



# LITERACY IN HUNGARY

## COUNTRY REPORT

### CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

March 2016

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# 1 Introduction

This report on the state of literacy in Hungary is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries<sup>1</sup>. ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its member countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce a set of reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012<sup>2</sup>. All country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: "ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference"<sup>3</sup>.

The Country Reports about Children and Adolescents are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG's literacy report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion (and equity<sup>4</sup>).

Within its two-year funding period ELINET has completed Literacy Country Reports for all 30 ELINET member countries. In most cases we published separate **Long Reports** for specific age groups (Children / Adolescents and Adults), in some cases comprehensive reports covering all age groups. Additionally, for all 30 countries, we published **Short Reports** covering all age groups, containing the summary of performance data and policy messages of the Long Reports. These reports are accompanied by a collection of good practice examples which cover all age groups and policy areas as well. These examples refer to the **European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels;** both are to be found in the section "Good Practice"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the network and its activities see: [www.eli-net.eu](http://www.eli-net.eu).

<sup>2</sup> In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as "HLG report". This report can be downloaded under the following link: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Equity" was added by ELINET.

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/>.

## 2 Executive Summary

### LITERACY PERFORMANCE DATA

Hungary participated in IEA's PIRLS (4<sup>th</sup> graders reading comprehension) in 2011, in OECD's PISA (15 year-olds' reading literacy) since 2000, Hungary performed at the EU average in PIRLS 2011 (539 vs 535 EU-average) and at the EU average in PISA 2012 (488 vs 489 EU average). While the performance in PIRLS slightly decreased (4 points) between 2001 and 2011, it has slightly increased in PISA between 2000 and 2012.

In PIRLS, 19% of students performed at or below the Low benchmark on overall reading. This is very similar to the EU average (20%). In Hungary, 12% of students achieve at the Advanced benchmark. This is above the EU average (9%). Hungary's standard deviation of 78 is 8 points higher than the EU-24 average, indicating a wider spread of achievement in Hungary. The proportion of low-performing readers was even higher in 2000: it gradually and drastically decreased between 2000 and 2011 (from nearly 40% in 2001 to 29 % in 2011). In PISA 2012, the percentage of low-performing readers was the same as in the European countries on average (19.7 % vs. 19.7%). The proportion of high-performing readers is somewhat smaller than in European countries. Between 2000 and 2012, the proportion of low-performing readers has slightly decreased (by - 3 %) in Hungary, mostly among girls (- 4.9 %).

The proportion of top-performing readers was high in PIRLS (12% vs 9% in EU) and lower than the EU average in PISA (5.6% vs 7% in EU).

The gap according to the pupils' socioeconomic background was higher than the EU average in PISA (118 vs 89 on average). This gap of 118 score points is equivalent to almost three years of schooling. Hungary is less equitable than European countries on average.

In Hungary, the percentage of students with an immigrant background is extremely low (2.1%). In PISA 2009, the difference in reading between native students and those with an immigrant background is negative (- 12 score point), meaning that immigrant students perform better than native students. One of the reasons for the negative correlation is the positive influence of bilingualism. In Hungary, 97% of pupils reported that they always spoke the language of the PIRLS reading test at home – higher than the corresponding EU-24 Average (80) and the highest among EU-24 countries. Just 3% reported that they sometimes or never spoke the test language at home. The difference in achievement between pupils in Hungary reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke the language of the test was 59 score points – 33 points higher than the corresponding EU-24 average difference (26).

Regarding the gender gap, in PIRLS, girls in Hungary achieved a mean score on overall reading that was higher than boys (16 vs. 12 on average) in 2011. Interestingly, the gap had fallen to 5 point in 2006, before rising again in 2011. In Hungary in PISA, between 2000 and 2012, the performance very slightly increased among boys (+ 3 score points); the girls' performance increased more (+ 12 score points). Nevertheless, one can observe that the increase in reading performance was higher in 2009, especially for boys (+ 10 score points).

In conclusion, at grade 4, Hungary performs above the EU average. Performance in PIRLS in Hungary dropped by 4 points between 2001 and 2011. The decline was too small to reach statistical significance. Unusually, performance in Hungary increased by 8 points between 2001 and 2006 (a statistically significant increase) and then fell by 12 points between 2006 and 2011. During the same

period, performance in the EU-24 remained consistent, rising by just one point between 2006 and 2011. Regarding 15-year-olds, the performances in Hungary have slightly increased between 2000 and 2012. Hungary performed at the same level as the European countries on average. Gender difference in reading performance in Hungary is close to EU countries on average. Boys' performance showed a small increase. The spread of achievement (gap between low and top performing readers) is smaller in Hungary than in EU on average at both levels. At both levels, the gap according to socioeconomic status is higher in Hungary than in the EU on average. These results seem to indicate that Hungary is less equitable than European countries on average. The gap according to migration or language spoken at home is very small, as the percentage of students who do not speak the test language at home in PISA 2012 was 1%.

As far as adults are concerned, Hungary did not take part in PIAAC, the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills, and has not carried out any recent national surveys of adult literacy, therefore no data are available on levels of literacy among the adult population.

# KEY LITERACY POLICY AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT (AGE-SPECIFIC AND ACROSS AGE-GROUPS)

## Creating a Literate Environment

### Pre-Primary Years

**Providing a supportive home environment:** The importance of parental attitudes to reading is shown by the fact that in Hungary there are great differences in reading performance at grade 4 between children whose parents like to read (average achievement 570) and those who do not (average achievement 501). The availability of children's books in the home is very close to the EU figures in Hungary, 13.8 % of students in Hungary had 10 or fewer children's books at home, compared with a European average of 12%.

In Hungary, nearly all parents engage often or sometimes in early literacy activities with their children. The *Early Literacy Activity Scale* correlates with later reading performance in grade 4. The average reading score of pupils who were engaged often in these activities was 553, compared with 535 for those pupils who sometimes were engaged in these activities with their parents before the beginning of primary school.

While the *Early Literacy Activity Scale* is a composite score, it is of interest to look at single items. If only the category "often" is considered, the percentage of pupils in Hungary whose parents engaged in specific literacy-related activities with them before the beginning of primary school is near or slightly above the European average read books to them often: 61.6% (European average 58.4 %); told stories to them often: 75.6% (European average 51.5%); sang songs to them often: 55.5% (European average 50.6%); played games involving shapes (toys and puzzles) with them often: 62.5% (European average 63.5%).

**Programmes to raise awareness of all parents needed:** There is a need for more family literacy programmes with a focus on supporting parents and carers working with minority children in understanding and fostering the literacy development of their children.

### Children and Adolescents

**Providing a literate environment in school:** Just a very small proportion of students in Hungary (5%) are taught by teachers who use a variety of children's books as a basis for reading instruction, compared with an EU average of 29%. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils in Grade 4 in Hungary are taught by teachers who use textbooks as the basis of reading instruction, compared with an EU average of 70%. Three per cent of students in Hungary are taught by teachers who report that computer software is used as a basis of reading instruction – about the same as the EU-24 average (5%) – while 39% of students in Hungary use computer software as a supplement, compared with 47% on average across EU countries (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 8.12, p. 236, EU averages obtained from PIRLS 2011 database, s. Table H1 in Appendix). Based on data provided by their teachers, PIRLS shows that 79.9% of students in Hungary are in classrooms which have class libraries – above the corresponding EU-24 average of 73% (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table H2). In Hungary, 12.5% of students were in classrooms with more than 50 books, which is below the EU-24 average of 21%.



**Supporting reading motivation, especially among boys and adolescents:** The National Core Curriculum encourages teachers to select common readings in the learning process which meet students' interests and are appropriate for their ages, and thus to help develop a positive attitude towards reading. Teachers are recommended to be open to children's culture and contemporary literature in their choices.

**Strengthening the role of public libraries in reading promotion:** In Hungary in the recent years the role of the public libraries in reading promotion has increased significantly. Libraries are not the only actors in reading promotion. In cooperation with them or on their own initiatives, other organisations – state or civil – also offer a great variety of programmes to foster reading engagement among children of all ages – both at regional and national level. HUNRA, the Hungarian Reading Association stands out as an exemplary initiator of such projects. Book Gobbler, a programme initiated by HUNRA and Meseutca (Talestreet) Foundation and coordinated by the Klebelsberg Institution Maintenance Centre, aimed to popularise contemporary children's literature among primary school pupils. The European Reader Mate programme was also adapted by HUNRA in Hungary. Children are invited to libraries and the reading sessions take place there or reading mates visit children in hospital. As part of the programme hundreds of university and secondary school students read out loud regularly to disadvantaged children with high risk factors for reading problems. As a result, these children - despite their poor conditions - become familiar with books and according to feedback from participants develop a positive attitude to reading. The project "Book" is targeted at children in state care. On coming of age they are donated a pack of books to help them start their adult life as readers. The National Educational Library and Museum developed the Portal for Reading Development ([olvasas.opkm.hu](http://olvasas.opkm.hu)). The Portal is to ensure cooperation between Hungarian schools and libraries to develop children's literacy. The Portal also collects new pilot programmes, and best practices edited by teachers and school librarians. These educational programs can be used in elementary and secondary education to support reading development and the improvement of digital and information skills in a non-formal and informal way.

