of VSDP, encompassing 90 vocational schools, ended in 2006, the same time as the second phase of the Programme started with the involvement of 70 schools. The concept of the Programme was elaborated in 2002 by the then Deputy State Secretariat of VET at the Ministry of Education and is coordinated by the National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education. The development of training content, the implementation of the newly gained knowledge and mentoring of the participants are carried out by experts selected through tenders.

In VSDP I., 32 training sessions were organised domestically mainly on methodological issues, with the participation of 4553 teachers/trainers. Altogether 33 study visits and language courses were organised in 13 European countries, and within the IT project 772 teachers passed ECDL examination. Close to two thirds of teachers from the vocational schools participating in the 2002/2003 school year took part in further training or study visits, financed by the VSDP.

The monitoring study carried out after the termination of the programme, the travel diaries taking account of gained experiences and follow-up expert visits to the institutions indicate that participants have greatly utilized what they had learned. Besides professional and methodological elements, those aiming at attitude change received the most positive evaluation. Further training sessions contributed to the establishment of cooperation between VET institutions as well.

During the monitoring survey, the majority of participants referred to the rigidity in the number of potential participants and difficulties with finding substitute teachers as obstacles to participating in the programme. The implementation of the newly gained knowledge is hampered by the physical circumstances (e.g. the number of classrooms) and the unresolved financing for additional teaching activities. The programme enabled the schools to start developments; however without providing them further support lasting changes affecting the entire vocational school system cannot be expected. Furthermore, it would be important to integrate the innovative, practice-oriented and competence-based pedagogical knowledge and methods, elaborated in the course of the Programme, into the initial training of vocational teachers and trainers. It would also be indispensable to include vocational schools (besides grammar schools and secondary vocational schools) among the teacher training schools.

Theme 5. Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

5.1. National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market (LM)

Ensuring correspondence between VET and the economy has been a policy priority, due to the permanent shortage of skilled workers in several vocations and certain regions, signs of oversupply in some popular vocations, and the dissatisfaction of the economy with the practical vocational skills and general competences of new entrant skilled workers.

Although the national and regional bodies of interest reconciliation and the economic chambers had since the beginning of the 1990s legally defined entitlements concerning VET development, increasing the involvement of economic actors in decision-preparation and decision-making processes of various levels has been an important item on the policy agenda. Measures applied included increasing the chambers' responsibilities in the definition of VET content and the supervision of practical training and the vocational examination (see 5.2.2.), and widening the decision-making rights of the regional (see 6.4.2.) and creating institutional-level (see 6.2.2.2.) consultative bodies in order to convey local labour market needs and ensure the appropriate training offer and student enrolment.

Increasing the proportion of workplace learning in IVET has been a policy priority. Due to the economic transformation in the 1990s, the collapse of the former state company system, the participation of economy has significantly decreased in practical training which in school year 2001/2002 was thus provided to a large extent in schools, often – especially in vocational schools – in workshops with outdated technical-technological equipments. Education policy aimed to increase primarily the proportion of student contract-based trainings, especially in ISCED 3 level practice-oriented vocations and in the final part of VET, by legal provisions and financial incentives (see 5.3.).

Modernizing the outcome requirements of qualifications in accordance with the demands of the economy has also been a central policy issue. In order to ensure the continuous content renewal of VET, first NQR qualification group committees involving representatives of the social partners were set up (see section 5.4.2.1.), then the complete structural-content reform of the NQR was implemented with the involvement of economic actors.

In addition to the above, VET policy intended to strengthen links between VET and the economy primarily by securing labour market and career monitoring information and introducing financial and other incentives in order to ensure a training structure demanded by the local labour market, and by establishing a RIVTC-system (see 6.2.2.1.) and defining training offer and student numbers in cooperation with the social partners (see above).

5.2. Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsive to labour market needs

5.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

During the economic crisis of the first half of the 1990s, companies have for the most part moved out of VET provision. By the time economic growth set in towards the end of the decade, a major part of practical training was organised by VET institutions maintained by local or county governments. VET was dominated by the governmental/local governmental sphere, although economic actors had an appropriate and institutionalised representation in the

interest reconciliation council all along. The participation of economic actors in practical training, including the defining of its content and allocating funds, has shown continuous increase in the past years, especially since the governmental change in 2002. The changes point to a trend, which has been a declared objective of policy-making as well. Policy-making bodies are hopeful that with economy's stronger involvement in training, as well as in defining its structure, directions and its content, training and economic demands will better match, making economic actors more satisfied.

Economy's role has particularly increased in practical training, which was facilitated by the regulation as well (see 5.3). At the same time, practical training provision at enterprises is typical only in blue collar jobs, whereas on higher levels or in white-collar jobs such training is still low-scale, although an upward trend can be noted here as well.

Following the enactment of the law on chambers in 1994, the legislation demonstrated preference for chambers as key actors of economy. Among economic organisations, chambers have consistently appeared to be the most influential ones with their influence having gradually increased in the past years, especially since 2004 when they took over a number of governmental responsibilities (see 5.2.2.1). Sectoral organizations play a less significant role, although they have continuously delegated experts to the working groups of content development. Chambers have been acquiring an increasing role in quality control as well. In the majority of cases they are entitled to nominate the presidents of examination boards in the area of skilled workers training, thus representing economic interests in the boards. Chambers organise so-called "level-examinations" at mid-term into the training, which provide important feedback for all those involved in the training.

The role which economic actors played in renewing the National Qualifications Register between 2004 and 2006 was larger compared to their previous contribution in content development. They delegated experts to the concrete development projects, and they were present also in the 21 qualification group committees which designed the new structure of qualifications of the qualification groups (see chapter 5.4.2).

The basic institutions of social partnership had gradually evolved since the beginning of the 1990s and actors of the economy have a stable position in them. In the past few years, especially since the 2007 legal amendment, these institutions have received a decisive role in shaping regional VET policies. They form majority in the Regional Development and Training Committees (RDTC) which have been assigned some important decision-making rights on top of their functions of recommendation and review (see 6.4.2 on the RDTCs). In 2007 the National Vocational and Adult Training Council (NVATC) approved a HUF 900 million (EUR 3.6 million) project, co-ordinated by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to prepare the conditions for performing the new tasks.

VET experts and the concerned institutions more or less agree on the necessity of increasing the role of economy in VET, however, they have differing views on how that should be done. It is not clear yet how the government will be able to keep control of the developments, that is, how it will be able to practice its ultimate responsibility with a view to the current developments. It is also unclear whether transferring more and more tasks from the local governmental/school sphere to that of enterprises and economic chambers will result in a better co-operation between education and economy, which is a pre-condition to the quality of training, and in better representing and meeting the long term needs of the economy.

5.2.2. Examples of policy measures

5.2.2.1 Delegation of state functions to the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI)

Since the governmental change in 2002, the chambers' positions in VET decision-making have improved rapidly both with respect to defining the content framework, as well as the location of the training. Among the organisations representing the economy, chambers have continued to have a prominent position since the middle of the 1990s and their role have by now become of decisive importance in this field.

The first significant action was taken on 27 January 2004 when HCCI signed an agreement of cooperation with the Ministry of Education to modernise the professional and examination requirements for 16 vocational qualifications, as well as to elaborate the system of practical level-examinations. The vocations covered represented 40-50% of vocational school training. HCCI was successful also in increasing the duration of vocational training following pre-vocational training in qualification groups by 50%, from 2 to 3 years, in 14 of the 16 vocations. Thus beginning from September 2005, it requires completing a longer training period to become a skilled bricklayer or a waiter (altogether 13 years; up to 1998 it took 11 years, while between 1998 and 2005 it was 12 years) than to obtain the secondary school leaving examination certificate entitling one to enrol in higher education. The content modernisation of the 16 vocational qualifications was financed from the resources allocated by the National Vocational Training Council, which was the predecessor of the National Vocational and Adult Training Council established in 2006, by the Fundmanager Directorate of the Ministry of Education.

Based also on the 2004 agreement, since 2005 chambers have been entitled to organise so-called "level-examinations" in the abovementioned 16 vocational qualifications at mid-term into the training, which provides feedback for the training providers on the activities carried out in the first phase of the training and on how to make the second more efficient.

Following the 2006 framework agreement, HCCI and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the latter being responsible for VET administration since the summer of 2007, concluded another agreement in February 2007. As a result, the Chamber took on tasks and positions which had previously belonged to the ministerial administration. Thus in the 16 vocational qualifications, the content management of which they took over in 2004, they became entitled to delegate the president to the examination boards as well. HCCI was assigned the responsibility to elaborate the professional and examination requirements in additional 11 vocational qualifications, where it will also organise level-examinations with the right to delegate presidents to the examination boards. These 27 vocational qualifications altogether cover the larger part of skilled workers training.

HCCI also took over from the Ministry the task of organisation, management and coordination of the national competition "Outstanding Student of the Trade", which first took place in spring 2008 under the new circumstances. Plans have been made to organise a competition for young skilled workers who have already completed their studies and, also through that, to join WorldSkills, the worldwide competition of young skilled workers.

These measures have generated changes almost exclusively in VET on ISCED 3 level. Their effects on the labour market cannot yet be judged, however, economic actors seem to be utterly satisfied with the changes themselves. This does not mean, however, that they do not call for further changes. Taking over tasks from the state fits the key concept of VET policy-making, which strives to involve the economy more and more actively into the process of defining the content, the structure and conditions of training. Behind this lies the expectation that tensions between demand and supply in the labour force would decrease as a result.

5.3 Integrating learning with working

5.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Enhancing practical training in IVET and adjusting it to the demands of the economy has been a highlighted objective of VET policy which it intended to achieve by more actively involving economic organizations. Pursuant to the VET act, in school-based VET practical training can be provided at an enterprise in two forms: based on a cooperation agreement or a student contract. VET policy promoted primarily apprenticeship training whose major distinction in comparison with the other form is that the student contract is concluded by the student and the enterprise, under the supervision of a representative of the local economic chamber which inspects the conditions and standard of training before and also afterwards. Besides, students making a student contract receive regular monthly payment from the enterprise (the amount of which it can reimburse from the training sub-fund of the Labour Market Fund/LMF), are entitled to social security benefits, and the time of their training is counted as work time when calculating pension.

The main principle governing VET policy was that the first phase of practical training focusing on mastering basic vocational skills should be provided in a workshop, but then skills should be deepened in the immediate environment of the economy. In order to increase the proportion of workplace training, VET policy offered financial incentives to enterprises and transformed the per capita funding of schools. This was required because training students entails considerable administrative and sometimes also financial extra burden for enterprises, while schools lose the per capita funding they would get for students trained in the school workshop if they participate in external practical training.

From school year 2004/2005 the per capita funding of practical training provided in the school workshop was raised to 140% in the first, but decreased to 60% in the final VET grade, thus encouraging schools to favour workplace training in the final period of VET. Experiences of the past years, however, show that this regulation resulted only in a minor change; the proportion of workplace learning has not increased in the last grade, and has not decreased in the grounding phase significantly. This suggests that there are much stronger interests which define the place of practical training: that where exists the infrastructure already and the fact that practical training provision is actually a thriving business (Mártonfi, 2007). The proportion of workplace training has remained low especially in VET provided by secondary vocational schools after the secondary school leaving examination, because in post secondary VET programmes the proportion of practical training is usually only 1 or 2 days a week which does not motivate enterprises to provide training.

