European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2010
Country Report: Hungary

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1 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

1.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

It is not yet possible to speak of a functioning nationwide system based on uniform principles and procedures for the validation for non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. A system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still under development.

Partly as a result of European Union initiatives, several national policy documents have now included the objective of the recognition of non-formal learning. The most important of these documents is the government’s Lifelong Learning Strategy, which was produced in 2005. The document set out the main approaches and formulated the development goals for which funds are provided in the context of the relevant operational programmes of the First National Development Plan (2004-2006) and the New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013).

While the strategic documents offer a comprehensive description of the need to introduce a validation procedure, there are very conspicuous sectoral differences in implementation, a feature that generally characterises the Hungarian education and training system and developments. Thus the connections between the management of public education, higher education, vocational education and training and adult training have been very weak to date, and as a result developments in the various sectors are separated from one another. Of these sectors VET and adult education and training are most receptive to validation. In 2006 a new competence-based and modular structure of VET was introduced, together with the flexibilisation of the input requirements of VET programmes, all of which has created favourable conditions for the development of validation systems, although these developments have not yet commenced.

As for the legal framework, according to Section 17 of the Act on Adult Training, which came into effect in 2001, “adults applying for training may request the preliminary assessment of their level of knowledge, which the training institute shall evaluate and take into consideration”. The Act formulated the assessment of prior learning as an individual right. This is limited to adults entering into a general, vocational or language training programme provided by an adult training institution operating under the Act on Adult Training. This regulation does not concern adult education organised in higher education. The Act obliges adult training providers to assess the knowledge of applicants in relation to the programme and to tailor provision accordingly, but the way in which this should be done has not been regulated. There is no uniform, regulated procedure in force: training providers carry out assessments according to their own training profile, practice and options. Although this solution is often seen as an early (sometimes premature and inconsistent) form of assessment and recognition of existing knowledge, the original intent of the legislators was to ensure that the needs of adults participating in adult education and training programmes are better addressed. However, customisation of training is greatly hindered by the current organisation of training (i.e. group-based training due to the need for cost effectiveness). In practice, the assessment of existing knowledge in adult education and training works in much the same way as the assessment of other applicants, against the set entry requirements and following similar procedures.

Additionally, there are isolated but very successful validation procedures, for example the European Computer Driving Licence examination scheme. This scheme provides certification for ICT skills obtained by any means (formal, non-formal and informal) and is
based on international standards. It has been present in Hungary since 1997.\(^1\) Other, similar systems have also appeared, but it is the ECDL, which has become truly widespread. The ECDL examination system co-ordination is carried out by a non-governmental organisation, the John von Neumann Computer Society (NJSZT). The ECDL programme is also accredited by the Adult Education Accreditation Board. Since the 2006/2007 school year the ECDL has been recognised as a proper examination and has been integrated into training in various vocational programmes and a growing number of higher education institutions.

In addition to this the foreign language proficiency examinations have traditionally always been open for learners coming from any learning environment. This means that the applicants can acquire a certification (of the level according to the level of their actual language proficiency) without participating in any language training course (that is they can learn on their own in an informal way). These language examinations can be organised by accredited language centres and, in case they are successfully taken, can give the candidates accredited language certificates.\(^2\)

These two procedures represent successful implementation of validation of non-formal learning, even if such procedures are somewhat isolated cases (and in the procedures a singular competency is certified).

Concerning higher education, a system level development will be implemented within TÁMOP (SROP) 4.1.3. Currently this is the biggest government development programme to address validation. The project was launched in July 2009 in the context of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the Second National Development Plan, entitled New Hungary (2007-2013). The project is managed by the project managers of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and it aims to develop a validation model that can be implemented in higher education, as well as formulating proposals regarding its introduction. The main goal of this project is the development and testing of a 'validation model' operable in the conditions of Hungarian higher education. The model to be developed can provide a basis for building a validation practice in the Hungarian higher education institutions (on a voluntary basis). The actual duration of the project work is from July 2009 to October 2010. The organisation responsible for the project is the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development.\(^3\)

In summary, in Hungary there is no nationwide validation system based on uniform principles and procedures; however, several isolated validation procedures have been in use for a long time. At present major development projects are being implemented in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan although very few of these go beyond the boundaries of the various training sectors. Hungary is also characterised by simultaneous and somewhat congested development of several preconditions that would be important for a validation system (NQF, development of the competence-based approach in public education, the slow shift to the learning outcomes-based programme description, Lifelong Guidance system building).