**Offering digital literacy learning opportunities at school:** There are national strategies covering training measures for ICT in schools, digital/media literacy, e-learning and e-inclusion. There are central steering documents for all ICT learning objectives. According to these official steering documents, students and teachers should use ICT in all subjects in class and for complementary activities (knowledge of computer, hardware and electronics, using multimedia, social media and developing programming skills). At secondary level ICT is also taught as a separate subject. Public-private partnerships promote the use of hardware and software in schools. According to the study of Emedus, in Hungary, media literacy is a competency and a set of skills which is integrated into the curriculum of secondary education as a cross-curricular subject. Only at upper-secondary (in years 9-12) is media literacy a separate subject. Students should acquire skills in order to use computer tools, software, info-communication resources and resources in libraries.

# Improving the Quality of Teaching

## Pre-Primary Years

**Providing free or affordable high quality preschool education for all children / investing more money in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):** ) The total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP in Hungary is 0.7%. The range is from 0.04% in Turkey and 0.1% in Ireland to 1.01% in Denmark. It places Hungary closer to the upper end among European countries for the total public expenditure per child on pre-primary education.

**Raising the professional qualification level of staff in ECEC:** The minimum required level to become a qualified teacher is Bachelor level (ISCED 5). Length of training is 4 years.

**Improving early language and literacy screening and training:** The provision of books and children's engagement in storytelling activities constitute the central aspects of literacy development (EASE. Overview of the national organization of early education and early primary services: Hungary). Children should have the opportunity to play with language, using nonsense words and rhyming (Eurydice 2011, p. 55).

**Introducing comprehensive literacy curricula in pre-primary schools:** Hungary has a preschool curriculum. It is the National Core Programme both for kindergarten/nursery school and crèche education in Hungary, which apply to all kindergartens/nursery school and crèches respectively, regardless of the maintainer. Both are a core curriculum defining the general pedagogic principles and objectives of education and care. The staff in each kindergarten/nursery school and crèche is responsible for developing the local educational programme (i.e. local curriculum). In line with the National Core Programme, fostering the development of oral literacy skills is an important function of pre-school institutions, providing a basis for formal literacy instruction in primary school. Pre-school programmes should focus on developing children's emergent literacy skills through playful experience rather than systematic training in phonics or teaching the alphabet. There is no evidence that systematic instruction of reading in preschool has any benefit for future learning (Suggate 2012). The authors of this report consider the following to be key components: oral language development, including vocabulary learning and grammar, familiarisation with the language of books (e.g. through hearing stories read and told), experiencing a literacy-rich environment, developing concepts of print, and language awareness.

## Children and Adolescents

**Ensuring adequate time for language and literacy instruction in primary and secondary schools:**

The delivery of basic key competences (literacy and numeracy) has been strengthened by the extension of the first 4-year learning period to the first six grades. With this in mind, appropriate pedagogical tools and methodologies have been developed and implemented, coupled with the necessary training, retraining and in-service-training of teachers (Eurydice, 2009). In 2011, pupils in Hungary spent fewer hours per year at school (760) than on average across EU-24 countries (850 hours). Students in Hungary spent 285 hours (about thirty per cent of all instructional hours) on instruction in the language of the PIRLS test, compared to an EU-24 average of 241 hours. In Hungary, 81 instructional hours per year are spent on reading as part of language, compared with an EU-24 average of 68, though the EU-24 average is itself low, relative to, for example, the United States and New Zealand (both 131 hours). Teachers in Hungary report allocating more time to teaching reading

across the curriculum and in reading classes (206 instructional hours per year) than on average across EU-24 countries (147 hours).

According to the PIRLS 2011 Encyclopaedia, the curriculum for Hungary specifies that 32-42% of instructional time (in grades 1-4) should be spent on language/reading time (Mullis et al., 2012, Vol. 1, Exhibit 6). In the same volume, Balkányi and Ostorics (2012) note that, in the course of Grade 1, 80 hours are allocated to teaching the system of signs for reading, including usage of capital letters and punctuation, articulating vowels correctly, combining letters and learning syntax.

No comparable data are available for secondary schools.

**Improving the quality of literacy instruction:** The new National Core Curriculum adopted in May 2012 recognises literacy as a basic and transversal skill which has to be developed across all aspects of education. This recent version of curricula in Hungary is much closer to the modern definition of literacy, but basic literacy skills are still developed mostly at primary school level. Requirements for useful literacy skills are getting higher, that is the very reason for the need for more teaching time being dedicated to the teaching of basic literacy skills, not only at primary level. The Core Curriculum makes a reference to the 8 key competences and describes them as essential competences for the 21st century. Literacy is mentioned in the description of communication in the mother tongue and learning to learn. Learning to learn is a key competence which must be addressed by every teacher in every subject. Literacy is included in the developmental tasks of Language, Literature, Foreign Language, Mathematics and Media Literacy. However, it is not mentioned in the parts belonging to sciences.

The curriculum pays more attention to functional literacy, literacy in everyday life in primary, elementary and middle schools. The National Curriculum is concerned with children learning functional, digital literacy skills. This appears on a cross curricular level, for instance in the field of teaching methods and strategies.

Literacy remains a highlighted area at upper primary / lower secondary and secondary level as well. Reading comprehension and text construction at these stages too constitute part of the Hungarian Language and Literature framework curricula but appear as separate and focused areas to be improved.

**Improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training:** In Hungary, initial teacher education needs a compulsory focus on developing literacy expertise among future primary and secondary teachers. The problem is that literacy is still regarded to be the expertise of primary teachers or teachers of Hungarian literature and language both at primary and secondary levels. There are only few other disciplines (e.g. physics) where teachers deal with content area literacy.

Improving the quality and participation rates of continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers is a need. There is no general basic course in teacher training at all (for all teachers), which focuses on how to develop students' reading comprehension skills.

Teachers in the lower primary section (grade 1-4) think that developing (content area) literacy is not an expectation in secondary section. They think that reading skills should be acquired in the lower primary section and later should be automatically applied. Secondary teachers think that incorporating development of literacy skills into their disciplinary lessons is time-consuming. Just a few of them understand that it is a means of making teaching and learning processes more efficient. It is mainly the conductive teachers who could appreciate such a course, however, they do not teach whole classes and they are not disciplinary teachers.

Although the new National Curriculum (2012) and frameworks (2013) do not represent this view and literacy is spread throughout the whole curriculum, it is known from research that education is the field where changes happen very slowly. Because of this, it is important to inform principals, decision makers in conferences, workshops, seminars about the state-of-the-art research results, and convince them about the importance to teach literacy across the curriculum.

Improving the quality and participation rates of continuing professional development is targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers. There is no general basic course in teacher training at all (for all teachers), which aims at developing students' reading comprehension skills.

Content Area Literacy-courses (= CAL), especially BaCuLit, are not widely known. There was not enough time given and devoted to make them known among education professionals and/or teachers themselves.

Still, there is huge potential in such a course. In Hungary education has been undergoing significant changes in the past years. Innovation and reforms could be really efficient if they are large-scale and ongoing (rather than one-off events). Enhancing CAL-courses/BaCuLit courses could have such effects.

### **Improving the quality and quantity (participation rates) of continuing professional development**

**(CPD):** In PIRLS 2011, teachers were asked how much time they had spent on professional development in reading in the past two years. In Hungary, 31% of the students have teachers who spent 16 hours or more (EU-24 average: 18%), 48% had teachers who spent some time but less than 16 hours (EU-24 average 53%), and 21% had teachers who spent no time (EU-24 average 29%) (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 7.4, p. 196). These figures show a high engagement of Hungarian teachers. The teachers' career model was introduced in 2013 in Hungary by the Order 326/2013 (VIII. 30). According to this model teachers are still obliged to take part in CPD; the main change regarding this field is that they cannot speed up their professional and financial promotion by completing 120-hour courses as they could before this order was enacted; completing these courses is a must if they do not want to be dismissed. This change is very relevant, especially regarding teachers' motivation in CPD. A nationwide project to renew the whole system of CPD called Social Renewal Operational Programme (TÁMOP) 3.1.5/12: Development of Teacher Education was to renew the whole system of CPD including the evaluation of existing training courses, survey and analysis of demands, providing training for trainers and teachers, development of a support system to CPD. Improving the quality and participation rates in continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers is a challenge for Hungary.

**Extending systematic assessment of literacy skills:** Since the 2001–02 academic year, Hungary has administered its National Assessment of Basic Competencies (NABC) nine times to examine student performance in mathematics and reading. Since 2004, all students in Grades 6, 8, and 10 have taken part in the testing. The assessment measures students' ability to use their skills and knowledge to solve problems modelling everyday situations, and does not focus on textbook knowledge.

Since 2008, the implementation of assessment IDs has made it possible to track individual student development from Grade 6 through Grade 10.