Measures promoting student contract-based training (see 5.3.2.) have, however, been rather successful inasmuch as it has become the dominant form of workplace learning in vocational schools. This training form preferred by legislation and financial incentives is considered by VET policy to be the best tool of strengthening links between VET and the economy, which also facilitates transition to the world of work and increases graduates' chances of employment. However, scholarly researches on the subsequent employment status and the learning activity of young people participating in school workshop versus workplace training, based on a cooperation agreement versus a student contract, have not so far been conducted.

Except for state supported programmes providing initial and continuing training linked to employment for disadvantaged young people and adults (see 2.3.2.), there has been no policy measure applied to promote workplace learning in VET provided outside the school system in adult training.

5.3.2. Examples of policy measures

5.3.2.1. Promotion of student contracts (2003)

Student contract-based training as one form of vocational practical training provided by an enterprise (see 5.3.1.) is available in IVET at upper and post secondary levels since school year 1997/1998. The number of student contracts has increased from 6616 to 14063 by school year 2001/2002 but the proportion of students participating in these trainings remained rather low.

The objective of the policy promoting student contracts is to increase the number of students participating in such training in IVET, especially in the last VET grade which should deepen vocational skills following vocational pedagogical grounding in a workshop. In order to achieve this goal, the following measures have been implemented since 2002:

- since 2005 the VET act defines the only cases when practical training can be provided based on a cooperation agreement, and since 2007 it prescribes that in case practical training is provided at an enterprise in more than 50% of its total duration, it can be organized only based on a student contract;
- the amount of payment apprentices are entitled to has been increased²;
- the administrative burden of enterprises providing student contract-based practical training has been reduced and they have been offered various financial incentives³;
- in parallel with differentiating the amount of per capita funding of practical training in a VET school (see 5.3.1.), schools became entitled to a partial per capita support in case their student participates in student contract-based training.

As a result of these measures, the number of student contracts increased to 43 265 by 2008 (see Table 1) and the number of enterprises providing student contract-based training increased to 7 560 (see Table 2). Increase of the number of student contracts in vocations in short supply in the labour market is presented in Table 3.

This form of training has become common primarily among vocational school students; in school year 2006/2007 nearly half of students participated in practical training at an enterprise based on a student contract (while about one seventh based on a cooperation agreement). The majority of secondary school students, however, still received practical training exclusively in school workshops, and although among full time students participating in practical training at an enterprise the proportion of those having a student contract has tripled (from 10.4% in school year 2001/2002 to 32.8% in 2006/2007), cooperation agreement remained the dominant form of external practical training in post secondary VET.

A training form corresponding to student contract became available also in higher level VET (see 7.3.3.2.) from 2006, in case the practical training is provided uninterrupted in at least 25%

² In 2003 it was raised to maximum 50% of the minimum wage, so that the amount of this allowance that qualified as exempt from taxes was at least 15% of the minimum wage in the first term of the first VET grade, and had to be increased by at least 10% in each of the following terms in view of the student's performance and diligence. Since 2007 the amount to be paid in the first term was increased to 20% which is supplemented by another 20% in case the training is provided in a vocation in short supply in the labour market, and thereafter the training provider decides on the amount of mandatory increase.

³ In 2003 the cost of materials used in the training of students became eligible for deduction in the amount of 20% of the minimum wage per student per year, also the flat rate deduction of costs became possible annually in the amount of the minimum wage, and the amount of tax base reduction per student per month was raised to 20% of the minimum wage. In 2006 the range of costs deductible on a flat rate basis was widened by making the wage costs of students' payment, such as the social security tax, deductible, and further costs became deductible in up to 150% of the minimum wage. In 2007 the deductibility of materials costs was raised to 40% of the minimum wage in case the training was provided in a vocation with a labour shortage, and administrative costs related to practical training provision and the deduction of its costs also became deductible in the amount of maximum HUF 15000/EUR 60 per student per year, but up to at most the annual amount of minimum wage per enterprise.

of the duration of training. New opportunities to extend this form of training would be the one-term-long practical training of the new, so-called practice-demanding BSc trainings, and VET programmes provided outside the school system.

As data above show, the measures promoting student contracts have not brought significant change in VET provided by secondary vocational schools, primarily because the proportion of practical training is usually only 1-2 days per week in these (short) vocational training programmes, which does not motivate enterprises to provide training. The impact of measures encouraging enterprises by financial incentives is reduced also by the fact that the vocational training contribution which is the basis of writing off the costs of practical training can be allocated also (to a certain extent) for financing the training of employees (see 1.2.1.2.), thus the two priorities act against each other (Szilágyi, 2007).

Promotion of student contracts has so far concentrated on increasing the number of student contracts, but in order to ensure the adequate standard of workplace learning it is also very important to eliminate quality differences that currently can be experienced among training locations, and to ensure the pedagogical qualification and regular further training of trainers instructing the students.

The current situation of student contract-based training might change significantly with the expansion of the RIVTC-system (see 6.2.2.1.), since in the future the RIVTC as a partnership will be eligible to conclude student contracts with students.

Year	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Number of students	6616	7970	8312	10155	14063	14128	15628	21301	32117	37696	43265

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture

Year	Number of enterprises
2002	n.a.
2003	n.a.
2004	1458
2005	3204
2006	6403
2007	7560

Source: Szilágyi, 2007

Vocation	2005	2006	2007
Joiner-rigger	183	266	311

Tinsmith and construction tinsmith	10	25	43
Metal cutter	251	444	584
Engine fitter	229	382	514
Welder	194	276	356
Structure locksmith	234	538	589
Toolmaker	22	100	105
Roofer	47	75	74

Source: Szilágyi, 2007

5.4. Integrating skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision

5.4.1. Policy progress since 2002 (approximately 500 words)

Since 2002, national policy in this area has been determined by the goals of modernizing the structure and content of the National Qualifications Register (NQR) and of adjusting training offer to regional-local labour market needs.

In order to ensure the continuous adjustment of VET content, outcome requirements to the needs of the economy, first NQR qualification group committees were set up (see 5.4.2.), and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) was assigned the task of developing certain popular qualifications (see 5.2.2.), then a comprehensive reform of the structure and content of the NQR was carried out (see also 3.2.2.). The NQR modernization project supported by the European Social Fund was based on an analysis of current Hungarian employment structure and jobs with the extensive involvement of representatives of the economy and the social partners, including the analysis of future developments in each vocation expected by job experts participating in the job profile analyses.

Apart from this latter activity, however, measures mentioned above actually involved surveying rather only the current situation and demands, and researches anticipating the future skill needs of vocations/sectors have been conducted only sporadically and without major central coordination. Following the development of the new NQR, the task of continuously monitoring the development of VET structure was assigned to a new consultative body (NQR committee) to be set up of representatives of responsible ministries and the social partners. Henceforward, education policy concentrates on creating the formal framework of involving the economy in VET development and planning at national, regional as well as institutional level. It provides to all concerned the opportunity to report changing labour market needs by initiating the modification of the NQR. On the whole, however, economic interest representative organizations have so far put little emphasis on identifying and anticipating the needs of the economy.

The other main goal defining education policy in this area was to adjust training offer to labour market needs. To achieve this, measures were taken to develop the labour market forecasting system, paying special attention to vocations in short supply and the change of regional labour market needs; to create the career monitoring system of graduates in IVET and adult training which in addition to assisting students' career choice would provide data also for the modification of national, regional and local VET structure (data is planned to be used for the correction of VET outcome requirements as well, see 8.2.1.); to introduce financial

incentives to promote training in vocations in short supply as defined by the RDTCs, then empower these committees to define the regional needs for VET, training offer and number of students to be enrolled (see 6.4.2.); and to create a Quality Award rewarding VET schools whose graduates find employment in high proportions, thus encouraging them to adapt their training offer and quality of training more to labour market needs.

Although the need of anticipating future skill needs of the labour market in a more qualitative way is also referred to here and there in the policy documents created since 2002, the focus is on quantitative approaches, i.e., on forecasting the composition and quantity of labour demand at national, regional and local levels. This approach is criticized by many researchers as still following the outdated “labour planning approach” when focusing on forecasting labour demand to provide a basis for the strict quantitative planning of VET. They emphasize the various theoretical limitations of such forecasting, including significant differences in needs and demands according to size of enterprise and region, size and openness of the economy, weakness of social partner mediation, etc.

5.4.2. Examples of policy measures (approximately 300 words/example)

5.4.2.1. Operation of NQR qualification group committees (2002)

Since its creation in 1994, the content and structure of the National Qualifications Register (NQR) had been modified several times, but the continuous development of qualifications and the professional and examination requirements with the involvement of representatives of the economy was not resolved.

The objective of creating committees in the 21 qualification groups (QGs) of the NQR was to create bodies with the participation of all stakeholders that would be responsible for promoting the continuous development of the NQR in view of the constantly changing labour market needs. The committees were set up by spring 2002, though their legal basis was created by the 2003 amendment of the VET Act. Pursuant to it the committees operated by the minister of education together with other ministers responsible for vocational qualifications “review the NQR based on the experiences of VET at least every three years and if necessary, make a recommendation for its modification”. Pursuant to the decree defining the procedure of introducing, modifying or deleting an NQR qualification, the minister of education sends proposals for modification also to the committees for professional review.

The establishment of these national level committees was linked to the policy approach aiming to modernize VET in accordance with labour market needs. Committee members included representatives of ministries responsible for qualifications, school maintainers and training providers, and economic organizations and social partners nominated by the National Interest Reconciliation Council and the economic chambers. Secretarial tasks, including the methodological support of the committees’ work, were performed by employees of the National Institute of Vocational Education.

The committees were operating between 2002 and 2007, but in fact stopped working from 2006. They had made proposals to the ministry to conduct researches, prepare studies on subjects considered important in the given QG and recommended experts to prepare them (committee members often participated in these researches also as authors), and initiated the modification of the NQR and the modernization of professional and examination requirements. The permanent character of the committees might have made them capable of monitoring the long term processes in the QG, thus of anticipating the economic, technological changes and future skill needs of the sector, in practice, however, it was not always possible to ensure their representativity (representatives of the economy were often missing from meetings due to their other engagements, VET teachers were overrepresented)

and to find competent experts, thus the committees could be competent only in partial matters. Furthermore, high standard professional work could have been expected only if members had received adequate remuneration, which, however, would have made the operation of the committees rather expensive.

Some members of the committees joined in the development of the new NQR in 2004-2006 (see 3.2.2.), this project was, however, coordinated and supervised by a 30-member Consulting Board meeting every month. Since further tasks related to the new NQR do not primarily relate to activities within QGs, education policy assigned the task of “continuously developing and modernizing the qualification structure” to a new committee to be created by the example of this Board involving representatives of the ministries responsible for VET and education, the national economic chambers and interest representative organizations and professional chambers. Although this is in line with the modular logic of the new NQR, the tasks of this new committee do not involve the identification and anticipation of skill needs by sector.

Theme 6. Governance and funding

6.1. National policy context on VET governance and funding

Adult training was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment and Labour in 2002, then following the 2006 elections and the subsequent transformation of governmental structure, VET has become supervised by Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MSAL) as well. In addition, management of VET and adult training has been shifted from the higher level of deputy state secretary to the lower level of head of department. In school-based VET the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the MSAL share responsibilities.