1.2 Relationship with the existing / developing qualifications framework and information on standards used for validation

The Hungarian National Qualifications Framework is currently under development. The development of the NQF and the validation system are interconnected. This close connection is reflected also in the fact that the two development projects are organised under the same project management (see section 1.1). However the most important common point is the use of a learning outcomes-based approach in the formulation of the

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\(^2\) [http://www.nyak.hu/default-eng.asp](http://www.nyak.hu/default-eng.asp)

\(^3\) In Hungarian: Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet [http://www.ofi.hu](http://www.ofi.hu)
education and training requirements. The same learning outcomes constitute the reference for the validation.

The New Hungary National Development Plan (2007-2013)\(^4\) mentions the need to create connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning at several points, for instance as a means of creating labour market flexibility(p.114). With regards to increased effectiveness for the public education system and the use of innovative solutions, it states the following: "It is necessary to develop a national qualifications framework, integrated into the creation European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which will provide recognition for competencies acquired by non-formal and informal means in the formal education system and on the labour market. A system for assessing output has to be developed." With regards to the task of improving the quality of higher education, the formulation of a system and procedures for validation are indicated as tasks to be carried out.\(^5\)

The Hungarian government has supported the efforts to create a qualifications framework from the very outset and has been actively involved in the related policy consultations and expert activity. Based on the joint proposal of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment, the government passed a resolution in mid-2008 supporting Hungary’s accession to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that would be compatible with the principles and structure of the EQF. Pursuant to the resolution, a proposal shall be drafted by 2010 setting out the legislative, policy and budgetary conditions of accession to the EQF. The development of the NQF is headed by the education administration and is carried out as a priority project in the context of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) of the New Hungary Development Plan. The experts working on the projects are striving to forge a close professional cooperation between the various VET sectors so that the national framework should rely on uniform principles.

However, the fact that the current concept of Hungarian public and higher education is far from the learning outcomes-based approach to education and training presents a serious challenge to the development of the NQF.\(^6\) The Hungarian education system, including higher education, has been characterised by the tradition of a content-based approach to education and assessment (of course with substantial differences concerning different study fields and programmes). The shift in approach brought about by the Bologna Process at various levels is slow to permeate the micro-level activities related to the development and implementation of training provision. It is rather difficult to achieve full methodological and content developments simultaneously with complex and large scale structural and cultural ones.\(^7\)

Currently it is the qualification standards applied in VET and the adult education and training sector that are closest to the competence-based and learning outcomes-based training programme descriptions. In higher education, the description of programmes in terms of learning outcomes is connected with the implementation of the multi-cycle study structure. The new training and outcome requirements are also outcome based but only in an initial stage, and it makes the acceptance of credits achieved elsewhere sometimes very difficult even in a functioning credit transfer system. (ECTS in Hungary, see section 1.6)

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\(^4\) [http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan](http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan)


1.3 National institutional framework

At present there is no organisation or institution responsible for the creation, operation and further development of the validation system. Development takes place in the context of separate projects.

From 2003 to 2005 an experimental project concerning the assessment of prior learning in adult education and training was conducted by the former National Institute for Adult Education. The two-year project (financed by the government) aimed at developing the methods of assessment. (See also 5.1)

Professional supervision of the work aimed primarily at developing a validation model for higher education in the context of the SROP (in Hungarian ‘TÁMOP’) project mentioned above (See 1.1) is undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Culture. At the present stage of development an idea is taking shape to create a “knowledge centre” type institution that would, in the long run, undertake professional activities related to the introduction and further development of the validation procedure. (For example it would prepare methodology materials and would provide technical assistance to higher education institutions in introducing the validation schemes and developing their institutional procedures, and would also train validation practitioners).