Parallel to NABC, testing fourth-grade students' basic reading, math, problem-solving, and writing skills began during the 2005–06 academic year. The Public Education Act guarantees the annual administration of these tests and requires schools to monitor their performance as part of their quality-control programmes.

**Building a stronger focus on literacy into curricula:** There is a need to mainstream reading / writing literacy across the curriculum and to offer content area literacy instruction in all school subjects throughout primary and secondary education, whether academic or vocational. Requirements of useful literacy skills are getting higher, that is the very reason for the need of more time of teaching basic literacy skills, not only at primary level. Other subjects and disciplines do not pay attention to literacy skills, literacy is mainly included in language and literature. It would be worthwhile to sharpen the literacy focus to help teachers of all subjects to become literacy teachers. Schools and teachers should be provided with tools and means to implement literacy aspects of the curricula effectively and the implementation process should regularly be monitored and supported. There is a strong need for change in attitude and content area literacy training both in initial and in-service teacher training.

## **Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity**

### **Pre-Primary Years**

**Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors:** In Hungary, the Gini index is 26.9%, and with this proportion Hungary is quite in the middle of the distribution. According to UNICEF (2001) the percentage of teenage mothers is 26.5 for Hungary, and this range is closer to the upper end of the scale. The proportions of children with parents born outside the country (2.0%) or only one parent born outside the country (4.0%) is rather low compared to the European countries. According to PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.3 - Students Spoke the Language of the Test Before Starting School, p. 118), the proportion of children speaking a different language at home from the one used at school is significantly low compared to the European Countries at 1.0%. The biggest ethnic group is Roma minority but 75% of Romany households use only Hungarian at home. (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012) The most severe problem concerning this group is not bilingualism rather some other factors (employment, educational participation, inclusive education).

**Increasing pre-school attendance of disadvantaged children:** Hungary is one of the few European countries where there is no positive relationship between the length of pre-primary education and reading achievement in grade 4.

Pre-primary education is free for children aged from 3 to 6 years old (EURYDICE. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Overview>. 21.08.2014). Hungary belongs to the half of the European countries where the entire period of ECEC is free.

Hungary has very high rates of Roma children with preschool experience (92 %). Socially disadvantaged children are given priority in enrolment. Kindergarten places are free of charge to "multiple disadvantaged" children from the age of 3. The survey data present Hungary as a clear example with visible effect of early childhood education on school attendance. As many as 94 % of compulsory school-age Roma children currently attending school have passed through preschool earlier in their life (they have had preschool experience). At the same time, only 15 % of the same-age Roma children in Hungary who do not currently attend school have had preschool experience before (Roma survey, 2014).

## Children and Adolescents

**Supporting struggling literacy learners:** Based on teacher responses to a series of questions in PIRLS 2011, 42% of students in Hungary are in classes where there is always access to specialised professionals who work with students who have reading difficulties, compared with an EU-24 average of 25%. Seven percent of students in Hungary are in classrooms where there is access to a teacher aide with the same frequency, while 3% are in classrooms where there is access to an adult/parent volunteer. Corresponding EU-24 averages are 13% and 3%. Hence, teachers in Hungary had greater access to specialised professionals, slightly less access to teacher aides, and similar (but low) access to adult volunteers.

The Hungarian education system provides relatively high levels of access to external specialist help, such as learning specialists or speech therapists. Pupils often have teachers who report spending more time working on reading individually with struggling students. The same reading materials are used, but students at different reading levels work at different speeds (Eurydice, 2011).

Public sector educational institutions and local governments provide free-of-charge speech therapy and dyslexia prophylaxis sessions as well as two hours coaching per day for children with special educational needs (Eurydice, 2009).

### 3 General Information about the Hungarian Education System

In Hungary, schools and kindergartens are established and maintained by the state, local governments, minority local governments, legal entities (foundations, churches, etc.) as well as natural persons. The state provides maintainers with a budget subsidy for the performance of their tasks. About 90 per cent of children attend public sector institutions.

The tasks related to administrative control and management responsibilities are shared among the central (national) government, the local (county and district level) authorities and the educational institutions. Overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of Human Capacities, which is in charge of education, culture, social affairs, health care, youth and sport. However, school-based VET and adult training is within the competence of the Ministry for National Economy.

Participation in education is mandatory between the ages of 3 and 16.

**Crèche** (nursery) is a welfare institution catering for children aged 20 weeks to 3 years and providing professional day care and development.

Free **kindergarten** education and care is offered for children aged 3-6 and is compulsory from age 3. It prepares them for school, and to be in a community, among other children of the same age. At the age of 6 children have to start elementary school.

**Primary and lower secondary education** (ISCED 1, 2) is organised as a single-structure system in 8-grade basic schools (typically for pupils aged 6-14, covering grades 1-8). During the first four year of elementary school, students acquire basic knowledge of reading, writing and calculus. Promotion is automatic in Grades 1–3, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 4–8.

**Upper secondary education** (ISCED 3, typically for pupils aged 14-18, usually covering grades 9-12) is provided by general secondary schools, vocational secondary schools or vocational schools. However, general secondary schools are also allowed to offer longer programmes starting earlier (from Grade 5 or 7).

**General secondary schools** provide general education and prepare for the secondary school leaving examination, which is the prerequisite for admission to higher education. Mostly the students choose this school plan to go on to higher education. There are different types of general secondary schools. Some last for 8 years, some for 6 and most of them for 4 years. There are some special schools for example: bilingual schools, where students participate in a one-year preparatory language programme and in the remaining 4 years most of the subjects are taught in the target language. **Secondary vocational schools** provide general and pre-vocational education, prepare for the secondary school leaving examination and offer vocational post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (ISCED 4 C). **Vocational schools** provide general, pre-vocational and vocational education, training skilled workers such as plumbers, joiners, bricklayers, hairdressers, etc. The training lasts three years. It may also provide remedial lower secondary general education for those who have not accomplished the basic school education.

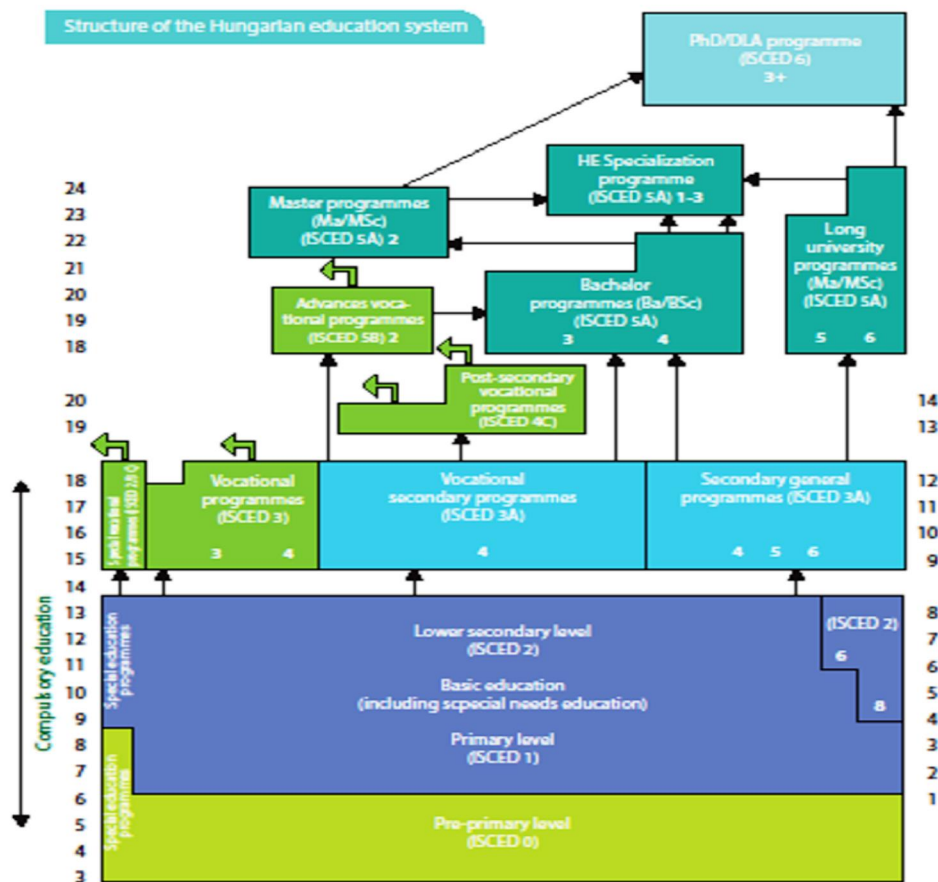
**Higher education** programmes (ISCED 5A, 5B, 6) are offered by public or private universities and colleges (non-university higher education institutions). In accordance with the three-cycle Bologna

degree structure, there are Bachelor degree programmes lasting 6-8 semesters (ISCED 5A, 180-240 ECTS credits), which can be followed by Master degree programmes (ISCED 5A, 60-120 ECTS credits) for another 2-4 semesters. The third cycle provides doctoral studies (ISCED 6). Nevertheless, there are also undivided long programmes (10-12 semesters, 300-360 ECTS credits, ISCED 5A) in some disciplines, e.g. medicine or law.