The institutional and maintenance structure of IVET is very fragmented with more than 1000 institutions providing VET. School maintainers include local governments of a large number of small towns, beside those of all the counties and larger settlements. Large-scale fragmentation has a negative effect on the professionalism of management as well as on the efficiency of training. Since 2004 the ministerial administration for VET has made steps towards the concentration of the institutional structure. This process accelerated in 2007 (see 1.2.1 and 6.2.2.1). They expect that, besides the improvement of management, concentration would bring an improvement in the efficiency of financing as well.

The participation of economic actors in shaping VET policy-making can now be called a tradition, even though social partners have the chance to voice their opinion in various bodies and commissions which change from time to time. However, views differ on how influential they are. Social partners also play a role in allocating funds both on national, as well as on local level. There is a strong desire to involve economic actors in management on a local level with the expectation of strengthening the labour market orientation of VET through that. Economic actors are also strongly represented in committees which decide about training profiles (see 6.4.2), while in the case of the newly established regional integrated vocational training centres they can exercise their influence through consultative bodies (see 6.2.2.2).

For the past years, the government has kept delegating tasks - while still providing its financing - to the economic chambers. Bringing VET closer to the economy is a declared objective, however, there are views that certain state responsibilities, especially in IVET, may suffer because of the way task delegation is carried out.

The structure of VET financing has hardly changed in the past period (see 6.3.1), although the 2005 Strategy of VET development set the objective of reviewing the financing. The ongoing institutional restructuring will also have implications for the financing with preference given to larger (above 1500 students) institutions. The legal amendments of the past 5 years brought significant changes in the utilization of the vocational training contribution – which is basically a VET tax, amounting to 1.5% of the gross wage bill – by extending the scope of opportunities for economic actors and putting an end to anomalies in this area.

6.2. Changes made to administrative/institutional structures

6.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The supervision of adult training was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Employment and Labour (now the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) in 2002. In the new governmental structure set up after the elections in 2006, VET was also placed under the supervision of the minister responsible for employment policy. In the period following the change of the regime, different ministries became responsible for VET and/or adult training after almost every election, based on how it fitted the new governmental

structure. The changes do not suggest a trend, but the current situation, having VET, adult training, employment policy and social policy all belong to one ministry creates a favourable condition for integrating policies. However, co-operation between the different fields is traditionally not harmonic; therefore there are only few examples of making use of this opportunity. The effort to directly connect VET to labour market developments has intensified since 2006.

Continuous and determined policy efforts have been made since 2002 to concentrate the institutional system of IVET eventuating in much less training provider institutions. The rather liberal law on local governments, passed in 1990, prescribes strong entitlements for the local governments as maintainers of VET institutions, therefore school-based VET is currently provided in far more than 1000 institutions, which, obviously, results in an efficiency and quality deficit. Given that political conditions have hindered the modification of the local government law, as it would require the unanimous votes of two thirds of the MPs present, the government decided in 2003 during the preparation of the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (HRDOP), to concentrate the VET system and thus also the available financial resources through the system of regional integrated vocational training centres (RIVTCs, see 6.2.2.1). The process began in 2005 already, but it gained real impetus in 2007.

It had also been a governmental concept for years to strengthen regional planning and management in VET. As the reform of state administration was taken off the agenda as a result of the two-thirds majority required for it, the government resorts to an indirect way again in an attempt to transform the system. The Regional Development and Training Committees (RDTCs, see 6.4.2) dominated by economic actors can modify the VET profile of regions to a considerable extent. From autumn 2009 development funds necessary for the permanent operation of VET will be available to VET institutions only if they accept the recommendations of RDTCs on where and in which vocations how many students can be enrolled. Thus RDTCs, in a sense, belong to the management structure.

Since 2006 RIVTCs are obliged to operate Professional Consultative Boards (PCB) in which economic actors take the majority of the seats (see 6.2.2.2).

Strengthening regional management, along with the establishment of RIVTCs and making the operation of PCBs compulsory, have resulted in bringing training closer to the everyday needs of the economy. Through the national and regional institutional structure of social partnership, economic actors have taken part in shaping VET policy for fifteen years but in recent years they have acquired increasing influence on concrete decisions and the everyday operation as well. Chambers, for instance, have been increasingly taking over more and more tasks which were previously performed by the state (see chapter 5.2.2). This shows a trend and has been the result of conscious governmental policy carried out since 2002. Some experts, however, are worried about a possible shrinking in the scope of the government's responsibility as a result of these steps. The transformation is in a phase where it is too early to tell the advantages and the disadvantages of the changes.

6.2.2. Examples of policy measures

6.2.2.1 Establishment of the regional integrated vocational training centres (RIVTCs)

The Hungarian institutional system of VET is extremely fragmented; it is made up of far more than 1000 VET institutions, which is too many for the volume of training provision. This has not changed in the past few years, despite local attempts at optimization: there are many small institutions and the fragmentation causes problems with efficiency and quality. Currently there are few conditions set for establishing and operating an institution; on top of that there had

been relatively easy access to state per capita funding and development money. Making goal-oriented changes in the maintenance structure of VET would require a two-thirds support of the MPs; however, given the current political scene, this is not feasible.

The policy concepts which evolved around 2002-2003 call for large-scale institutional centralisation. In the absence of a legislative solution to achieve it, financial incentives can be used, for which the Structural Funds or the development resources funded from the vocational training contribution (a kind of VET tax amounting to 1.5% of total labour costs) could provide the financial background. Original plans calculated with the establishment of about fifty RIVTCs and built strongly on the model of the Dutch Regional Training Centres (ROC).

In its planning phase between 2004 and 2006, the National Development Plan supported the establishment of 16 RIVTCs through tenders. The call for tenders was announced in March 2005 and that same year 16 RIVTCs were established based on consortia of 6-8 VET institutions, each of which received close to HUF 1 billion (EUR 4 million) in support.

The original regulations on the co-operation between schools participating in the RIVTCs were soft, and less supportive of an economical management of capacities. The amended legislation, passed in the summer of 2007, included a significant limitation as well as motivation at the same time. It offered prospective access to development funds, thus to the ensuring of quality education, only for those institutions which trained at least 1500 students and which accepted the recommendations of the RDTCs (see 6.4.2) as to the vocations to be offered and the number of students to be enrolled. In addition, the regulation allows for a variety of organizational forms for emerging voluntary VET-organization partnerships and companies, i.e., RIVTCs to take.

Tenders offering support for these voluntary partnerships in the total value of more than EUR 100 million were announced at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008. The support may be used for infrastructure development, technological investments and for creating the human and organisational conditions of quality co-operation. The tenders attracted great attention and massive transformation has begun. It is foreseen that in this round as many as 32 RIVTCs will be supported and in the next 2-year action plan of 2009/2010 another 32 are foreseen to be funded. This way the number of RIVTCs, supported from the Structural Funds, is expected to reach 80, but altogether at least 100-150 RIVTCs are expected to be set up.

The modified regulation can be deemed successful in that it launched changes on an extremely wide scale and set in motion processes of capacity-integration. These affected an overwhelming proportion of participants in school-based VET. It is only the beginning of the process, and due to the modified regulations, the experience of the 16 RIVTCs, established in 2005, can hardly give any forecast on further developments. Some experts remain sceptical as to whether the decision of local school maintainers will lead to the termination of significant capacities. It cannot be foreseen either if the recently reconstructed RDTCs (see chapter 6.4.2) will be able to generate substantial changes with their decisions; but if so, then to what extent will these make available resources which remain in the system or how much will they withdraw? The transformation of the institutional structure is at the initial phase of undergoing large-scale changes; its success may depend on how successful the central and local actors are in managing changes and the anomalies generated by them.

6.2.2.2 Professional Consultative Boards (PCBs) operating beside VET institutions

The participation of economic actors in interest reconciliation has been ensured institutionally since 1991. County-based interest reconciliation fora were established in the course of the 1990s as well. Economic actors also play an active role in shaping the content of qualifications. However, they were scarcely involved in an institutional way in local

developments or in shaping training offer and, in most cases, only informally were they able to indicate their demands to the institutions. At times they were able to give emphasis to this when they decided to transfer some part of the vocational training contribution (a kind of VET tax amounting to 1.5% of total labour costs) for development purposes directly to the institutions. Nevertheless, representatives of the economy believed that the lasting divergence between training output and the demands of the economy was in great part due to the fact that they had no opportunity to influence decisions about local developments in training, profile modifications or enrolment which took into account only the intentions of schools and the population. This idea coincided with that of VET administration in power since 2002. They tried to limit training programmes whose provision was in the interest of the schools but which were less useful from the point of view of the economy also by channelling the views of economic actors into local decision-making.

The Strategy of VET Development accepted by the government in May 2005 already stated that “in order to convey the labour market demands, the operation of professional consultative boards of RIVTCs and institutions training at least 800 students should be regulated by legislation”. The amendment of the VET act in December 2005 finally made it compulsory for schools with more than 500 students to establish PCBs. The establishment and operation of PCBs beside RIVTCs was regulated also by the 8/2006. (III. 23.) decree of the minister of education. Pursuant to the amendment of the VET act, PCBs involved members delegated by the economic chambers, employer organisations and employee representatives, along with school maintainers. Besides them, in PCBs operating beside RIVTCs the representative of the competent labour centre as well has voting right, and representatives of VET schools participating in the RIVTC and the managers of the governing board and of the central training location can also participate in the work of the board with advisory rights. In the 9-15-strong PCBs of schools with more than 500 students economic actors were in majority, but the scope of these bodies was limited to making recommendations but not decisions, since the so-called “two-thirds local governmental law” did not allow that. Still, the fact that PCBs had to be consulted on a range of issues in local level professional circles (such as the programme of the VET school, its work plan and budget planning, the range of vocations taught at the school and the use of development subsidy) still represented a great achievement for the economy.

It was prescribed that PCBs operating beside VET institutions be established by the autumn of 2006 and most of them were, with their members appointed for three years. However, due to the 2007 summer legal amendment, since then most VET institutions have joined RIVTCs (see 6.2.2.1) for which accepting the decisions of the Regional Development and Training Committees (RDTCs, see 6.4.2.) defining the directions of VET development and the proportions of student enrolment is mandatory, and, from the autumn of 2009, a precondition of receiving development funds. Since in the restructured RDTCs actors of the economy are in majority and they received decision-making rights, VET policy considered the operation of PCBs unnecessary, therefore the legal amendment annulled the provision of the VET act relating to PCBs. Thus from 2008 Professional Consultative Boards will operate only beside RIVTCs. There is no assessable feedback available of the short operation of PCBs set up in the autumn of 2006.

6.3. Changes made to funding arrangements for VET

6.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Regarding the change of the financing system of VET, since 2002 the most important objective of education policy – discussed in a separate chapter in the 2005 Strategy of VET development - has been to make the system more efficient. Besides that, the introduction of

financial incentives, modification of the support system was the prime tool of several policy objectives promoting the adjustment of VET to labour market needs.

In school-based VET, most important goals were to increase cost effectiveness and to encourage VET schools to change their training offer in accordance with changes of the labour market. Education policy considered the key to cost effective operation was to increase the size of institutions, i.e., to create the system of RIVTCs (see 6.2.2.1.) in order to rationalize operating costs and ensure the optimal use of sources available for development. Institutional transformation is encouraged by the most recent legal amendments pursuant to which (with a few exceptions) only RIVTCS will be eligible to receive development funds (see below and 6.3.2.1.). To reward schools providing VET in accordance with labour market needs a Quality Award was introduced, financed by 5% of the training sub-fund of the Labour Market Fund (LMF).