1.4 Division of responsibilities (national, regional, local, provider level) according to the different aspects of validation

As Hungary does not yet possess a functioning nationwide system there is no clear division of responsibilities. The development initiatives came from the government, with the strong influence of the European Commission initiatives but without involvement of social partners.

The Adult Education and Training Act of 2001 puts adult training providers in charge of delivering prior learning assessment practice. The Act also includes verification of whether the adult training providers actually implement assessment in the course of ad hoc inspection as part of the accreditation system operating in the adult training sector.

The first development project (TÁMOP /SROP 4.1.3) to take off was the development of the validation model in higher education (see details under 1.1 and 1.5). Projects addressing public education and vocational training are expected to commence in the future, all co-financed by the European Union. These projects will develop conceptual frameworks to include a description of the validation procedure, the information system, awareness raising and training required for introduction as well as details of the validation methodologies and a quality assurance system and the division of responsibilities among institutions.

In addition, in the interests of giving the training providers professional guidance, methodologies have been drawn up in the course of a separate project. At the request of the education ministry, in 2003 the National Institute of Adult Education began to draw up a methodology package. Some 53 training institutions made successful applications to join the project (including the nine state funded regional training centres). The institutions received funds to develop their ICT infrastructure (approximately EUR 10 000 each) and they committed to taking part in testing the methodology for three years. Groups of experts drew up Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) tests and instructions for testing in the following areas: English, maths, marketing, business communications and the timber industry. The National Institute of Adult Education developed special software for writing tests and aiding assessment. Yet the assessment tools developed in this project have not been widely adapted. This may be because of the reorganisation of the National Institute

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8 Today in Hungarian Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttőképzési Intézet (National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education) http://www.nive.hu
of the Adult Training, as no further support for the project was provided by government, and because the tests developed covered a very limited area of VET. Furthermore, as the project has not been fully completed, the dissemination of the results was unsuccessful.

1.5 Examples of regional, local or EU funded initiatives

Most initiatives at these levels have been, so far, EU-funded. The above-mentioned SROP (TÁMOP) project “Validation model development for HE” (See 1.1) is organised under the scheme of the Social Renewal Operational Programme New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013) and is financed by the European Social Fund. The main goal of the project is the development and testing of a “validation model” operable in the conditions of Hungarian higher education. The first step taken in the project has been the mapping of the existing but not institutionalised validation practice in Hungarian higher education institutions. Information has been collected through interviews and document analysis in 40 institutions (with additional information collection in other sectors). The main finding of the mapping exercise is that in most HEIs some “soft” validation practices can be identified (mainly in relation to the credit transfer system that has been regulated and initiated for ten years from now in Hungary). The crucial question of the HE validation model development is how to interest HE institutions in adapting a transparent validation procedure if both students and teachers are engaged currently in informal arrangements for exemptions or other forms of recognition of prior learning outcomes.

The HE validation model development work will be based on a series of workshops involving the different stakeholders from several sectors (HE experts and representatives of administration at different levels in HE institutions, professionals from the VET and adult training sector, NGOs, researchers etc.). A short training programme for HE staff (for a total of 420 people) is also part of the project, to test the validation model in two pilot HE institutions. One of the expected results of the project is the formulation of recommendations on the introduction of a validation procedure in the HE institutions.

The two projects described below, funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme have involved Hungarian partner organisations:

- The Sustainable Learning in the Community (SLIC) project was funded by the Grundtvig Programme of the European Commission between November 2007 and January 2010. The pilot project was developed and implemented in Austria, Finland, Hungary, Italy and the UK - the Hungarian partner organisation was the Budapest Cultural Centre. The aim of the project was to offer older people (aged over 50 - mainly retired individuals) the opportunity to review their skills and experience and to reflect upon how to use these for further learning and/or engagement within the community. It is based mainly on self- and group reflection. The project organised 10 workshops for self-reflection of skills and experience with over 100 participants.