Since 2005 there have been no entrance exams to universities. Admission depends on how students do on their secondary school leaving exam. There is a two-level examination system and students may decide whether they want to take the intermediate or the advanced exam.

The whole system is illustrated by the following figure:

Figure 1: Structure of the Hungarian Education System<sup>6</sup>



### Recent changes in the teacher training, one-cycle teacher training

Since 2013 a BA and an MA teacher qualification can be obtained in a one-cycle system. In both types (BA and MA courses), teacher trainees must have two majors/disciplines. Initial Teacher Education has three forms regarding its length: a 4 + 1-year type, a 4.5 + 1 year type and a 5 + 1 year type. The extra year is totally devoted to school placement. The ten-term training (4+1) provides qualification for primary schools (6-12 years of age), the eleven-term (4.5+1) one provides a mixed qualification, both

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://euroescuela.com/sosproject/partners/index.php?pais=hun&sec=3>.



for primary and secondary schools (6-18 years of age), and the twelve-term training (5+1) provides qualification for secondary schools (14-18 years of age).

As the training is unified, there is no difference between the three types of trainings at the moment of application and admission. In all three types there is a common (unified) syllabus in the first 6 terms of training (provided all the types exist in the chosen disciplines and the chosen university/college offers all the types of training). Trainees should make a decision which type of training (primary, mixed or secondary) they would like to graduate from after 3 years of teacher education. However, there are some exceptions to this rule, e.g. a foreign language teacher qualification can be obtained only in the 5+1 type of training, a music teacher qualification can be obtained only in a 4+1 type of training.

By completing a Bachelor of Education course, students can become qualified primary school teachers. The aim of the B. Ed. course is the training of experts who can teach all subjects in years 1-4, and at least one subject in which they are specialised in teaching at classes 1-6, based on their knowledge acquired during their theoretical and practical training.

### **Adult education and training**

It includes part-time general education programmes at all ISCED levels, vocational education, as well as a wide range of non-formal courses provided by the public and private sector.

### **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN)<sup>7</sup>**

The Public Education Act does not regulate if children/students with SEN have to be educated in special schools, or classes established for this purpose, or integrated in mainstream schools. It permits both opportunities. Although the NCC's unified development tasks should be applied in the case of students with SEN, the process of education must be organised in harmony with students' abilities, limitations and special needs. Children/students with SEN have the right to receive special education after their eligibility was determined. Parents consult the Educational Counselling Service. The service provides diagnostics and counselling; therapy and family care. If the child has specific educational needs or is struggling with adaptive, learning or behavioural difficulties an education rehabilitation committee is consulted. The Committee can either recommend that the student is placed in a specialised class or institution, or propose integration into mainstream education. Special needs education is provided in line with the rehabilitation committee's expert opinion. Parents, according to the Act on Equal Opportunities, have the right to select the educational institution that provides appropriate education for their children with SEN based on the relevant committee's expert opinion, taking into consideration the needs and possibilities of parents and children. The aim of the Hungarian education policy is to operate an inclusive system but also provide professional education to children/students with disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>National Core Curriculum <http://regi.ofi.hu/english/publications>.

<sup>8</sup>European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive education <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/hungary/national-overview/special-needs-education-within-the-education-system>.

# 4 Literacy Performance Data for Children and Adolescents

## 4.1 Performance Data for Primary Children

The performance data for primary children are derived from the IEA's PIRLS studies.

Inaugurated in 2001 and conducted every 5 years, **PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)** is an assessment of pupils' reading achievement at fourth grade organized by the Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The survey was administered in 35 countries in 2001, 45 education systems in 2006, and 50 in 2011. PIRLS assesses different purposes for reading (literary and informational) and different reading processes (retrieve explicit information, make inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements). Both multiple choice and open-ended questions are used.

Combining newly developed reading assessment passages and questions for 2011 with a selection of secure assessment passages and questions from 2001 and 2006, PIRLS 2011 allowed for measurement of changes since 2001. PIRLS 2011 also examined the national policies, curricula and practices related to literacy in participating countries, and included a set of questionnaires for students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and school principals to investigate the experiences that young children have at home and school in learning to read, in particular their attitudes and motivation towards reading.

For all PIRLS data used in this report, detailed tables with data for all participating countries in ELINET are provided, together with the EU averages (see Appendix C: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Data, Appendix D: ELINET PIRLS 2006 Data).

### 4.1.1 Performance and variation in reading: proportion of low and high performing readers

Students in Hungary achieved an overall mean reading score of 539 in PIRLS 2011 (Table 1). This was not significantly different from the EU-24 average (Table 14.1). Performance in Hungary was marginally better on Literary texts (542) than on Informational texts (536), and on Interpret, Integrate & Evaluate (542) than on Retrieve & Infer (537). However, differences were not large enough to reach statistical significant (ELINET PIRLS 2011 E-Appendix, Tables A2-A5).

Table 1: Overall Performance on PIRLS 2011 – Hungary and EU-24 Average

	Overall Reading – Mean Score
Hungary	539
EU-24	535

Significant difference (relative to the EU-24 Average) shown in **bold**.

In Hungary, 19% of students performed at or below the Low benchmark on overall reading. This is very similar to the EU average of 20%. In Hungary, 12% of students achieve at the Advanced benchmark. This is above the EU average of 9%.

Table 2: Performance by Overall PIRLS Reading Benchmarks 2011 - Percentages of Pupils

	Below 400	400-475 Low	475-550 Intermediate	550-625 High	Above 625 Advanced
Hungary	5	14	33	35	12
EU-24	5	15	36	35	9

Hungary's standard deviation of 78 is 8 points higher than the EU-24 average, indicating a wider spread of achievement in Hungary. The difference between the scores of students at the 90<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> percentiles in Hungary – 198 points – is 18 points above the corresponding EU-24 average of 180.

Table 3: Spread of Achievement – Standard Deviation, 10<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> Percentiles, and Difference between 90<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Percentiles on Overall Reading

	Standard Deviation	10 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	90 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>
Hungary	78	435	633	<b>198</b>
EU Avg	70	441	621	<b>180</b>

Significant differences are shown in **bold**.

Performance on PIRLS in Hungary dropped by 4 points between 2001 and 2011. The decline was too small to reach statistical significance. Unusually, performance in Hungary increased by 8 points between 2001 and 2006 (a statistically significant increase) and then fell by 12 points between 2006 and 2011. During the same period, performance in the EU-24 remained consistent, rising by just one point between 2006 and 2011.

Table 4: Trends in Performance 2001-2011 (Overall Scale) – Hungary and EU-24 Average

	2001	2006	Change (2006- 2001)	2006	2011	Change (2011- 2006)	2001	2011	Change (2011- 2001)
Hungary	543	551	<b>8</b>	551	539	<b>-12</b>	543	539	-4
EU-24 Avg.	534	534	0	534	535	1	534	535	1

Significant differences in **bold**.

#### 4.1.2 Gaps in reading

As in every European country there are achievement gaps between different groups.

##### Parent's educational achievement

In Hungary, 13% of pupils reporting having 10 or fewer books at home, compared with an EU-24 average of 11%. More pupils in Hungary (17%) reported having over 200 books, than on average across EU countries (12%). The achievement gap between those with 0-10 books and those with 200+ books is 106 points. This is greater than the EU average of 80 points.

Table 5: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Pupil with 0-10 books at Home, and those with More than 200 Books – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Books in the Home	None or Few Books (0-10)		More than 200 Books		Mean Score Difference (More than 200 – None or few)
	Percent of Students	Mean Reading Score	Percent of Students	Mean Reading Score	
Hungary	13	469	17	583	<b>113</b>
EU-24	11	482	12	563	<b>82</b>

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

Thirty-two percent of parents in Hungary reported having few home resources for learning – well above the EU-24 average of 25%. There was only a 1 percentage points gap between the EU Average (25) for many resources, and the Hungarian average (26) suggests that pupils in Hungary have similar access to home resources to the EU-24 average. The difference in achievement between pupils in Hungary whose parents reported having many home resources and few resources was 103 score points – 24 points higher than the corresponding EU-24 average difference (79).

Table.6 Percentages of Pupils Whose Parents Reported Having Few or Many Home Resources for Learning, and Corresponding Mean Overall Reading Scores – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Level of Home Resources	Few Resources		Many Resources		Difference (Many - Few)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Hungary	32	493	26	596	<b>103</b>
EU-24	25	495	25	573	<b>79</b>

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

Level of Education was Lower Secondary, and Percentages who Finished University or Higher – Hungary and EU-24

Level of Education	Lower Secondary or Below		University or Higher		Difference (Univ or Higher – Lower Sec)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Hungary	40	502	26	593	<b>91</b>
EU-24	18	495	30	571	<b>76</b>

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

### Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school

In Hungary, 97% of pupils reported that they always spoke the language of the PIRLS reading test at home – higher than the corresponding EU-24 Average (80) and the highest among EU-24 countries. Just 3% reported that they sometimes or never spoke the test language a home. The difference in achievement between pupils in Hungary reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke the language of the test was 59 score points – 33 points higher than the corresponding EU-24 average difference (26).