Further changes concerning the per capita funding of VET schools aimed primarily to promote workplace learning and in general to enhance practical training. To this end the per capita support of vocational practical training was differentiated by grade and place of training (see 5.3.), and the per capita funding of practical training provided in guidance and pre-vocational education in the general education grades was introduced from school year 2006/2007.

Significant changes have taken place regarding the regulation of the vocational training contribution (VTC, a kind of tax levied on enterprises in the amount of 1.5% of total labour cost) which is the primary source of the development of VET and adult training. The general objective of education policy was to make the use of this source (the amount of which increases in line with the development of the economy) more efficient and decision-making more regulated and decentralized. From among the four possible objectives of use of VTC that enterprises can choose more or less freely, modifications of regulation intended primarily to encourage enterprises to organize practical training, especially training based on a student contract and provided in vocations in short supply (see 5.3.2.), and to secure the necessary resources of central and regional development needs (since 2003 enterprises not providing practical training are obliged to pay at least 20%, since 2007 30% of their VTC into the LMF). The most important changes concerning the use of resources of the LMF training sub-fund aimed:

- to ensure a separate fund to support the development of adult training (2003: establishing an adult training section within the employment sub-fund, but from VTC sources, 2006: merging this section with the training sub-fund but maintaining the separate support objective);
- to strengthen regional decision-making (2003: defining the decentralized section in the law and increasing its proportion, 2007: increasing the decision-making rights of the regional development and training committees, see 6.4.2.);
- to ensure the concentrated use of development funds (2008: narrowing the group of beneficiaries of investment support to maintainers of special and skill developing vocational schools and RIVTCs, VET-organization partnerships, higher education institutions joining such partnerships, and enterprises providing practical training for the students of these institutions); and
- to widen the range of activities eligible for support (2006: practical training provided in special and skill developing vocational schools that do not award a state recognized vocational qualification, 2008: development of curriculum and learning tools, financing the accredited in-service training of teachers/trainers; but from 2007 the range of activities in higher education eligible for support was limited to practical training provided in higher level VET and practice-demanding bachelor level training programmes).

For changes concerning the development subsidy and the training of employees financed from the amount of VTC, see sections 6.3.2.1. and 1.2.2.2.

Further significant changes regarding the funding of VET provided outside the school system - aiming to improve access to training for disadvantaged groups and increase participation in adult training - were the introduction (2003) of the state per capita support of adult training (see 6.3.2.2.) and a personal income tax deduction opportunity available for the participants of training (below a threshold of annual income, in the amount of 30% of the training fee but at most HUF 60,000/EUR 240), then – primarily due to budget restraints – the restriction of the range of beneficiaries to the former, and the abolition of the latter (2006).

6.3.2. Examples of policy measures

6.3.2.1. Change of regulations of development subsidy (2008)

Development subsidy is one form of paying the vocational training contribution (VTC, see 6.3.1.), when the enterprise gives money or equipment to VET institutions for developing the infrastructure of vocational practical training. Currently this support can be used for the development of practical education and training by VET schools, the development of the practical training of VET school students by a central training place, and the development of practical training by higher education institutions, to purchase equipment or (in at most 15%) to cover the immediate operational costs of these equipments. Development subsidy is an important source of VET development, but its availability varies greatly between schools and regions (in order to eliminate extremities of distribution, the amount of subsidy – except for the case of providing equipment – was maximized in 2006 in triple the per capita support of vocational practical training as defined in the budget act per student), and in lack of adequate monitoring and sanctions, the subsidy has not always been used for the goals defined in the law.

The main objective of modifying the regulation as defined by education policy was to encourage institutional transformation which ensures more efficient and concentrated training provision in IVET (primarily at upper and post secondary level), by creating a support system in which (with a few exceptions) only regional integrated vocational training centres (RIVTCs see 6.2.2.) can receive development funds (including also resources of the training sub-fund of the Labour Market Fund, see 6.3.1.).

Amendment of the VTC Act effective from 1 September 2008 narrows the group of beneficiaries, thus in the future development subsidy will serve the development of the infrastructure of practical education and practical training organized in an institution providing school-based VET as part of a RIVTC or in a special or skill developing vocational school, or the development of practical training provided in a higher education institution in a higher level VET or a practice-demanding bachelor level programme. The subsidy will furthermore be given by the enterprise – which from 1 January 2008 can write off the amount of subsidy given to a higher education institution in at most 35% of its VTC and in 70% in all other cases, instead of the former 37.5 and 75% - to the maintainer of the RIVTC or the VET-organization partnership/company (so not directly to the institution), but only if the number of full time VET school students of its member institution(s) is at least 1500.

In addition, the legal amendment widens the range of use of the development subsidy, so that besides the purchase of equipment and operational costs, it can cover the costs of licenses and products (software) required for these equipments, and 5% of the subsidy can be used for developing curriculum and learning materials necessary for the modernization of VET as well as for the accredited in-service training of teachers of vocational theory and practice, trainers

of school workshops and in-company trainers. From 1 September 2008 the amount of development subsidy per student will be maximized only for higher education institutions.

In order to ensure the adequate monitoring of the lawful and appropriate use of the development subsidy, since 1 January 2008 the content of development contract between the enterprise providing the subsidy and the beneficiary has been regulated by the law, and the amendment of the decree on the execution of the VTC act provides for repayment and payment of interest in case of breach of contract or the unlawful use of the subsidy.

The impact of this legal amendment – since it becomes effective only from 1 September 2008 – cannot yet be assessed, however, it can be predicted with high probability that the availability of development resources will be of significant encouragement for VET schools and their maintainers to form RIVTCs. The measure and the use of development funds can, however, become truly efficient only if transparency and adequate monitoring of use can be ensured in practice.

6.3.2.2. Per capita support of adult training (2003)

Groups most disadvantaged in the labour market in Hungary include unqualified people, those living with disabilities, and older people, often having an outdated vocational qualification. The (further) training of these target groups is therefore an important employment tool and is financially supported by the state.

The objective of introducing the per capita support of adult training from 1 January 2003 was to support adults to obtain their first vocational qualification (of the National Qualification Register/NQR) and assist people living with disabilities (and other target groups defined annually) to participate in general, language or VET training programmes, provided in adult training. In 2006 this support became available also to people aged over 50 to obtain their 2nd NQR qualification, but at the same time the trainings remained completely free of charge for participants only under certain conditions (see below). From 1 July 2007 per capita support is available exclusively for the training of disabled people, and by 2008 the support in practice ceased to exist (see below).

Financial support from the central budget can be claimed by adult training institutions which are accredited and, in case they train disabled adults, offer accredited training programmes, from the ministry of labour which accepts claims up to the amount of budget allocation, in an order defined by the law. The total annual amount of per capita support and its amount per hour per participant are defined in the budget act. The introduction of this measure was part of the policy approach aiming to improve the employability of disadvantaged people, or more broadly, to increase labour market activity.

So far there has been no comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the measure (the ministry plans it for summer 2008). As regards numbers, the amount of support increased significantly until 2006, which provided free training opportunities for more and more disadvantaged adults (see table below).

	Annual total amount of per capita funding of adult training (million HUF/EUR)	Number of participants of supported trainings	<i>of which: number of people living with disabilities</i>
2003	475 / 1.9	5823	669
2004	2900 / 11.5	29177	2480
2005	3000 / 11.9	17181	2953
2006	1325.2 / 5.3	3869	3644
2007	100 / 0.4	176	176

Source: Ministry of Employment and Labour

The essential feature of the per capita support of adult training that it can be claimed for anyone in the target group proved, however, to be its fundamental problem: since it cannot be estimated what proportion of the working-age population without a vocational qualification wishes to participate in training annually, this solution served primarily the interests of training providers, and soon necessitated the restriction of the conditions of application so that all claims could be satisfied. In addition to this constraint, modification of regulation introduced in 2006 were initiated by the objective of increasing efficiency that was prescribed also in the 2005 Strategy of VET development: to this end, provision of full support – except for the training of disabled people - was linked to the guaranteed subsequent employment of participants. However, in the case of trainings provided in vocations in short supply in the labour market, the ministry still reimbursed 50% of training costs even if participants' employment was not ensured. Another requirement that participants must successfully pass the examination in at least 6 months after completing the training was also introduced as a general condition of support. Training providers in general considered these strict criteria as impossible to comply with (the number of applications has decreased significantly in 2006), while many believe that the efficiency and quality of trainings could be improved only by a solution in which it is the participating adult, not the training provider, who is supported, e.g. by introducing individual training accounts.

Due to budget restraints, the ministry finally had to restrict the target group fundamentally (to disabled people who are most disadvantaged in the labour market), and following a drastic decrease of the amount of budget allocation in 2006, in 2007 and 2008 its small amount (HUF 100 and 15 million; EUR 0.4 and 0.06 million) provided funding only for trainings commenced in the previous year, thus the per capita support of adult training has in practice been abolished. Meanwhile, support of the training of participants of the public work programme (targeting unemployed people) from the training sub-fund of the Labour Market Fund was introduced in 2007 and a complex programme was launched targeting people living with disabilities. However, it cannot yet be assessed whether these new measures will be able to improve the employability of disadvantaged people in a more efficient way.

6.4. Promoting partnerships in VET policy making

6.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

National and county-level interest reconciliation mechanisms in VET were established in the 1990s but the composition, tasks and entitlements of the relevant bodies were constantly changing as a result of legislative amendments. The changes indicate a trend which led to an increased influence of the economic actors. The most recent notable change in national level interest reconciliation was brought about by the 2006 amendment of the VET act. Following the transfer of VET from the Ministry of Education after the 2006 governmental change, supervision of both VET and adult training have been assigned again to the same ministry, that of Social Affairs and Labour. Consequently, the National Vocational Training Council and the National Adult Training Council, which functioned as consultative bodies for the two competent ministers, were replaced by the National Vocational and Adult Training Council. The new body resembles very much its predecessors with respect to its tasks and composition. A notable change is that the number of employer representatives increased from six to nine, according to their representation in the National Interest Reconciliation Council.

A national-level social partnership was formed in the review and restructuring process of the National Qualifications Register (NQR) (see 3.2.2.) as well. The 2003 amendment of the VET act authorized the minister of education to establish, together with other ministers responsible

for qualifications, committees in each qualification group to ensure the continuous development and modernization of the NQR (see 5.4.2.). Predominantly it was the members of the National Interest Reconciliation Council who delegated experts to the 21 committees. Eventually these committees were operating only until the renewal of the NQR, completed by 2006, then they were dissolved and one 30-strong commission was formed instead whose task was to carry out continuous review and updating of the NQR.

County-level interest reconciliation was institutionalised in the 1990s through the operation of the county VET Committees. These committees were replaced in 2001, in the course of the preparations for EU accession, with the regional development and training committees (RDTCs) in an attempt to give more weight to the regional planning frameworks. The composition and operation of RDTCs have since been modified by several acts (see 6.4.2.), endowing these committees with significantly more influence and importance and increasing the proportion of economic actors in them.

As a last step in the process of establishing the institutional framework of social partnership, since 2006 professional consultative boards (PCB) must be operated beside the newly established regional integrated vocational training centres (see 6.2.2.2.). This way the economy is represented in the whole range of decision-making – sometimes with the right to make recommendations, while other times with the entitlement to participate in decision preparations and decision-making.