- The Precise project produced an online course for practising or future IT teachers that aims to enrich, improve and evaluate their English skills, with a specific focus on vocation-specific language skills and competences. The project was funded through the Leonardo da Vinci programme over the period 2007 - 2009 and involved partners from Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and the UK – the Hungarian partner

\[9\] The results of this research has been summarized in “Gyorsjelentés a TÁMOP 4.1.3 A felsőoktatási szolgáltatások rendszer szintű fejlesztése c. projekt Felsőoktatási Validációs Rendszer alprojekt Szektorelemzés keretében készült terepmunka eredményeiről” (Report on the interview-based empirical research in HEIs made in the frame of the sub-programme 4.1.3 of the Social Renewal Operational Programme of the New Hungary Development Plan), Compiled by Mária Kraici-Szokoly, 2010. March
organisation was the Budapest Tech Centre of Adult Education and Vocational Training. Key planned outcomes of the project were:

- an interactive electronic online English course with content suitable for individual study, using innovative methodological approaches (portfolio and electronic evaluation, collaborative online work etc.)
- an online evaluation system to assess individual progress and serve as a basis for issuing certificates
- a guide and toolbox to serve as a manual for the individual user, also providing supplementary exercises and a list of recommended resources and external links
- a course for potential online tutors with an insight into the course and methodology recommendations
- an essay outlining needs and recommendations.

Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (Volunteers Centre Foundation) has also participated in the ‘Assessing Voluntary Experiences’ (AVE) in a professional perspective’ international research project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme since October 2003, together with partners from six countries. The project participants developed a tool (a ‘portfolio of competences’) and a methodology that can be applied in assessing learning and competences acquired in the course of volunteer work that are potentially important in future careers and can help people with experience in volunteer work in finding jobs in the future. More information on this project can also be found below in this report.

1.6 Link between validation and the existing/ developing credit system, unit-based or modularised structure of qualifications

A credit system was introduced in Hungary first in the HE sector. The credit system in the HE appeared at the beginning of the nineties as a result of the change in the political regime, which led to spontaneous reform in universities as well. In 1998 the Hungarian Government issued a decree on the introduction of a higher education credit system. This Decree mandated that all higher educational institutes should introduce the credit system from September 2002. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been provided for by law since November 2000 and has been introduced in practice since the 2003/04 academic year. It is mandatory and is used both in terms of transfer and accumulation.

Today almost every higher educational institution applies the credit system in their academic programmes which are further regulated by the Act of Education and its Governmental Decrees. The Decree disposed of the establishment of the National Credit Council to give professional help to the institutions, develop the credit system nationwide, and enhance student mobility through the credit system.

The validation issue is closely connected to the existing credit transfer system. The current practice of credit transfer reflects the reluctance of the teachers of the HEIs to recognise knowledge gained outside of their own programme (sometimes the rejection concerns also the recognition of knowledge gained in another programme of the same institution). There are also operational problems with the credit transfer system, primarily related to a lack of clear descriptions of learning outcomes.

A modularised structure of VET qualifications has been operating in Hungary since 2006 but the credit system has not yet been introduced in the VET sector. Development project

Source: http://www.oka.hu/alap.php The Foundation was set up by five non-profit organisations including Foundation for Democratic Youth, and plays an active part in enhancing awareness of voluntarism in Hungary and organises awareness campaigns.
plans are under preparation at the moment to adapt the validation procedure to this area, but no information is available on the details.