Table 7: Percentages of Students Reporting that They Always or Sometimes / Never Speak the Language of the PIRLS Test at Home, and Associated Mean Score Differences – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Language of the Test Spoken at Home	Always		Sometimes /Never		Mean Score Difference (Always – Sometimes/Never)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Hungary	97	542	3	482	<b>59</b>
EU-24 Avg	80	541	20	519	<b>26</b>

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

### Gender

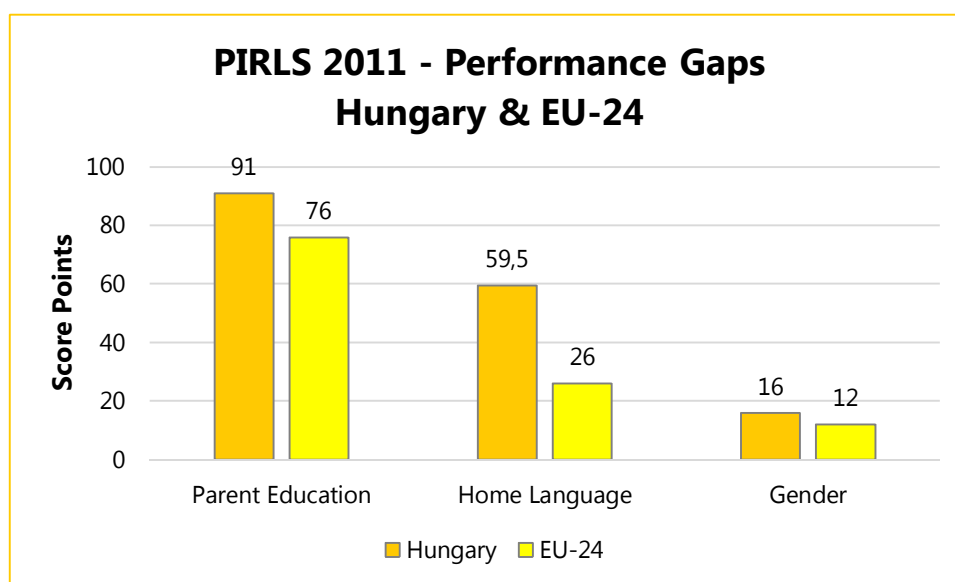
Girls in Hungary achieved a mean score on overall reading that was higher than boys by 16 points in 2011. This was slightly above the EU-24 average difference of 12 points (Table 14.5). Interestingly, the gap had fallen to 5 point in 2006, before rising again in 2011.

Table 8: Trends in Performance by Gender 2001-2011 (Overall Scale) – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Year	Hungary			EU-24		
	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys
2011	547	532	<b>16</b>	541	529	<b>12</b>
2006	554	548	5	541	528	<b>13</b>
2001	550	536	<b>14</b>	542	525	<b>17</b>

Significant differences in **bold**

Figure 2: Performance Gaps – Gender, Education and Language Spoken at Home



Education: Parent has University vs. Lower Secondary/Primary education; Language: Student speaks language of the test at home always vs. sometimes/never; Gender: Girls – boys;

## Attitudes to Reading

There was a difference of 61 points between the top and bottom quartiles of the Like Reading Scale in Hungary in 2011 (Table 9). On average across the EU-24, the difference between students in the top and bottom quarters of the Like Reading scale was 52 points, indicating a relatively stronger relationship between liking reading and performance in Hungary.

Table 9: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Students in the Top and Bottom Quartiles of the PIRLS Like Reading Scale – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Like Reading	Overall Reading Score		
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Difference (Q4-Q1)
Hungary	574	514	<b>61</b>
EU-24	563	511	<b>52</b>

Significant differences in bold

Students in Hungary in the top quarter of the Confidence in Reading scale achieved a mean score (591) that was some 106 points higher than students in the bottom quarter (485) (Table 10). The average difference across the EU-24 was 80 points, again indicating a relatively stronger relationship between Confidence and performance in Hungary.

Table 10: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Students in the Top and Bottom Quartiles of the PIRLS Confidence in Reading Scale – Hungary and EU-24 Average

Confidence in Reading	Overall Reading Score		
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Difference (Q4-Q1)
Hungary	591	485	<b>106</b>
EU-24	570	490	<b>80</b>

Significant differences in **bold**

There is a National Assessment of Basic Competences system since 2001. The assessment of basic skills and competences is an annual task of every full time primary and secondary school in year 6, 8 and 10. The assessment focuses on two areas: mathematics and text comprehension. Schools are informed about the results and the performance of their students. The school is obliged to take measures if the performance of at least half of the students is under level 2.

The University of Szeged has a nationwide digital assessment project with about 10.000 exercises from class 1 to 6. The major areas are mathematics, reading and sciences; moreover, there are 14 minor areas<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> You can read about them in the following link: [http://www.edu.u-szeged.hu/~csapo/irodalom/DIA/Diagnostic\\_Asesment\\_Project.pdf](http://www.edu.u-szeged.hu/~csapo/irodalom/DIA/Diagnostic_Asesment_Project.pdf).

The frameworks for reading is published here: [http://edia.hu/sites/default/files/books/Reading\\_Framework\\_English.pdf](http://edia.hu/sites/default/files/books/Reading_Framework_English.pdf).

## 4.2 Performance Data for Adolescents

The performance data are derived from the OECD PISA study.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) led by OECD<sup>10</sup> **assesses the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students every three years in all OECD countries and** in a number of partner countries.

Since 2000, PISA has been testing students in reading, mathematics and science. The OECD assessment also collects information on students' backgrounds and on practices, motivational attributes and metacognitive strategies related to reading.

The PISA tests assess different aspects of reading literacy – retrieve information, interpret, reflect and evaluate on texts – and use a variety of texts – continuous (prose) and non-continuous (texts including graphs, tables, maps...). About half of the questions are multiple-choice, the other half open-ended (short or constructed answers). Results are reported on scales defining different levels of proficiency ranging from 1 (low performing) to 6 (high performing). Level 2 is considered as the level all 15 year-olds should reach, and will enable them to participate effectively to society. Since 2015, PISA has been administered on computers only in most participating countries.

The follow-up of students who were assessed by PISA in 2000 as part of the Canadian Youth in Transition Survey has shown that students scoring below Level 2 face a disproportionately higher risk of poor post-secondary participation or low labour-market outcomes at age 19, and even more so at age 21, the latest age for which data from this longitudinal study are currently available. For example, of students who performed below Level 2 in PISA reading in 2000, over 60% did not go on to any post-school education by the age of 21; by contrast, more than half of the students (55%) whose highest level was Level 2 attended college or university (OECD 2010, S. 52).

### 4.2.1 Performance and variation in reading; proportion of low and high performing readers

Table 11: Reading performance in PISA 2012

	Mean	S.E.
Hungary	488	(3,2)
EU-27	489	(0,6)

S. E. = standard error; Significant differences between the country and the EU average are shown in **bold**

In PISA 2012, the reading performance of Hungarian student is very close to the EU's average.

Table 12: Trends in reading performance - PISA 2000-2012

	2000		2009		2012		Change 2000–2009		Change 2009–2012		Change 2000–2012	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.
Hungary	480	(4.0)	494	(3.2)	488	(3.2)	<b>14</b>	(7.1)	-6	(5.2)	8	(7.8)
EU-27	489*	(0.7)	486**	(0.6)	489***	(0.6)	-3*	(5.0)	<b>5**</b>	(2.7)	3*	(6.0)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold** \*EU21 \*\*EU26 \*\*\*EU27

<sup>10</sup> See: <http://www.pisa.OECD.org>.

The performances in Hungary have slightly increased between 2000 and 2012.

Table 13: Spread of achievement. Difference between 10th and 90th percentiles on the reading scale, all students and by gender – PISA 2012

	Difference 90 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> for all students		Difference 90 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> for girls		Difference 90 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> for boys	
	Score diff.	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.
Hungary	240	(6.2)	222	(7.2)	248	(7.8)
EU-27	251	(1.3)	230	(1.2)	259	(1.6)

Significant differences between the country and EU in **bold**

In Hungary, the spread of achievement is somewhat smaller than in the EU countries on average.

Table 14: Percentage of low-performing (below level 2) and high-performing (levels 5 and 6) students - PISA 2012

	Below level 2		Levels 5 and 6	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
Hungary	19.7	(1.2)	5.6	(0.8)
EU-27	19.7	(0.2)	7.0	(0.1)

Significant differences between the country and EU in **bold**

In Hungary the percentage of low-performing is similar than in the European countries on average. The proportion of high-performing readers is somewhat smaller.

Table 15: Trends in the proportion of low-performers (below level 2) in reading, all students, and by gender – PISA 2000-2012

	Proportion of students below level 2 in reading					
	All students		Girls		Boys	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
2000	22.7	(1.5)	17.9	(1.7)	27.2	(2.2)
2009	<b>17.6</b>	(1.4)	<b>11.4</b>	(1.5)	23.6	(1.8)
2012	19.7	(1.2)	13.0	(1.1)	26.9	(1.9)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold**

Between 2000 and 2012, the proportion of low-performing readers has slightly decreased (by - 3 %) in Hungary, mostly among girls (- 4,9 %).