The role of social partners in policy-making has been institutionalised permanently and the influence of economic actors, in particular, has been showing a continuously increasing trend. In spite of this, many people were on the opinion up to most recent times that the state has a strong dominance in VET policy-making. One reason behind this is that the sphere of economy was unable to delegate appropriately prepared and committed experts into the committees, thus their operation focused on protecting everyday economic interests instead of substantively influencing strategic decisions. This bears a lasting negative effect on the working of the partnership, but the situation is slowly changing, which is indicated by the fact that economic chambers, having overtaken significant state functions in the past years (see 5.2.2), prepared their own VET strategy in 2005.

6.4.2. Examples of policy measures

6.4.2.1. Establishment of the Regional Development and Training Committees (RDTC)

County-based VET committees were consultative bodies consisting of members delegated by school maintainers and economic actors, operating since the second half of the 1990s. They have also handled the development tenders financed from the decentralised parts of the VET Fund, whose sources derived from the vocational training contribution (a VET tax amounting to 1.5% of total labour costs). In the years prior to joining the EU, an attempt was made to strengthen the institutions of regional planning against county level institutions, thus in 2001 county VET committees were replaced by the RDTCs as their legal successors. From then on quotas of development funds were defined for regions. (Aside Budapest and its agglomeration, every three counties make up all in all a further six regions.)

RDTCs were restructured after the passing of the VTC act. School maintainers and the educational sphere were entitled to delegate 50% of the members into the 28-strong (27-strong, prior to 2003) committees, while another 50% was delegated by actors of the economy whose role thus has increased. With respect to the members delegated by the economy, 45 were nominated by employers, 37 by trade unions and 16 were nominated by the chambers. The most important new task of the committees was to prepare the regional mid-term VET development plans. From 2006 on, the committees were entitled to define the vocations which

they deemed to be in short supply in the labour market; training in these occupations entitled training providers to special allowances and students to additional financial allowance.

Act CII of 2007 once again amended the composition, the tasks and entitlements of the committees. According to the justification of the law, the legislative intention had been to expand the purview of RDTCs, improve their status and strengthen their role in communicating the demands of the economy. The new, 26-strong committees, with the majority of members representing the economy, had to be set up starting from January 2008. Co-presidents are delegated by the HCCI.

The purview of RDTCs has been substantially expanded. The law prescribes that RDTCs should decide about the goals of regional VET development and the support for development financed from the decentralised section of the training sub-fund, they should define the regional demands of VET and determine the vocational programme offers and the proportions of enrolment. RDTCs make proposals as to the distribution of development subsidy among institutions, the volume of development funds, and the classification of vocational qualifications as qualifications in short supply in the labour market. In addition, they take part in regional planning and coordinate the tenders for development resources.

The seven RDTCs have become the main actors. The National Vocational and Adult Training Council has decided to provide a support of HUF 900 million (EUR 3.6 million) for the RDTCs to perform the increased tasks, their primary objective being to gather information about the regional labour market to support decision-making.

These changes suggest a trend in being part of the process of involving economic actors in concrete decisions concerning school-based VET as well, where the expectation is to alleviate the divergence between labour-force supply and demand. The operation of RDTCs so far has not been really perceptible, but if they use their newly acquired entitlements, they may affect the system more. The committees are about to start their operation these very months and they will have to make their first important decisions – on the vocational programme offers and schooling rates in VET – in September 2008. VET policy-making expects a lot from their operation. Actors of the school system, including institutions and maintainers, however, occasionally voice their concerns that RDTC members, not having the appropriate experience about training provision and the education system and being committed to short-term interests at the same time, can also make decisions detrimental to training capacities and quality.

Theme 7. EU tools and geographic mobility within VET

7.1. National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and the promotion of geographical mobility within VET

The objectives of national VET policy concerning EQF, ECVET and Europass point in two directions. On the one hand, the continuous progress and the considerable resources provided for the implementation of these objectives definitely suggest that promoting Community cooperation and mobility is a high priority governmental goal; and in the course of the most important recent national developments it has been a major criterion that it should be possible to easily interlink them with those future common frameworks. On the other hand, however - since these steps offer an opportunity to review the operation and structure of education and training - a conscious effort can be observed that the developments regarding EQF, ECVET and Europass should contribute to the highest possible extent to the enhancement of efficiency and redeeming the deficiencies of the national VET system. Therefore the national preparation and development of EQF, ECVET and Europass have been linked to some significant national development targets: the renewal of VET system and the increase of its transparency and flexibility.

In course of the 2004-2006 renewal of the National Qualifications Register (NQR) and the currently ongoing revision of the related professional and examination requirements, the definition of competence-based learning outcomes facilitated the adaptability of NQR to the future NQF and ECVET, and these revisions will contribute to the comparability of national qualifications and to the recognition of prior learning (see also 3.2.2. and 7.2.).

While it is primarily the representatives of educational administration and experts who face the challenges of the introduction of ECVET and EQF at national level, Europass is met directly by the users. The relatively quick and successful spreading of its use may suggest - among others - that the measures facilitating transparency and comparability met the needs of participants of the labour market.

Projects initiated by the European Union (primarily those implemented within the Leonardo Programme) highlighted the importance of geographical mobility in VET, and the success of these projects served as an example for the development of domestically organized mobility programmes. Although the impact of the development and preparation of common EU tools is not yet perceptible in regard of mobility indicators, their introduction and the spreading of its use will probably increase the number of students who undertake studies or practical training placement abroad not only through centrally organized programmes but also individually.

The most important obstacles of geographical mobility are the lack of appropriate language skills and of sufficient level of financial support (e.g. as a consequence of inequalities between Hungarian and EU wage levels, many of the students could not cover the living costs abroad).

7.2. Promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF

7.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

In the past years, the frames and conditions of a qualification system based on outcome regulation have been developed and implemented in the field of public education, VET and higher education. These improvements were determined by the priorities of learning outcome

approach and competence development. In the case of VET these priorities had been supplemented with the additional objective of improving the content of qualifications in accordance with the needs of the labour-market.

The National Qualifications Register (NQR), which was set up in 1993, had been revised between 2004 and 2006. The new NQR and the linked professional and examination requirements define competence based learning outcomes, which facilitate the future adaptation of NQR vocational qualifications to the appropriate levels of the European Qualification Framework.

In line with this process and also in terms of the competence based approach, the annual nationwide competence assessment has been introduced in public education, and the secondary school leaving examination closing secondary studies has been reformed. From 2006 on, the secondary school leaving examination became a stronger outcome regulator tool than before as it replaced the entrance examination for higher education.

Under the recommendation accepted by the European Council in 2006, member states can decide whether they adapt their qualification systems to the EQF or create national qualification frameworks of their own. Hungarian education policy decided to develop a National Qualification Framework. Working out the NQF is going to take place between 2008 and 2012 by exploiting the sources of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the New Hungary Development Plan (see 7.2.2.).

In October 2005, during the extensive national consultation on the development of EQF, the challenges of this task became clear as well: although the outcome-oriented approach gets more dominant in the field of VET by the renewal of NQR, it seems to be far from the way of current operation of the education and training system.

In every sub-sector of education, the transformation of content regulation and quality assurance yielded significant results during the past years. However, because of the weak professional-political coordination within the education sector, these changes went on separate ways, and the new systems currently being developed are not sufficiently interlinked. (MEC, 2007) The development of the NQF brings to the fore the problems that derive from this; however, it may also accelerate the steps towards the solution.

7.2.2. Examples of policy measures

7.2.2.1. Policy regarding a National Qualification Framework

In relation with the development of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) an extensive professional consultation process started in the autumn of 2005 in Hungary, with the participation of experts and representatives of public education, VET, higher education, interest representing organizations, professional associations, developers, sectoral partners, ministries responsible for vocational qualifications and the partner organizations thereof, and NGOs. The participants supported unanimously the development of EQF, as well as the establishment of a national qualification framework compatible with it.

The Ministry of Education created the concept of introducing a National Qualification Framework (NQF) - based on the recommendations evolved in the course of the consultation series - which is to be discussed by the Government in the spring of 2008.

Stakeholders consider that the elaboration of NQF, besides its primary aims (i.e. making qualifications comprehensively comparable on European level, and enhancing active

participation in international developments regarding education and training) will enhance the harmonization and acceleration of the internal reforms taking place in the different educational sectors.

In the course of its elaboration, highest emphasis and attention was paid to goals and principles which are not yet realized but are urgent and very significant in respect of lifelong learning, and the realization of which is closely connected with the elaboration of NQF: transparency, transferability, approval of non-formal and informal learning, competitiveness, social and geographical mobility. The framework may also enhance the harmonization of the outcome regulators of the different educational levels, the labour market relevance of education as well as the harmonization of the quality assurance systems of education and training, and may support the operation of career orientation and counselling systems.

The development of NQF will take place with the contribution of the ministries of the relevant fields, professional organizations and social partners under the primary direction of the minister of education. The scheduling, harmonizing, professional-financial supervision of the specific tasks will be carried out by an interministerial committee involving the representatives of the National Council for Public Education, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, the Higher Education and Research Council, employers' and employees' associations represented in the National Interest Reconciliation Council and the national economic chambers. The outcome regulators of the various educational sub-sectors will be approved and evaluated by a single expert committee, the National Council for Qualifications. It will be the responsibility of the minister responsible for the given sub-sector to ensure compliance with the outcome requirements of qualifications in the course of examinations and training.

The recommendations concerning the level and descriptor system of NQF will be developed in the first phase of the developments (from 2008 to 2010). By the end of this period the ministries responsible for the management of the various educational sectors (public education, VET, higher education, adult training) will define the tasks which need to be implemented in a harmonized way in order to enable the integration of these sectors into the NQF. The relevant ministries have to create the policy, legislative, budgetary and institutional conditions of the comprehensive introduction of NQF and of the accession to EQF in their fields from 2010 to 2012. According to the proposal, the introduction of NQF and the official accession to the EQF will be possible from 2013. The costs of the direct and indirect tasks related to the development of NQF (HUF 800 million) will be covered by the resources of the Social Renewal Operative Programme.

Although the elaboration of the concept was preceded by a long professional discussion process, it is ultimately a government initiative, therefore its wider support requires that all stakeholders understand the importance of the process. During the experts' consultations it also became evident that the development of an NQF involving all levels and forms of education is an investment that will yield profit in the long term: it is possible, that it will require an even longer period of harmonized development than planned, and its subsequent implementation may also take place only gradually.

7.3. Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET

7.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

In recent years, the most important steps facilitating the accumulation and transfer of vocational qualifications and the introduction of ECVET have been the introduction of the new National Qualifications Register (NQR) and the national level consultation preparing the introduction of ECVET. Indirectly however, the measures taken towards the further development of higher level vocational education and training (HLVET) can also be listed here.

By the introduction of 'partial' vocational qualifications, 'branches' and 'built-on' vocational qualifications, and competence-based professional and examination requirements, the new NQR facilitates the switch between vocational learning pathways and the recognition of certain prior knowledge and skills. In addition, theoretically, it will be possible to match easily its requirement modules to the units serving as the base for the system of ECVET. (See further details in 3.2.2.)

In recent years, the government expressed its intent to extend the role and accelerate the pace of expansion of HLVET, a training form awarding ISCED 5B level NQR-listed non-degree qualifications, by the implementation of several supporting measures (see 7.3.2.). The original objective of HLVET introduced in the 1998/1999 school year was to provide short-term (2-2.5 years) modular training programmes capable of quickly adapting to changing labour market needs, which prepare participants for high-level professional work as well as ensure the recognition of studies (credits) to facilitate entry to higher education from VET. The unique possibility for the cooperation of higher education institutions and secondary vocational schools is ensured by the fact that although HLVET programmes are organized by higher education institutions, they may be provided also by secondary vocational schools based on an agreement between the institutions.