1.7 Funding framework

The costs of prior learning assessment (which is only possible for adults) in the adult training sector are borne by the training provider (training providers themselves are funded by the state, by employers, by participants, or by a mix of these). The procedure itself is free to adult students entering training, regardless of how the training provider is financed. Costs are basically “hidden” as there are no calculations regarding the cost items of assessment or any other related services as such. Providers consider prior learning assessment as part of the training. There is only fragmented information on the practice. Providers usually count the hours spent on assessment (test writing and evaluation of the tests) by the trainers in the timeframe of the given training programme. So the cost of the assessment procedure is absorbed in the programme fees (paid by the adult learner, the employer or by the government).

The costs of credit transfer in higher education are borne by the HEIs concerned.

Actual figures of funding are only available for the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) examination system. Participants generally pay the fees of training modules (the cost varies between EUR 15 and 40). Students are given significant discounts and some employers choose to cover the training costs of their employees. Since 2002 the ECDL examination is part of civil servants’ training, with funding coming from the national budget. The ECDL is also part of the nationwide (obligatory) education and training of teachers and cultural professionals programme financed by the national budget.

In summary it can be stated that beyond the lack of programme structure development and the traditional approach, one of the main barriers is the lack of a clear and transparent financial regulation of sharing of the costs and benefits among the interested parties.

1.8 Data on flows of beneficiaries

There is very little data available on the number of participants in existing validation initiatives in Hungary.

The ECDL examination can be seen as a unique skill assessment and certification programme. According to data from ECDL Hungary\(^{11}\) nearly 400 accredited examination centres have been set up nationwide. Although similar systems are in operation, in Hungary, thanks to strong management, the ECDL examination has become widely used. By February 2009 335,000 people had registered in the system (of which 210,000 people had been awarded the certificate). According to the number of participants, Hungary is eighth among the ECDL countries.

According to Educational Authority statistics, more than 175,000 people passed a language proficiency examination. There is no data regarding the numbers that have acquired their skills outside the framework of formal training.\(^{12}\)

2 ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

2.1 Role of the formal education and training sector, including providers

Under Section 17 of the 2001 Adult Education and Training Act, the assessment of prior learning is entirely the task of accredited adult training providers (operating outside of initial education and training).

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\(^{11}\) Source: [http://www.ecdl.hu](http://www.ecdl.hu)

\(^{12}\) Source: [http://www.nyak.hu/doc/statisztika.asp?strId=43](http://www.nyak.hu/doc/statisztika.asp?strId=43)
As mentioned previously, in the context of the development project TÁMOP (SROP) 4.1.3, information was collected on the basis of interviews in 40 HEIs at the end of 2009 to map “soft” (not formalised and transparent) practices of validation. (See footnote 9) Taking prior work experience in HE practical training into consideration is also a widely used practice (but according to the current Act on HE the maximum number of credits available from prior work experience is 30).

Students are exempted from certain requirements, mainly in part-time and special professional training – but this practice is rather “hidden”, meaning not transparent, not regulated, not formalised. This practice of “validation” strongly depends on the type of training and the attitude of teachers. ‘Elite’ institutions tend to be more reluctant in respect of validation of ‘outside’ learning and competences.

According to the HE Act applicants can be given extra points in admissions procedures if they can document certain skills relevant in the given education programme (for example foreign language competence certified by a language proficiency examination).

2.2 Role of existing information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

The Hungarian guidance system is very fragmented and each sub-sector in education (public education, VET, HE) and the labour market operates their own system.

There is no specific information, advice or guidance system regarding the assessment of prior learning and exemption in HE. Information on the credit transfer system is usually found on the websites of the individual HEIs.

Adult training providers also give some information on the procedure for the assessment of prior learning assessment on their websites (as part of the information on training programmes and service provision).

Under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the National Guidance Committee was established in 2008. The role of this Committee is to develop a national strategy for LLG and to coordinate the activities of different stakeholders. The Employment and Social Office, steered by the Committee, is carrying out a Social Renewal Operative Programme project to develop a network and the human resource background of the guidance service.

2.3 Validation in the private sector and the role of private sector actors

As noted in the previous European Inventory report for Hungary13, Hungarian umbrella organisations on a sectoral level have not really begun to set up concrete initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In general, there seems to be an expectation that the initiative will be led by the government and national bodies (ministries). There seems to be a centralised approach in operation - which is top-down instead of bottom-up (coming from the industrial bodies or industries themselves).