## 4.2.2 Gaps in reading performance

### Socio-economic status

Table 16: Difference in reading performance between bottom and top national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status – PISA 2009

Difference between bottom and top national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status	
Score diff.	
Hungary	<b>118</b>
EU-26	<b>89</b>

Significant differences in reading performance between bottom and top national quarters in **bold**

In Hungary, the gap in reading performance according to the students' socioeconomic background is higher than in the European average. This gap of 118 score points is equivalent to almost three years of schooling. Hungary is less equitable than European countries on average.

### Migration

Table 17: Percentage of students and reading performance by immigrant status – PISA 2009

	Native students				Students with an immigrant background (first- or second-generation)				Difference in reading performance between native and students with an immigrant background	
	Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Score dif.	S.E.
			Mean	S.E.			Mean	S.E.		
Hungary	97.9	(0.3)	495	(3.1)	2.1	(0.3)	507	(8.3)	-12	(8.4)
EU-26	91.7	(0.0)	490	(0.4)	8.3	(0.0)	452	(6.4)	38	(6.4)

Significant differences between native and students with an immigrant background in **bold**

In Hungary, the percentage of students with an immigrant background is extremely low (2.1%). The difference in reading between native students and those with an immigrant background is negative (-12 score point), meaning that immigrant students perform better than native students. One of the reasons for the negative correlation is the positive influence of bilingualism.

## Language spoken at home

Table 18: Percentage of students and reading performance by language spoken at home – PISA 2012

	Speak test language at home				Speak another language at home				Difference in reading according to language spoken at home	
	Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Score dif.	S.E.
			Mean	S.E.			Mean	S.E.		
Hungary	99.0	(0.3)	496	(3.1)	1.0	(0.3)	403	(35.0)	<b>93</b>	(35.0)
EU-27	86.7	(0.02)	494	(0.4)	13.3	(0.02)	441	(5.4)	54	(5.4)

Significant differences according to language spoken at home in **bold**

In Hungary, the gap between students speaking the test language at home and those who do not (1 % of the students) is higher (93 score points) than the EU's average. It is equivalent to almost two years and a half of schooling.

However, the percentage of students who do not speak the test language at home (1%) is so low that this result has to be taken with a lot of caution.

## Gender

Table 19: Mean reading performance by gender and gender differences – PISA 2009

	Boys		Girls		Difference (B – G)	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.
Hungary	475	(3.9)	513	(3.6)	<b>-38</b>	(4.0)
EU-26	463	(0.5)	506	(0.4)	<b>-44</b>	(0.5)

Significant differences between boys and girls in **bold**

Gender difference in reading performance in Hungary is close to EU countries on average.

Table 20: Trends in reading performance by gender – PISA 2000-2012

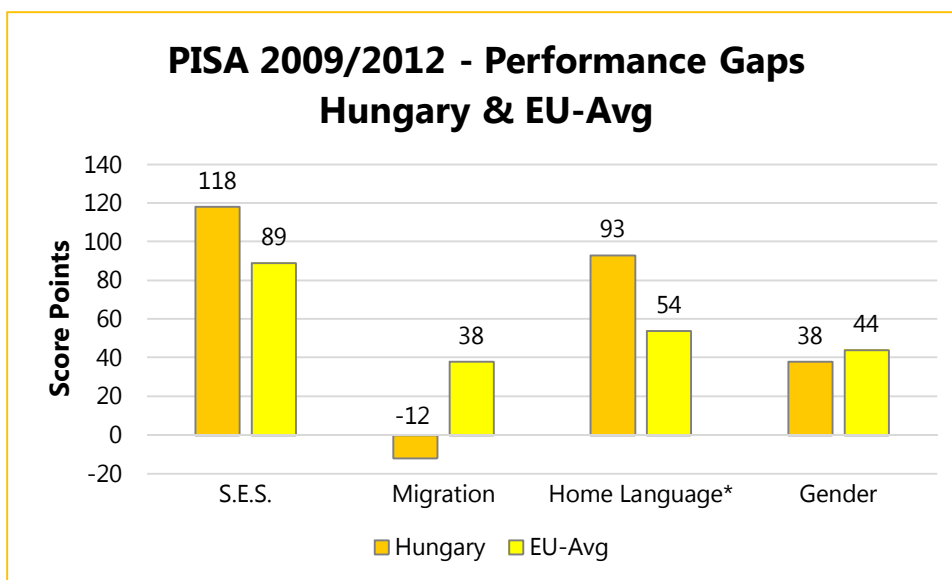
	Hungary				EU-27			
	Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.
2000	496	(4.4)	465	(5.3)	506*	(0.8)	473*	(0.9)
2009	<b>513</b>	(3.6)	475	(3.9)	507**	(0.7)	464**	(0.8)
2012	508	(3.3)	468	(3.9)	511***	(0.6)	468***	(0.8)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold** \*EU21 \*\*EU26 \*\*\*EU27

In Hungary, between 2000 and 2012 the performance very slightly increased among boys (+ 3 score points); the girls' performance increased more (+ 12 score points). Nevertheless, one can observe that the increase in reading performance was higher in 2009, especially for boys (+ 10 score points).

The trend is different from the European average between 2000 and 2012: the girls' performance increased from 5 score points, and the boys' decreased by 5 score points.

Figure 3: Performance Gaps – SES, Migration, Language Spoken at Home and Gender



SES: Top – Bottom national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Migration: Native - Students with an immigrant background; Language: Speak test language at home – speak other language at home; Gender: Girl - Boy

### Reading engagement and reading literacy

Table 21: Mean reading scores between students poorly engaged and highly engaged in reading – PISA 2009

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Hungary	452	(3.9)	556	(3.2)	<b>104</b>
EU-26	444	(0.8)	543	(0.8)	<b>99</b>

In Hungary, there is a gap of 104 score points – which is equivalent to two years and a half of schooling - between the students reporting being highly engaged in reading (top quarter), and those reporting being poorly engaged (bottom quarter) in that activity. Not surprisingly, students who report being engaged in reading perform better in the PISA test. The difference between the most and the least engaged readers in Hungary is higher than the EU's average.

Table 22: Mean reading scores between students in low and top quarters of understanding and remembering strategies

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Hungary	445	(4.7)	535	(3.5)	<b>90</b>
EU-26	433	(0.8)	531	(0.8)	<b>98</b>

In Hungary, there is a gap of 90 score points- equivalent to more than two years of schooling- between the students who know which strategies are the most efficient to understand and remember a text, and those who have a limited knowledge of that. This gap is very close to the EU's average (98 score points). This difference reflects how closely reading proficiency and awareness of efficient reading strategies are linked

Table 23: Mean reading scores between students in low and top quarters of summarizing strategies

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Hungary	434	(4.7)	549	(3.4)	<b>115</b>
EU-26	440	(0.8)	530	(0.7)	<b>90</b>

In Hungary, the gap of 115 score points – which is equivalent to almost three years of schooling - between the students who know which strategies are the most efficient to summarise a text, and those who have a limited knowledge of that is close to the EU's average. This difference between students in low and top quarters reflects how closely reading proficiency and awareness of efficient reading strategies are linked.

# 5 Policy areas

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (2012, p. 38) recommended that all EU Member States should focus on the following areas as they craft their own literacy solutions:

- 1) Creating a more literate environment
- 2) Improving the quality of teaching
- 3) Increasing participation, inclusion and equity (with the term “equity” was added by ELINET).

The following parts refer to these three key issues, however some overlapping may occur.

In order to achieve as much comparability as possible across countries, quantitative and qualitative indicators for which information from international data are available are reported. Appendix A provides more information on criteria for the choice of indicators and the chosen indicators for the pre-primary age group. For each of these indicators Appendix B contains a table with numbers of the European countries participating in ELINET. Appendix C has been created using the international database for PIRLS 2011 – and contains separate tables for all information reported. If countries did not participate in PIRLS 2011, data for PIRLS 2006 are referred to. Appendix D offers this information for the PIRLS 2006 data.

## 5.1 Creating a literate environment for children and adolescents

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated the following in relation to **creating a more literate environment**:

“Creating a more literate environment will help stimulate a culture of reading, i.e. where **reading for pleasure** is seen as the norm for all children and adults. Such a culture will fuel reading motivation and reading achievement: people who like to read, read more. Because they read more, they read better, and because they read better they read more: a virtuous circle which benefits individuals, families and society as a whole.” (HLG report 2012, p. 41).

Parents play a central role in children’s emergent literacy development. They are the first teachers, and shape children’s language and communication abilities and attitudes to reading by being good reading role models, providing reading materials, and reading to the child.

Schools play an important role in offering a literate environment for students. Schools may foster reading motivation and reading for pleasure by establishing school and classroom libraries, offering a wide variety of books and other reading material in different genres, providing sheltered and comfortable spaces for individual reading activities (like reading clubs), and not forcing children into having to express and exchange their individual (intimate) reading experiences.