The 2005 governmental resolution on the implementation of the Strategy of VET development defined two more goals enhancing the implementation of ECVET: creating the conditions of recognizing prior (formally, informally or non-formally obtained) knowledge (scheduled to 2010, see 3.4.1.), and the establishment of an examination system which is independent from the trainers (scheduled to 2013). There are some governmental decrees which target to enhance the independence of the current examination system, e.g. the decrees annulling the right of examination organizers to make recommendation regarding the person of the president of examination, but vocational examinations should be completely independent from the trainers/teachers to operate as really effective outcome regulators.

The ECVET working group of the European Commission was set up in 2003 – Hungary represented itself in it from the beginning – and prepared a working document for 2006. On February 22 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour organized a national consultation on this subject for a wide range of participants (representatives of state authorities, national and regional bodies, councils, committees, chambers, interest representatives, professional organizations and training institutions).

During the course of discussions, numerous proposals had been subjected concerning the preparation of the implementation of the system. Among others, the study of the development and dissemination of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) has been proposed. According to the latest (2005) operation survey of ECTS (introduced in 2002 in Hungary) – evaluating nationwide, representative data – the credit system in higher education has not been able to significantly improve student mobility, neither internationally, nor in the relation of domestic faculties or institutions. 91% of the students did not intend to conduct domestic inter-institutional (cross-registration) studies, and 75% did not plan to continue his/her studies abroad. As one of the main reasons, students specified the lack of appropriate information. Besides, according to the reports of students participating in Erasmus scholarships, it seems that the recognition of studies conducted abroad is lagging behind. Among others, the

underlying reasons are the low level of trust and cooperation between trainers/teachers. Advancing on this field may be crucial to attain transparency and transferability of learning pathways and recognition of studies, which are primary conditions to implement and to reach the set goals of ECVET.

During the consultations, testing and development of the system was proposed in the form of network cooperation with other countries. The participants univocally expressed their intent for cooperation during the process of implementation of the credit system, which is estimated to take 6-8 years.

7.3.2. Examples of policy measures

7.3.2.1. Promotion of higher level vocational education and training (HLVET) (2005)

Since its introduction in 1998, HLVET awarding an ISCED 5B level NQR qualification (see also 7.3.1.) had developed dynamically in terms of the number of qualifications, training providers and participants. However, although the number of participants has increased from 1246 in 1999 to 23614 by 2005 (of which the number of participants studying in higher education institutions [HEIs] was 810 and 9122), their proportion in HE remained low (that of participants studying in a HEI was 2% in 2005), and this training form was still not widely known among potential participants and employers. The development and expansion of this training pathway was hindered by legal ambiguities and anomalies: the different legal background (duality in the legal status of students, financing, entry requirements, organization of the school year, statistical system, etc.) and quality problems (differences in quality regarding human and material resources conditions, teacher competences and methodology, the vocational examination, etc.) due to the two different places of training. The original goal was only partially achieved: in practice, emphasis was in many cases on studies recognizable in higher level education, not on skills development (the proportion of external practice was regulated in minimum 50% only until 2001). According to experience, the vast majority of HLVET participants considered this training rather as some kind of preparation for the HE entry examination and continued studies in HE as soon as they could.

Education policy promoted the development of HLVET and the increase of the proportion of its participants within HE by raising the quota on the number of participants supported financially by the state (see table below), by modifying its regulations defined in the new higher education act accepted in 2005 and the decree on its execution and in the decree on the new NQR published in 2006, and by developing the new structure and content of modular and competence-developing, practice-oriented HLVET qualifications.

Quota on the number of students supported financially by the state for HLVET in HE 2002-2008	
Year	Quota
2002	4500
2003	5500
2004	8000
2005	11000
2006	12500
2007	12500
2008	12500

The most important modifications of regulation were the consistent differentiation of the legal status of participants studying in a secondary vocational school or a HEI, simplification and

shortening of the time of entering a HLVET qualification into the NQR, including the abolition of accreditation by the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee, and the introduction of student contracts in order to promote workplace learning. The new structure of HLVET qualifications and their modernized professional and examination requirements were developed in the 2004-2006 NQR development programme (see 3.2.2.) in cooperation with representatives of the economy, though their introduction into training provision may start only from school year 2008/2009 at the earliest.

The number of HLVET participants and training providers continued to increase in the past years (in 2007/2008 28 409 students participated in such trainings, 12 398 in a HEI), though the quotas defined for it in HE cannot be filled up for years. HLVET has also become better known, and according to informal information in some vocations more and more participants indeed choose this training form with the intention of entering the labour market rather than of continuing studies.

The most important questions to be resolved in relation with the future of HLVET are the relationship of, transferability between, and the labour market relevance of post secondary VET, HLVET and BA/BSc trainings. In order to strengthen the flexibility of training it is crucial to improve credit-based transferability, since although pursuant to the higher education act at least 30, at most 60 credit points gained in HLVET must be recognized in a bachelor programme of the same field, and 30-60 credit points gained in VET of the same content could also be recognized in HLVET, in practice the operation of the system of recognition is rather troublesome and is not uniform. To increase the number of students participating in HLVET it is also very important to publicize and further develop this training form, thus, for example, to make practical training universal, or to ensure the further training of instructors.

7.4. Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET

7.4.1. Policy progress since 2005 to introduce and promote Europass

The Hungarian homepage of Europass (<http://www.europass.hu>) became operational in May 2005 making it possible to download the documents (Europass curriculum vitae (ECV), Language Passport, Diploma and certificate supplement and Mobility) and the related information. There has been a continuous growth in the number of issued Europass documents since 2005.

Number of issued Europass Diploma Supplements, Certificate Supplements, Mobilities and visits at <http://www.europass.hu>

YEAR	Diploma supplement (head)	Certificate supplement (pcs)	Mobility (pcs)	http://www.europass.hu (number of visits)
2005	104	61	670	33291
2006	15924	2529	1110	100722
2007	31165	15849	818	167255

Although the goals of Europass include the enhancement of international mobility, its introduction did not trigger significant changes in this field, and also the number of online documents (CV and Language Passport) filled out in native language is quite high compared to other countries. The continuous expansion and development of Europass assists the national comparability of qualifications and competences, which should undoubtedly have positive effects on national mobility, and ensure the frames for international mobility.

In order to ensure that the system does not merely operate as a framework but is an initiative which is easy to use in practice and finds its place on the labour market, it would be necessary to further develop the documents and some of the softwares both at national and European level (e.g. to improve operation, make it more user-friendly and suitable for statistical data collection). One of the main factors explaining why the Diploma Supplement has not yet come into general use is that universities do not get reimbursement of related costs and therefore they are not interested in issuing it.

The development of Europass, ECVET and NQF are currently managed by different institutions. The first step to harmonize these systems would be to improve communication and cooperation between them which would create a common base for the implementation of developments.

7.4.2. Examples of policy measures and practice

7.4.2.1. Introduction of Europass

The Hungarian National Europass Centre (NEC) was established by the Ministry of Education (ME) in 2004. The ministry has assigned its tasks (creating the central information system of Europass portfolio, designing and operating its Hungarian website, providing information services and international cooperation, coordinating the work of professional organizations issuing the documents) to one of its ministerial institutions, the Educatio Public Service Company.

The introduction and nationwide spreading of the use of Europass were driven by the need of comparability and transparency of qualifications and competences, and the intent to enhance international mobility.

Since then, the legal regulations, software and databases facilitating the nationally uniform application of the documents, as well as the informational flyers and homepages (<http://www.europass.hu>, <http://www.nive.hu/nrk>, <http://www.okm.gov.hu/ds>) have been created. Compared to the average pace of advancement in EU member states, several aspects of the introduction of the Hungarian Europass system can be considered outstandingly successful. The first ECV-compatible recruitment database has been introduced in Hungary. To create the database NEC cooperated with private companies which consequently adapted their databases to ECV, thus making it easier to register for job-seekers with this type of CV. The Europass Mobility, the Certificate Supplement and the Diploma Supplement have been available nationwide since 2007. The software used to issue the latter enables universities to award uniform documents, which can still be individual according to the different training programmes. The software used to fill out and to issue Europass Mobility can be accessed online for both the home and host organizations.

The Tempus Public Foundation (Europass Mobility), the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (Certificate Supplement) and the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Diploma Supplement) assist the work of NEC, in close cooperation with the Hungarian labour market and career guidance organizations as well as institutions providing information about the European Union.

The effectiveness of the work of NEC is made evident, among others, by data provided by the Europass homepage operated by Cedefop and their statistics. While Hungary is only the 13th largest state by population in Europe, it took 4th-5th place regarding the number of Europass users and 7th-8th by the number of homepage visitors in 2007. Among the countries of similar population, only Portugal is ranked higher, however, the reason for that is that they use

Europass outside Europe as well. There has been a continuous growth in the number of issued Europass documents and the number of visitors since 2005.

**Number and proportion of Europass users by country
(best performing 20 countries)**

Country	total number	proportion of visits
Italy	744 783	20.10%
Netherlands	529 785	14.30%
Portugal	468 514	12.64%
Germany	283 659	7.66%
Spain	261 829	7.07%
United Kingdom	165 429	4.46%
Poland	136 772	3.69%
Hungary	126 651	3.42%
Austria	124 934	3.37%
France	121 039	3.27%
Finland	106 937	2.89%
Romania	100 691	2.72%
Greece	86 595	2.34%
Lithuania	84 495	2.28%
Belgium	74 316	2.01%
Norway	64 621	1.74%
Sweden	60 101	1.62%
Bulgaria	55 999	1.51%
Czech Republic	55 071	1.49%
Turkey	53 226	1.44%

In order to expand the system, the creation of a database is planned in which citizens could store their documents electronically and could grant access to them e.g. for their potential employers. This – besides enhancing the practical usability of documents – could serve as a valuable source for statistical data collection as well. The development of the database and the issuing of electronic data need considerable amount of work and financial resources beyond the amendment of several legal regulations. Therefore one of the crucial factors of the feasibility of this plan is the amount of available financial support.

7.5. Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET

7.5.1. Policy progress since 2002

Hungary joined the programmes which preceded the Lifelong Learning Programme in 1997. Tenders in these programmes have been managed by the same National Agency, the Tempus Public Foundation, since 1999. Enduring satisfaction with the operation of the agency expressed by all parties concerned (applicants, training and other institutions involved in VET, experts of maintenance and management) and the high level of professional work it carries out have made the Ministry of Education consistently rely on the National Agency in implementing its policies in the fields of EU co-operation and mobility.

Within 2-3 years after its establishment, quality criteria for mobility have already come into the focus. One sign of this is the launching of the Hungarian competition for a Mobility Award in 2002, adapting the Austrian initiative, and its organisation every year since then. The high quality of the Hungarian Leonardo mobility programmes is underlined by several facts: the opinion expressed by the beneficiaries of the programme; the recurring statements in the evaluations and effectiveness studies, which have been carried out four times so far; and the experience gained during the competitions for the European Quality in Mobility Award in 2004 and 2005. The nominated Hungarian projects were all among the best ones; one fifth of the nominations and one third of the quality awards were granted to Hungarian institutions. The European Quality Charter for Mobility is well-known among nominees and its 10 points serve as guidelines for the information and the review-evaluation processes.