Informal and non-formal learning is usually recognised without any formalised procedure in the labour market, through facilitating access to certain jobs (the requirement of several years’ professional work experience is included in most job advertisements) and also through promotion.

It has not been possible to identify Hungarian companies which have started to set up processes for the promotion or implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (at least under this name). Presumably companies currently interested in or working on their own “validation procedure” are primarily multinational companies.

but information is not available on this topic. According to small-scale research\(^\text{14}\) in this field multinational companies have well designed independent training and skill certification systems as part of their company development strategy and they do not wish to disclose information on these to the public.

In the frame of the TÁMOP (SROP) 4.1.3 HE validation model development project the experts initiated consultation with employer representatives. Some important organisations delegated members to the meeting in June 2010 (National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers\(^\text{15}\), Confederation of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists\(^\text{16}\)) and also some small companies took part. According to their statements these employer organisations are in the phase of getting the first information on validation in general. They are rather reticent to opening up the formal VET system and recognising the outcomes of the experiential learning.

### 2.4 Validation in the third sector and the role of third sector actors

So far very few attempts have been made to introduce validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian third sector. At present, only examples of experimental methods can be identified, as there is no research on the sector and NGOs practices concerning validation. Here, some examples can be identified of new initiatives and increased awareness within the sector.

For example, the National Volunteer Centre provides downloadable documents for individuals to create a "volunteering portfolio", in which they can record experiences gained through volunteering. However, the spread of this type of document is reported to be limited to date\(^\text{17}\).

Nevertheless, growing attention has been paid to voluntary work. *Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Voluntary Activity to the Benefit of the Public* defines volunteers as important actors shaping society. The experience gained in the course of volunteer work and its recognition in the labour market or primarily in higher education, has been an explicit need articulated by some of the more active NGOs.

As an example, *Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány*\(^\text{18}\) (Volunteers Centre Foundation) has participated in the ‘Assessing Voluntary Experiences’ (AVE) in a professional perspective international research project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme since October 2003, together with partners from six countries. The project participants developed a tool (a ‘portfolio of competences’) and a methodology that can be applied in assessing learning and competences acquired in the course of volunteering that are potentially important in future careers and can help people with experience as volunteers in finding jobs in the future. The tool is a document including a short introduction (on what is voluntary work and the related competence) and questions helping the individual to identify the learning outcomes related to their different voluntary activities. There are other tools based also on self-evaluation. The result of these self-evaluation processes is a short structured description of the competences of the voluntary worker, which can be used as an annex for a CV.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some NGOs consider they should build closer ties with HEIs (by receiving students for placement or internship, for example), or that the HEIs concerned should give credit for the civic training the NGOs offer (by awarding applicants

\(^{14}\) [http://www.sow.hu/?lang=2&menu=102&id=4](http://www.sow.hu/?lang=2&menu=102&id=4)

\(^{15}\) [http://www.vosz.hu](http://www.vosz.hu)

\(^{16}\) [http://www.mgyosz.hu/progr/pra.php](http://www.mgyosz.hu/progr/pra.php)


\(^{18}\) Source: [http://www.oka.hu/alap.php](http://www.oka.hu/alap.php). The Foundation was set up by five non-profit organisations including Foundation for Democratic Youth, and plays an active part in enhancing awareness of voluntarism in Hungary and organises awareness campaigns.
extra scores, for example). For instance, Non-profit Workshop (Nonprofit Képzési Műhely) is an umbrella organisation which has been operating since 2001, bringing together 20 organisations and providing them with a forum for discussions and regular training programmes. In each county (there are 19 altogether) there is a regional service centre for civil organisations (Civil Szolgáltató Központ). Some of them have also contacted HE institutions operating in the given region to establish a close relationship and offer activities for the students, which could be integral part of the university training programmes.