However, schools do not have sole responsibility. A broad range of actors may shape literacy motivation, from parents and peers to libraries. Parents may provide role models and influence children’s attitudes towards literacy practices. Also, libraries have a vital role if they offer free books, especially for families who cannot afford to buy books. Regional or national campaigns may inspire children and their parents to engage in reading activities. (Cf. ELINET Country Reports, Frame of Reference, pp. 29ff.)

Adolescence is a crucial phase in life where young people develop long-term *identities and self-concepts* which include media preferences and practices (*media identity*). In this perspective, it is of great importance that families, schools and communities offer young people rich opportunities to encounter the *culture of reading* and develop a stable *self-concept as a reader/writer* and member of a literary culture. This includes access to a broad variety of reading materials (in print and electronic forms) and stimulating literate environments in and outside of schools; it also includes opportunities to get actively involved in engaging with texts, and communicating, reflecting on and exchanging ideas about texts with peers and ‘competent others’, such as teachers or parents (Ibid., pp. 45f).

### **5.1.1 Providing a literate environment at home**

The **home learning environment**, particularly in the first three years, is extremely important. It determines the quantity and quality of interactions between the infant and the primary caregivers, who are the most powerful agents of language development, both receptive and expressive, in the context of everyday activities and experiences. During these years, experience-dependent creation of synapses is maximal. We know that the more words the children are exposed to, the more they can learn. Caregiver-child relations in their turn strongly influence the ability to learn, by influencing self-esteem, general knowledge and motivation.

Several indicators are used to describe the literate home environment of very young children in this report, drawing on data from international sources (PIRLS) that are comparable across countries. It is important to acknowledge that some of the PIRLS data are self-reported and may be biased by social desirability and the ways in which questions are interpreted by parents within countries.

#### **Parental attitudes to reading**

PIRLS 2011 used the “Parents Like Reading Scale” according to their parents’ responses to seven statements about reading and how often they read for enjoyment. The figures are presented below with the percentage of students whose parents “like”, “somewhat like” or “do not like” reading” as reported by PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 4.4 – Parents Like Reading, p. 120).

The importance of parental attitudes to reading is shown by the fact that in Hungary there are great differences in reading performance at grade 4 between children whose parents like to read (average achievement 570) and those who do not (average achievement 501)

#### **Home Resources for Learning (PIRLS 2011)**

In Hungary, 12.5% of students reported having 10 or fewer books at home (ELINET PIRLS Appendix, Table E1). This is above the EU-24 average of 11.3%. 17.1% of students in Hungary have 200 or more books, compared with an EU-24 average of 12.3%. The mean score difference in favour of students with 200 books, compared with those who had 10 or fewer books was 113.2 points in Hungary, compared with an average of 81.7 across the EU-24. Hence, the association between number of books and reading achievement in Hungary is considerably stronger than on average across the EU-24.

Students in Hungary described as having ‘few’ home educational resources (based on a scale that includes number of books at home, number of children’s books at home, access to a quiet room to study, Internet access, and parent education and job status) had a mean score on PIRLS reading literacy that was significantly lower, by 110.6 points, compared with those described as having many resources (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table E2). The corresponding difference on average across the

EU-24 was 78.9, again indicating that the association between home resources and reading achievement is much stronger in Hungary than on average across the EU-2 B).

**Challenge:** The above mentioned facts are proof of the lack of the compensation effects of schools, as the interpretation of the last PISA-results indicated.

### **Number of children's books in the home**

PIRLS 2011 offers two sets of data concerning books in the home: The first refers to numbers of children's books in the home (based on reports by parents); the second refers to books in the home (regardless of whether they are children's books or not), as reported by students. A possible discrepancy might be explained by the difference in sources and questions.

The PIRLS 2011 database provides the figures below about the number of children's books in the home based on the report of parents:

- 0-10: 13.8% (European average 11.8%)
- 11-25: 18.6% (European average 19.7%)
- 26-50: 28.4% (European average 29.4%)
- 51-100: 22.9% (European average 23.4%)
- >100: 16.4% (European average 15.7%).

Compared to the European average (for an overview of European countries see table B2 in Appendix B) the availability of children's books in the home is very close to the EU figures in Hungary.

### **Early Literacy Activity Scale**

PIRLS 2011 reports the percentage of students whose parents (often, never or almost never) engaged in literacy-relevant activities with them before the beginning of primary school (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.6 - Early Literacy Activities Before Beginning Primary School, p. 126). Nine activities are considered: reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys, talking about things done, talking about things read, playing word games, writing letters or words, reading signs and labels aloud.

The figures for Hungary in the composite score for all these activities are below (for an overview of European countries see table B3 in Appendix B):

- Often: 42.6% (European average 40.7%)
- Sometimes: 56.1% (European average 57.4)
- Never or almost never: 1.3% (European average 1.9%).

This means that, in Hungary, nearly all parents engage often or sometimes in early literacy activities with their children in the nine activities. The Early Literacy Activity Scale correlates with later reading performance in grade 4. The average reading score of pupils who were engaged often in these activities was 553, as compared with 535 for those pupils who sometimes were engaged in these activities with their parents before the beginning of primary school. These figures demonstrate the importance of the time devoted to literacy-related activities in early childhood and their association with achievement in Grade 4.

While the Early Literacy Activity Scale is a composite score it is of interest to look at single items. If only the category "often" is considered, the percentage of pupils in Hungary whose parents engaged in

specific literacy-related activities with them before the beginning of primary school is near or slightly above the European average:

- read books to them often: 61.6% (European average 58.4 %)
- told stories to them often: 75.6% (European average 51. 5%)
- sang songs to them often: 55.5% (European average 50.6%)
- played games involving shapes (toys and puzzles) with them often: 62.5% (European average 63.5%).

(For more details and an overview of European countries see table B 4 – B 7 in Appendix.

**Challenge:** Since reading to the child is a predictor of future literacy achievement it is a matter of concern that there are differences between parents concerning social class. There is a need for programmes **to raise awareness of all parents** that literacy is a key to learning and life chances and that the basis for good literacy achievement is laid in early childhood. In particular there is a need for more family literacy programmes with **a focus on supporting parents and carers** working with minority children in understanding and fostering the literacy development of their children.

### 5.1.2 Providing a literate environment in school

**Challenge:** As we know from the PISA and other studies, there is a high correlation between reading for pleasure and reading performance. Therefore, schools, libraries, families and communities should do more in order to support reading motivation, reading habits and a stable self-concept as a reader among adolescents, especially boys and students from disadvantaged families (low SES, migrant background).

#### Resources teachers use for teaching reading

Since the type of reading materials teachers use in literacy instruction may influence the motivation of students, it is of interest to have a closer look at this matter. PIRLS 2011 provides some data. Just a very small proportion of students in Hungary (5%) are taught by teachers who use a variety of children's books as a basis for reading instruction, compared with an EU average of 29%. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils in Grade 4 in Hungary are taught by teachers who use textbooks as the basis of reading instruction, compared with an EU average of 70%. Three per cent of students in Hungary are taught by teachers who report that computer software is used as a basis of reading instruction – about the same as the EU-24 average (5%) – while 39% of students in Hungary use computer software as a supplement, compared with 47% on average across EU countries (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 8.12, p. 236, EU averages obtained from PIRLS 2011 database, s. Table H1 in Appendix C).

#### Availability and use of classroom library

Based on data provided by their teachers, PIRLS shows that 79.9% of students in Hungary are in classrooms which have class libraries – above the corresponding EU-24 average of 73% (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table H2). In Hungary, 12.5% of students were in classrooms with more than 50 books, which is below the EU-24 average of 21% (ibid.).

**Challenge:** According to PIRLS 2011, nearly 20% of students in Grade 4 in Hungary were in classrooms with no classroom library. The situation concerning school libraries was also problematic. Only about 15% of all Hungarian school children have ca. 50 books or 3 magazine titles in their classroom libraries. Problems also lie with transitions to higher schools, such as from primary to secondary, where



performance is sometimes getting worse. The reasons for these problems are manifold. One of them is the increase of the number of lessons and the widening of lesson materials and scope. The other explanation is the lack of transition of primary methods to the secondary sector. Basic skills are regarded as having already been acquired in the first 4 years.

### **5.1.3 Providing a digital environment**

#### **Digital environment of primary students**

According to teachers' reports, 38% of students in Hungary have a computer available for reading lessons, compared to the EU-average of 45% (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix Table I6). In Hungary, 35% use a computer at least monthly to look up information. The corresponding EU-24 average is slightly higher at 40% (ibid). In Hungary, 12% of students are in classrooms whose teachers report that the students use computers to write stories or other texts at least monthly. The corresponding EU-24 average is 33%.

According to Balkányi and Ostorics (2012), information technology only appears as a supplemental tool in the process of reading instruction.

#### **Digital environment of secondary students**

There are national strategies covering training measures for ICT in schools, digital/media literacy, e-learning and e-inclusion. There are central steering documents for all ICT learning objectives. According to these official steering documents, students and teachers should use ICT in all subjects in class and for complementary activities (knowledge of computer, hardware and electronics, using multimedia, social media and developing programming skills). At secondary level ICT is also taught as a separate subject. Public-private partnerships promote the use of hardware and software in schools.