Another indicator of the high level of the Leonardo mobility tenders is that in 2005 as much as 72.6% of applications were qualified as excellent or good and thus received funding, while in 2006 their proportion was 71.6%. The 1% drop against the 50% increase in the number of applications suggests significant quantitative reserves in quality mobility and it could effectively utilise larger resources as well.

VET policy-makers have always talked in positive terms of international mobility and they have made available additional resources for it several times (see 7.5.2.). Although their actions were not framed by a concept in this field and support was given on an accidental basis rather than systematically, yet at least there was support from time to time. VET policy-makers revealed a commitment to promoting mobility also in their decisions to incorporate an international mobility component into all the major development programmes - already before 2002, as well as into the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP) launched in 2003. This mainly concerned teachers, instructors and managers but complementary resources were made available for student mobility as well.

The conditions for introducing the Europass in Hungary were created particularly quickly (see 7.4.2.), which may positively influence both the attractiveness and the quality of mobility.

Public awareness and recognition of the Leonardo mobility programmes led to the announcement of calls for applications for domestic mobility programmes within VSDP in 2007 and in 2008 as well. The calls, as well as the applications, were shaped mostly after those in the Leonardo programme. Although the resources available have been limited (HUF 50 million/EUR 200 000 in 2007, and even less in 2008), and so has the scope of potential participants, the programme introduced a learning form which – as attested to by the positive reception of the programmes in the first year and the conclusions of the evaluation – raises high hopes. Its institutionalisation would favourably affect the sector's overall knowledge.

Nevertheless, the positive assessment of international mobility in VET has not yet resulted in the drawing up of concept-based, additional continuous, institutionalized support for this type of learning. This is evidenced by the unfortunate fact that neither the chapters on education and VET nor the action plan of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the 2007-2013 planning period include this type of learning among the priorities or the activities which may receive support in the first two years.

7.5.2. Examples of policy measures

7.5.2.1. Domestic resources for mobility in VET

Study visits and internships abroad in the framework of the Leonardo programme may be the most well-known VET mobility programmes in Hungary; however, they may not be the largest ones with respect to their volume. A study prepared in 2003 during the evaluation of the Leonardo programme suggests that student and teacher mobility projects containing vocational elements, which had existed in great number even before the launch of the Leonardo programme in Hungary in 1997, greatly exceed the Leonardo Programme in their volume. These study programmes may be shorter and less elaborated in terms of their professional content, however, the number of participants is very high. These are often financed through joint funding but most often local resources – including family budgets, to a large extent – are used to cover expenses.

The Leonardo programmes have gained great reputation and recognition within a short time, they are among the best managed funding programmes and tenders. Although the success and positive impact of its programmes are hard to quantify, there is a widespread opinion that, within the scope of investment into education and (further) training, investment in international mobility represents a very efficient and rewarding type which allows gaining a kind of knowledge and experience which is important and is hardly accessible in any other way. It is understandable, therefore, that the need arose to expand the scope of participants in international mobility through providing additional resources in the face of the limited – or so perceived – resources available domestically.

In 2003, following the initiative of the National Tempus Agency, the National Vocational Training Council (NVTC), the multilateral interest reconciliation body of that time, provided HUF 62.5 million (EUR 0.25 million) from the Labour Market Fund (LMF) for supporting student mobility for schools participating in the Vocational School Development Programme (VSDP). They announced a “Leonardo-type” call for applications in terms of its logic and algorithm, which was, at the same time, adjusted to the vocational school segment under-represented in the Leonardo. Out of the 89 schools participating in the VSDP, 18 applied and eventually 10 institutions were given the opportunity to carry out 11 projects with the involvement of 163 beneficiaries. External evaluators assessed the programme as positive, which contributed to the broadening of the recruiting base of the continuously expanding Leonardo Programme.

In 2005 it was again the NVTC which provided the resource from the LMF for school mobility programmes in the amount of HUF 160 million (EUR 0.65 million). This additional resource, which also aimed to alleviate the disadvantages of the vocational school segment, under-represented in the customary call, enabled the travel of 308 students and 57 teachers.

Additional resources for supporting the mobility of students in vocational schools are granted by individual initiatives and on individual basis and do not form part of a coherent and pre-defined policy. Obstacles standing in the way of the systematization of decisions and an institutional increase of resources lie in that VET policy-makers do not seem to perceive the importance of these investments, even though they declare the opposite, or they are not fully convinced that they would pay back. In any case, other goals and activities (central content development, content digitalization, investment in tangible goods, traditional further training) seem to stand higher on the list of priorities.

Theme 8. Development of VET statistics

8.1. Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002

Statistical sources available in Hungary to support the analysis of VET

Data on VET provided within the school system – collected on the basis of the National Statistical Data Collection Program – are contained in the public education statistical database (KIR-STAT) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). A significant part of data is also publicly available through the annually published Statistical Yearbook of Education (published in paper as well as online at <http://www.okm.gov.hu>) and the Public Education Statistical Publication (published online at <http://www.okm.gov.hu>). The methodology of data collection enables comparison with and data submission for international surveys (UOE, OECD, ESTAT, UNICEF). The collection of data covers VET provided in secondary level VET institutions, including higher education VET programmes provided by them. The collected data contain, among others, the aggregated student and teacher numbers per grade, number of classes, number of teachers/trainers, as well as information on school facilities and equipment, participation of teachers in in-service trainings, and the number and proportion of students passing the vocational and the secondary school leaving examinations. Data on higher level VET provided in higher education institutions are contained in the higher education database (FIR-STAT) of MEC. The Higher Education Statistical Publication (published online at <http://www.okm.gov.hu>) provides aggregate data on students by year, training programme, field of study, level, institution, etc. The Statistical Yearbook of Education as well includes data on higher level VET provided in higher education.

Data on VET are currently available in distinct, independent databases maintained by different institutions. The National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (NIVE) collects data, among others, on vocational examinations (<https://osap.nszi.hu/vnybeta/statisztika/index.php?ok=1>), accredited adult training programmes and training providers, institutions providing school-based VET, as well as on students graduated from VET either within or outside the school system. Data collection within the framework of the National Statistical Data Collection Program, started in 1995 and currently carried out by NIVE is regulated by the 300/2007. (XI. 9.) governmental decree pursuant to which adult training providers are subject to obligatory data submission following the end of each course). The interactive database of these data is accessible at https://osap.nszi.hu/osap_index.php?oldal2=statisztika.

The online system supporting the VET tasks of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) (<http://www.isziir.hu/index.php?modul=statikus&func=nyilvanos>) contains data of students, teachers, schools, practical training locations and experts related to student contracts, examinations and accreditation.

Data of adult training providers – which are obliged by the law to register at the regional labour centre - is collected by the Public Employment Service (PES). On its homepage it publishes annually short-term labour market forecasts (http://www.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=showcontent&content=sajto_merop_prognozis_2008) and the lists of trades in which there is oversupply or shortage of skilled workers (http://www.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=full_afsz_sat_prognozis_rov_baromm).

The regular workforce survey of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) provides data every three months for Eurostat on the participation of the 15-74 aged population in trainings, on training forms (full-time or adult), types (formal, non-formal), levels and fields of VET by ISCED classification. This survey is important, among others, from the aspect of

surveying participation in any (formal, non-formal or informal) kind of training. Several ad hoc modules have also been implemented in the framework of the labour force survey, such as the surveys examining indicators of transition to the world of work in 2000, participation in lifelong learning in 2003, and the Adult Education Survey (AES) in 2006. The Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), the internationally harmonized survey of Eurostat, conducted in Hungary by HCSO every five years, examines indicators of adult training at economic organizations.

Progress made since 2002 on the development of national VET statistics. Gaps and plans to fill them

Although data handled by MEC form a relatively integrated system, and they provide the data required for national and international data submission, due to their complexity they are difficult to use and only a relatively small part of them is processed. The establishment of administrative registering systems (registers of students and teachers/trainers) has begun and these registers are expected to enable the examination of some important indicators. This will make it possible to analyse, for example, the progression of individual students, their leaving the education system, completion of compulsory schooling, drop-out rates and individual data of teachers/trainers. The measurement of data on early school leavers is among the goals of MEC, but its realization is hindered also by the fact that there is no nationally uniform definition for the concept of “dropping-out”. The harmonization of the existing elements of the systems of assessment, examination and institutional evaluation with each other and with the statistical databases - which would enable the feedback and registering of indicator-based quality assessment information – is still an outstanding task.

Improvement of the information system of VET is one of the most highlighted objectives of the 2005 Strategy of VET development 2005-2013. There has been some advancement concerning some related tasks (e.g. development of the VET statistical system and the labour market information system, and the improvement of adult training registering system), but other plans are still not completed, or they are in progress (e.g. the creation of a complex information system of VET, introduction of a career monitoring system and an identification system in adult training). In 2005, four strategic committees were established in NIVE, one of which made proposals specifically for the development of VET information system. This committee was dismissed in 2007, and part of the ongoing work was undertaken by a smaller team of experts, considered as a more efficient body.

The legal background of the career monitoring system has been created by the 2007 amendment of the Public education act, and the development of the government decree regulating in detail the operation of the system is in process (see also 8.2.1.).

In the frames of the 3.5.1. central measure of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRDOP), with the interlinking of several databases, an extensive database on adult training has been established. The “Integrated System of Adult Training” is currently under testing, and is to be made publicly accessible from August 2008. The database will contain the training information system of regional training centres and the digital library of curricula developed in the course of the aforementioned measure, along with the name of the training providers and their activities as specified at registration. Although the latest legal amendments specify serious sanctions, a great number adult training providers still do not register themselves or do not comply with the data submission obligations, thus further hampering the transparency of the adult training system.

A key indicator system containing the most important VET indicators (e.g. data on drop-outs, national and international competence assessments, financing and the employment of graduates) has been introduced and added to the criteria system of the Vocational School Self-

Assessment Model (VSSAM, see 4.2.2.). The Model has been introduced to 160 vocational institutions participating in the Vocational School Development Programme launched in 2003. This anonymous, Internet-based benchmarking database provides information for educational policy-makers and enables the institutions to measure and compare their efficiency when planning their developments.

With the participation of the ministry of labour, representatives of data collecting organizations, Hungarian representatives of OECD workgroups, researchers and experts, the ministry of education established an indicator workgroup as a consultative body for attaining a consensus on the core indicators of public education institutions, which develops relevant indicators among core indicators.

In the past 5 years, in line with the conception of lifelong learning, the HCSO carried out numerous developments in the field of data collection. For instance, the range of statistical observations has expanded, the surveys mentioned above have been introduced besides the annual institutional data collections that concentrate primarily on formal education. The Office plans to complement the series of indicators of these surveys with complex indicators summarizing information on educational spending of households and other kinds of educational investment. One of the most important guideline of the developments is to harmonize the accessibility of databases and personal data protection.

8.2. Examples of policies/measures/projects for improving national VET statistics

8.2.1. Steps towards introducing a career monitoring system in IVET

The governmental resolution on the implementation of the 2005 Strategy of VET development schedules the introduction of a career monitoring system in vocational and adult training by December 2008.