2.5 Costs to organisations

The costs of assessment are mostly hidden, as already mentioned. No calculations have been made of how much it costs to assess an individual’s prior learning. According to the opinion of the training institutions interviewed in the OECD RNFIL project, the costs depend also on how many individuals are assessed altogether – how far the assessment flows in a “production line” fashion.

Similarly to many other countries no data on costs are currently available.

3 INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

Adult education and training providers give information mostly on their websites to their expected clients on the assessment of prior learning, as it is part of the obligatory adult education and training services. As there is no functioning validation system, there is no guidance on validation apart.

Awareness raising activities will be important in the current and future validation system development projects organised in the frame of the New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013). This kind of information can be in the near future part of the information provided by the Lifelong Guidance System (also under development in the EU co-funded project of TÁMOP (SROP) 2.2.2). As the guidance service focuses on individuals and their learning path, the idea of validating competences gained in different learning environments can become one of the central point in this service.

3.2 Provision of guidance and support

Adult education and training providers (trainers, teachers, training advisors) provide preliminary information on the process and give help to the adults/students if it is needed. As mentioned above the newly developed network of guidance providers is promising to offer a wide range and professionally well based guidance service at all levels and for any groups of learners.

3.3 Costs to individuals

Prior learning assessment is free of charge for adults entering in a training programme.

The fees of the ECDL examinations and courses are determined by the examination centres. The license card costs approximately EUR 30. Students receive substantial discounts. Costs are sometimes paid by employers.

There is a need for a transparent national regulation of cost sharing in Hungary.

19 http://www.civil.info.hu/modules/News/20060731/a_nonprofit_kepzesi_muhely_bemutatasa.html
20 http://www.nonprofit.hu/ciszokhalozat/tagjaink
21 Information source: Summary of the consultation with civic organizations in the frame of the TÁMOP/SROP 4.1.3 project “Szakmai összefoglaló a civil szervezetekkel 2010. július 2-án tartott konzultációiról.”
24 An example of one of the regional training centres http://szrmkk.hu/main.php?id=szolgalatasok_12
3.4 Initiatives focused on specific target groups

There is no concept/plans to target migrants or any other disadvantaged groups. In the VET system the new modularised qualification structure (developed mostly in 2006) opens up some entry paths for students without the basic school certificate in some specific trades (but under a different name – and this is not yet part of a validation system).

3.5 Evidence of benefits to individuals

There is no evidence-based evaluation on the benefits to individuals. There are only assumptions concerning these benefits and the motivation of the individuals (i.e. that it is a shorter and more cost-effective way to get a qualification).

4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

Quality assurance in the Hungarian educational system is sectoral. There is no quality control of the prior learning assessment. Only the existence of this service provision is controlled.

Neither the Adult Education and Training Act in 2001 nor any other document relating to its implementation expresses how the assessment procedure should be carried out, how it should be paid for, what is actually meant by “take into account” (i.e. take into account prior learning) and what would happen if the institution did not carry out any kind of assessment. According to the amendment to the act (in 2006), the County Labour Centres are authorised to monitor whether the activities of a given organisation comply with legal regulations and as a part of this, whether the organisation provides assessment of prior learning and takes such learning into account for programme content or for altering the process to suit the individual. If the activities of the training and education provider do not meet the criteria provided for in the Act (including those provisions relating to assessment), then a much higher fine could be levied than was previously the case (approximately EUR 2,000), or the provider could even be banned from adult education.

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

As there is no system in place, there is no established national quality assurance framework for the validation procedures at the time of writing.

4.2 Quality assurance systems / procedures

The evaluation of the training providers’ practice (assessment of prior learning) is part of the adult education and training accreditation system and consists of the control of the operation of this service.

4.3 Evaluation framework

As there is no national system, the evaluation is not systemic.