The aims of this measure are directed at the quality improvement of vocational and adult training as a whole, thus directly affecting all levels and most participants of VET. On the level of sectoral administration this can contribute to the determination of the development course of VET and employment policy, and the identification, elimination and prevention of the causes of some general problems (e.g. high rate of drop-outs). At regional level, the measure intends to facilitate the harmonization of VET with the labour market needs, and to promote the rationalization of its financing by making overlapping of training provision at multiple locations obvious. For schools and their maintainers the feedback on and evaluation of the methods, specializations and labour market value of their training provision would define the directions of institutional quality improvement. As a tool for facilitating the conscious choice of school and planning of learning pathways, it can play an important role in the career guidance of students.

The system will be operated by the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education. The amendment of the Public education act entered in force in September 2007 defines obligations in regard to the career monitoring system for the following participants:

- From the 2007/2008 school year on, VET institutions shall send certain data of students passing the vocational examination to the institution responsible for the operation of the career monitoring system, and shall (anonymously) publish the data regarding the labour market status of graduated students.
- From the 2008/2009 school year on, students are obliged to provide for the career monitoring system data for three years after passing the vocational examination

(according to the proposal, data should reflect their labour market status and their level of satisfaction with the received training).

- In case the student finds employment in this three-year period (from the 2008/2009 school year on) his/her employer is as well obliged to provide data.

The elaboration of the governmental decree regulating the operation of the system in detail is currently under progress in cooperation of the competent ministries.

Between 2007 and 2009, the Social Renewal Operational Programme provides EUR 4 million to support the establishment of the system – simultaneously with the introduction of the system monitoring the study progress of secondary school students. According to the plans, full-scale data collection shall take place only regarding objective data (completed modules and obtained qualification, name and region of training provider, position held, working hours and salary, etc.) which will be complemented by representative surveys on satisfaction and experiences.

The challenges of its implementation include:

- interlinking and further developing the employment and VET databases,
- making possible the registration of obtained vocational qualifications and completed modules,
- identifying ex-students in every life situation, and
- making available relevant data for all while ensuring the protection of personal data.

A principal condition of its efficiency is to find those tools which would make students and employers interested in filling in the questionnaires (e. g. ensuring access to certain data on the Internet surface of the system, but new decrees on implementation most certainly will need to be introduced as well). On the other hand, results, for many reasons, should only be considered as orientating, approximate data. Due to change in availability data, there will be no chance to reach each and every graduated student; and a certain part of the submitted data will not reflect the real situation – e. g. in case of undeclared employment. The competition between vocational training schools will increase; their cooperation may be hampered by the publication of the information obtained.

Some two thirds of those participating in VET study in CVET programmes. The basic condition of monitoring their subsequent career is to extend the student identification system already operating in IVET to CVET as well.

Theme 9. VET beyond 2010

9.1. VET issues that should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010. Ways they could be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets

The decisive processes of the current VET policy are expected to continue after 2010 both on European and national level. Some of these will come to an end once they have fully evolved and following the approximation of the objectives, while others, in turn, will accelerate after 2010. At the same time, we are anticipating substantively new processes as well, stemming from the existing ones.

The results which have been achieved so far, the advanced state of CQAF's elaboration and its adaptation in Hungary, will render the issue of quality assurance less emphatic than it is now. Quality assurance will appear among the general requirements, such as the appropriate qualifications of vocational trainers and teachers or the regulation of qualifying examinations. At the same time, it is expected that more importance will be attached to quality, of which quality assurance is a tool but an insufficient one applied only in itself. Quality gaining more importance is partly due to the fact that it can be linked directly to the competitiveness of the European Economic Area, the aging of employable population and the general demand for social cohesion.

We expect that two factors will become particularly important in relation to quality. One is the teachers' and trainers' quality as a significant determinant of the quality of VET, which – beyond providing further training for them – requires the strengthening of their social status in many countries, including Hungary. This is – and it will remain to be – closely related also to the general perception, attractiveness of VET, and to the goals of the concept “parity of esteem”. Another key factor is the increasing of the “overall knowledge” and professional culture of all actors concerned – professionals in administration, heads of institutions, R+D, social partners, teachers and trainers – and a renewal in their approach. Here we include the necessity to modernise VET administration and management and increase its level, as well as the attempt to think more in the lifelong learning context.

The modernisation of the overall knowledge will be carried out by existing, albeit neglected, tools. We believe that enhancing the activities focusing on cooperation, networking, and particularly on mobility, carried out in the framework of the Lifelong learning Programme (LLP), can help increase the “overall knowledge”, while the method of “peer learning” used sporadically so far, or regional-level international cooperation, also open up many opportunities in this direction. VET policy-makers on a national level – but on EU level as well, we believe – failed to meet the requirements of an “evidence-based policy”. Setting local, national and EU level priorities and tasks requires more intense monitoring and evaluation of the allocation of resources and activities, together with a feedback based on publicly available results. From now on special attention should be paid to the impact analysis of actions, which in the past was carried out in exceptional cases only.

Another goal will also serve as an important instrument of increasing the overall knowledge, which will continue to be a priority even after 2010: increasing transparency. This has been an EU level policy priority for more than a decade and it needs to remain one, as – besides its direct objective – it stimulates “peer learning” and the effort to overcome shortcomings in particular domains. EQF and NQFs will be vital instruments of fostering transparency; their implementation is likely to result in a higher level of transparency by the mid 2010s and they have the capacity to pave the way for elaborating and implementing ECVET. These

developments can also support the spread of the competence-based principle and modularisation, as well as their increasingly unified interpretation, which is a precondition to the dominance of individualized learning pathways.

The requirement of transparency will also extend to a new area, which is the recognition and validation of prior formal, non-formal or informal learning (RNFIL). This process may be stimulating not only for increasing the mobility of the workforce, but also for the efforts of those member countries, including Hungary, which lag behind in introducing the innovation of RNFIL. The developments fostering transparency will obviously expand to the unified information databases but we would consider it a grave mistake to content ourselves with that instead of trying to provide motivation for the micro-processes enfolding within national contexts as well.

The advancement of RNFIL and EQF will also promote the context of individualized learning pathways, as well as the individualization of learning pathways in the ongoing processes. A further precondition to this is the abovementioned approach that handles the processes of VET as well as career guidance and counselling in the context of lifelong learning (cf. lifelong guidance). Change is necessary in the regulatory and financial background as well, for example by creating the conditions of completing some part of the studies abroad, which is more exceptional in the LLP Leonardo Programme than typical. With respect to financing, individualized learning pathways should shift towards co-financing, in which an enterprise or the individuals participating in the training can also take part, along with several member states/municipalities and potential EU funds.

The role of social partners remains to be indispensable in shaping VET policy. However, it would be necessary to loosen the formal and bureaucratic way that currently characterises their participation in it. Increasing the role of the economy in training provision is still important but it would be even more important to make sure that it happens in a regulatory and financing environment which prompts educational institutions and enterprises providing practical training cooperate all along the pedagogical-educational process.

Broadening the scope of cooperating institutions and actors will also be addressed if, beside the inclusion of actors of VET and the economy, inclusion of the wider societal environment (social institutions, non-governmental organisations, and institutions on the preceding educational level) is becoming higher priority. This is related to the shift in emphasis in the content, which suggests that VET – viewing it in the context of LLL – is increasingly about the development of social, learning and other key competences besides transferring vocational content and skill development.

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10.3. List of Acronyms

AES	Adult Education Survey	<i>felnőttoktatási felmérés</i>	AES
ARDOP	Agriculture and Rural Development Operational Programme	<i>Agrár- és Vidékfejlesztés Operatív Program</i>	AVOP
CSO	Central Statistical Office	Központi Statisztikai Hivatal	KSH
CVET	continuing vocational education and training	<i>szakmai továbbképzés</i>	SZT
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey	<i>szakmai továbbképzési felmérés</i>	CVTS
ECV	Europass Curriculum Vitae	<i>Europass önéletrajz</i>	ECV
EU	European Union	<i>Európai Unió</i>	EU
HCCI	Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	<i>Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara</i>	MKIK
HRDOP	Human Resource Development Operational Programme	<i>Humán erőforrás-fejlesztési Operatív Program</i>	HEFOP
IQMP	Institution-level Quality Management Programme	<i>intézményi minőségirányítási program</i>	IMIP
IVET	initial vocational education and training	<i>szakmai alapképzés</i>	SZA
LMF	Labour Market Fund	<i>Munkaerő-piaci Alap</i>	MPA
ME	Ministry of Education	<i>Oktatási Minisztérium</i>	OM
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture	<i>Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium</i>	OKM
MEL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	<i>Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium</i>	SZMM
MET	Ministry of Economy and Transport	<i>Gazdasági és Közlekedési Minisztérium</i>	GKM
NDP	National Development Plan	<i>Nemzeti Fejlesztési Terv</i>	NFT
NEC	National Europass Centre	<i>Nemzeti Europass Központ</i>	NEK
NHDP	New Hungary Development Plan	<i>Új Magyarország Fejlesztési Terv</i>	ÚMFT
NIRC	National Interest Reconciliation Council	<i>Országos Érdekegyeztető Tanács</i>	OÉT
NIVE	National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education	<i>Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Intézet</i>	NSZFI
NIVE	National Institute of Vocational Education	<i>Nemzeti Szakképzési Intézet</i>	NSZI

NQF	National Qualifications Framework	<i>Országos Képzési Keretrendszer</i>	<i>OKKR</i>
NQR	National Qualifications Register	<i>Országos Képzési Jegyzék</i>	<i>OKJ</i>
NVATC	National Vocational and Adult Training Council	<i>Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Tanács</i>	<i>NSZFT</i>
NVTC	National Vocational Training Council	<i>Országos Szakképzési Tanács</i>	<i>OSZT</i>
PCB	professional consultative board	<i>szakmai tanácsadó testület</i>	<i>SZTT</i>
PEF	Public Employment Foundation	<i>Országos Foglalkoztatási Közalapítvány</i>	<i>OFA</i>
PES	Public Employment Service	<i>Állami Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat</i>	<i>ÁFSZ</i>
RDOP	Regional Development Operational Programme	<i>Regionális Fejlesztés Operatív Program</i>	<i>ROP</i>
RDTC	regional development and training committee	<i>regionális fejlesztési és képzési bizottság</i>	<i>RFKB</i>
RIVTC	regional integrated vocational training centre	<i>térségi integrált szakképző központ</i>	<i>TISZK</i>
SF	Structural Funds	<i>Strukturális Alapok</i>	<i>SA</i>
SOSA	”Step One Step Ahead” programme	<i>„Lépj egyet előre” program</i>	<i>LEE</i>
SROP	Social Renewal Operational Programme	<i>Társadalmi Megújulás Operatív Program</i>	<i>TÁMOP</i>
VET	vocational education and training	<i>szakképzés</i>	
VET-QAF	VET Quality Assurance Framework	<i>Szakképzési Minőségbiztosítási Keretrendszer</i>	<i>SZMBK</i>
VSDP	Vocational School Development Programme	<i>Szakiskolai Fejlesztési Program</i>	<i>SZFP</i>
VSSAM	Vocational School Self-Assessment Model	<i>Szakiskolai Önértékelési Modell</i>	<i>SZÖM</i>
VTC	vocational training contribution	<i>szakképzési hozzájárulás</i>	<i>SZH</i>

Legislation

Adult training act	<i>Act CI of 2001 on Adult training</i>
VTC Act	<i>Act LXXXVI of 2003 on Vocational training contribution and the support of the development of training</i>
VET Act	<i>Act LXXXVI of 1993 on Vocational Education and Training</i>
Higher education act	<i>Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher education</i>
Public education act	<i>Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public education</i>