5 ASSESSMENT METHODS

5.1 Methods used

The method of assessing and taking into account prior learning on entry to adult education and training programmes, as laid down in the 2001 Act, has long been used in the adult education and training sector. In Hungary up until the 1990s, it was predominantly state-owned training companies and the competent ministries’ own continuing education institutions, which played a leading role in adult education and non-formal training. According to experts, it was general practice to grant exemptions to adults entering a course, if they could prove (usually in a written test) that they had
already acquired the knowledge through another programme. This procedure was agreed between the organisations running the programmes and laid down in a set of written regulations, referred to as the ‘exemption system’.25

In addition to this, in the case of certain types of courses, for example foreign language courses, for decades now, students with varying language skills have been level-tested in order to group students of a similar standard together.

The usual tool used for this process is a test of knowledge based on the requirements of the given training programme, the individual plan to start or rather of command of the language. Such tests are also well known and extensively used in formal (school) education.

However, as noted previously, in the interests of giving the training providers professional guidance, methodologies have been drawn up in the course of a separate project. At the request of the education ministry, in 2003 the National Institute of Adult Education began to draw up a methodology package. Some 53 training institutions made successful applications to join the project (including the nine state funded regional training centres). The institutions received funds to develop their ICT infrastructure (approximately EUR 10 000 each) and they committed to taking part in testing the methodology for three years. Groups of experts drew up Prior Learning Assessment tests and instructions for testing in the following areas: English, maths, marketing, business communications and the timber industry. The National Institute of Adult Education developed special software for writing tests and aiding assessment. Yet the assessment tools developed in this project have not been widely adapted. This may be because of the reorganisation of the National Institute of the Adult Training, because no further support for the project was provided by government, and because the tests developed covered a very limited area of VET. Furthermore, as the project has been not fully completed, the dissemination of the results was unsuccessful.

In the Regional Training Centre of Békéscsaba26 (one of the units of a network of the nine regional training centres established by the state in the 1990s) there have been attempts to develop specific tools to assess prior learning in some specific trades. The name of the resulting tool developed is ‘Movelex’.27

**Movelex, a tool to assess prior learning**

Movelex is designed to evaluate “factual” elements of the knowledge (facts, definitions, rules, relations etc.) of adult learners entering a training programme.

The main goal of this project was to provide a standardised evaluation tool supporting the prior learning assessment – in order to make the training programme more tailor-made.

Abilities and other elements of competences are evaluated in other ways not in the Movelex (practical challenges, essays). The basic element of the evaluation by Movelex is the task (tasks are based on the analysis of training curriculum). A database (individual tasks and test-modules) called “task-bank” has been created as the central element of the system. The task-bank covers only some trades for the moment. The goal is to create a common data bank for the VET training providers.

This approach is very much labour-intensive (requires many workloads) thus expensive especially as there are more than 400 trades in the Hungarian VET system, and trades change constantly.

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26 [http://www.brkk.hu](http://www.brkk.hu)
5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the methods used

The written test method is generally preferred because it is a cost-effective solution. It is cost-effective because it is standardised, inexpensive, used in large groups, it is easy to evaluate, it is possible to use it in electronic form, etc.

6 VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In adult education the prior learning assessment is usually carried out by trainers themselves.

In higher education the teachers are competent to recommend whether the prior learning outcomes of a student (and the document proving the prior learning or the acquired learning outcomes) are acceptable or not. The decision is taken in special institutional credit transfer committees.

6.2 Provision of training and support to practitioners

As there is not yet a coherently established system for validation, it is not possible to identify a group of practitioners with a targeted profile. At present, validation practitioners are teachers and trainers.

6.3 Qualifications requirements

There are no specific formal qualifications requirements for assessment practitioners. The prior learning assessment is managed by trainers in the adult training programmes, and is operated by training providers. In higher education, the decision on the exemption (e.g. the recognition of the work experience against the requirements of a given programme) is taken by the above-mentioned special committees, based on the teacher's recommendation.
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Stakeholders consulted:

Ministry of Education and Culture
Ministry of Labour
National Credit Office, Institute for Educational Research
National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education