According to the study of Emedus, in Hungary, media literacy is a competency and a set of skills which is integrated into the curriculum of secondary education as a cross-curricular subject. Only at upper-secondary level (in years 9-12) is media literacy a separate subject. Students should acquire skills in order to use computer tools, software, info-communication resources and resources in libraries. They should also learn to understand the phenomenon of the information society (pp. 2/3). There are teacher training programs in Moving Image Culture and Media Studies, and also prepared activities for teachers and support for the implementation of activities.

According to the SoS country profile, in Hungary, ICT is used in class as a general tool for specific tasks in other subjects (p. 4). At all grades, use of ICT by teachers is lower than the EU average. Nearly one third of teachers (EU 38%) use ICT in more than 25% of lessons (p. 10). But Hungary is among the leading group of countries in terms of student-centred learning at all grades (p. 11). Teachers participate in professional development (48%, EU 53%) and students are also engaged in ICT training provided by school staff (at grade 8: 36% (EU 51%), at grade 11: 35% (EU 42%) (p. 18). Compared to the EU level, fewer students are in schools where ICT coordinators provide pedagogical as well as ICT support, but the incentives for using ICT is above the EU average at all grades (p. 21).

According to the Emedus study, schools in Hungary have an evaluation platform which allows them to give self-assessment (as an indicator of the progress of schools in new technologies) (p. 3).

**Challenge:** Students have to rely on themselves or private resources to acquire digital literacy skills. Shortages of resources (library books, computers) in classrooms, and infrequent use of computers in reading classes need to be addressed.

#### **5.1.4 The role of public libraries in reading promotion**

Public libraries are an important agent in reading promotion. In Hungary, in recent years, the role of the public libraries in reading promotion has increased significantly. Act CXL of 1997 (on Public Library Provision) set the legal framework for the new library system, incorporating the following concepts: libraries are the core institutions of the information society, the library system is a prerequisite for the free flow of information, all citizens have the right to access services provided by the libraries which are "open to all users", the development of the library system and national library services must be financed by the state. The latest update of the Act added some new elements: public libraries must help citizens to develop their information literacy and digital literacy competencies. All county, municipal and village libraries must be registered as "libraries open to all users", and must respond to the requirements stipulated by the Library Act. There are 20 county libraries, nearly 300 municipal libraries and over 2,500 village libraries, and nearly 4,000 school libraries in Hungary. The National Curriculum introduced the teaching of library skills as a compulsory subject.

The areas of strategic development of libraries for the period 2008-2013 were determined in accordance with the objectives of the overall National Development Plan, which aims to increase the competitiveness and employability of citizens. One of the key areas of the library strategy is that libraries should contribute to developing reading culture with new methods and programmes. In the strategy period 2008-2013 the European Union contributed a major sum for implementing comprehensive library development in Hungary. The government has approved, within the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan, two main programmes: the Social Infrastructure Operational Programme and the Social Renewal Operational Programme. The main objectives of both are very closely related to education and learning: to develop the infrastructure of library services in a co-ordinated manner, to provide quality education and to ensure access for all. All libraries that received support from the EU had to organise special programmes for reading promotion during the grant period. Thanks to the development projects, there are now many more and better databases helping lifelong learning, and a lot of new programmes for promoting reading development, reading comprehension and information literacy. The number of participants in these programmes was 795,165.

#### **Cooperation between secondary schools, families, libraries and other agents in literacy promotion for adolescents**

According to the PISA results (2012), in the majority of Hungarian students' homes, there are less than 200 books. The number of books at home correlates with the school results of the students. There is also a strong correlation between school results and the use of the school library. The students who use the library more frequently have better results in PISA, especially in reading comprehension. More than 80% of the schools stated that the supply of the school library is not satisfactory enough for the teaching and learning expectations.

The National Educational Library and Museum is the central institution in Hungary promoting school libraries and information literacy development. With the help of an EU grant the library developed the Portal for Reading Development ([olvasas.opkm.hu](http://olvasas.opkm.hu)). The Portal is to ensure cooperation between

Hungarian schools and libraries to develop children's literacy. It collects full text educational materials and tools for teachers and parents to popularise reading and information-seeking competencies. It supports the development of non-formal and informal training programmes and the adaptation of Hungarian and international best practices. The Portal also collects new pilot programmes, and best practices edited by teachers and school librarians. These educational programmes can be used in elementary and secondary education to support reading development and the improvement of digital and information skills in a non-formal and informal way. The educational programmes urge the students to use different information sources, library databases and the internet.

**Challenge:** The situation of the school libraries is a crucial problem of reading promotion in Hungary. It is very urgent to develop a comprehensive survey about the recent situation, and initiate a new conception and strategy for the development of school libraries. They should be the knowledge centres in schools, coordinating information flow and helping students and teachers to acquire the necessary skills not only for reading, but also for 21<sup>st</sup> century information literacy.

### **5.1.5 Improving literate environments for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples**

#### **Programmes for introducing parents and children to libraries and bookshops**

Public libraries offer a wide range of programmes to popularise library culture. They organise special programmes for mothers and their babies, where they sing nursery rhymes accompanied with musical instruments. For children between 3 to 7 years old libraries organise puppet theatre shows as well as arts and craft classes in the afternoon and music sessions. These activities are very popular, and of course the participants borrow books after the event. Story-telling sessions are usually on Hungarian folk tales, because we are very rich in folklore. For adolescents there are more sophisticated programmes, where they use books and learn art and craft techniques. They have to use their brains and their hands. Public libraries often organise reading competitions for students, and reading camps in the summer.

The National Library Days, held every year in October, are coordinated by the Alliance of Libraries and Information Institutes. The event, which has been a tradition for over a decade, mirrors the goals of the library weeks organised in many other countries of the world. Its objective is to raise public awareness of the value of libraries in the knowledge society through various library events and extensive media coverage (TV, radio and newspapers). Over one week, library conferences, exhibitions and literary events are held throughout the country, while libraries also use this opportunity to promote their services and enhance their public relations.

A database of all children's literature available in Hungarian<sup>11</sup>, created by the Hungarian Library Institute, is also at the service of parents, teachers and young readers. The system with annotations for each publication provides sufficient information for all inquirers to be able to orientate themselves among the many children's books on sale in shops and accessible in libraries

"Read to, with and for your children!"- Reading engagement programme at Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty (Szinger 2012). The above mentioned series of programmes was initiated in spring 2011 and it is still ongoing so that kindergarten children could experience reading for pleasure through playful comprehension of literature texts among library settings. The programme is run

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<sup>11</sup> <http://ki.oszk.hu/gyerekirodalom/>.

according to a schedule and is to promote positive attitudes to books, reading and literature as such. As the programme is a bit different from kindergarten literacy curriculum, children can get familiar with possibilities offered by libraries. Kindergarten teachers and librarians meet children at a very sensitive period of cognitive and language development. Besides creating a positive attitude towards reading development of comprehension was in focus by applying the method of interactive story telling. Another aim is to involve parents, and through this common positive experience, books, reading and literature can appear as a topic in family conversations.

### **Initiatives to foster reading engagement among children and adolescents**

Libraries are not the only actors in reading promotion. In cooperation with them or on their own initiative other organisations – state or civil – also offer a great variety of programmes to foster reading engagement among children of all ages – both at regional and national level. HUNRA, the Hungarian Reading Association<sup>12</sup> stands out as an exemplary initiator of such projects.

HUNRA, founded in 1992, as the major NGO promoting reading development in Hungary, organises conferences, collects research data about literacy issues, publishes textbooks, essays, studies, and gives a platform for all people engaged in literacy research and promotion to share their ideas. They collaborate with schools, libraries and other educational associations in reading promotion campaigns and activities.

To illustrate the variety of programmes that have been available over the past couple of years presented below you find some of their initiatives – along with projects run by other associations or institutions.

Book Gobbler<sup>13</sup>, a programme initiated by HUNRA and Meseutca (Talestreet) Foundation and coordinated by Klebelsberg Institution Maintenance Centre, aimed to popularise contemporary children's literature among primary school pupils. Teachers were trained to work with 10 selected pieces of contemporary Hungarian children's literature. They were also provided with teaching aids and supplementary materials. Thus trained, they conducted special literary classes for their pupils on the works chosen. More than 80 teachers and thousands of pupils in schools maintained by KIMC were involved in the programme. 12 author-reader meetings in different locations were also organised as part of the project.

The European Reader Mate<sup>14</sup> programme was also adapted by HUNRA in Hungary. While in other European countries volunteers visit families to read out loud to their children, in Hungary children are invited to libraries and the reading sessions take place there or reading mates visit children in hospital. As part of the programme, hundreds of university and secondary school students read out loud regularly to disadvantaged children with high risk factors for reading problems. As a result, these children - despite their poor conditions - become familiar with books and according to feedback by participants develop a positive attitude to reading. Training courses for potential volunteers are organised nationwide by HUNRA in cooperation with KIMC on a regular basis.

Book Bundle<sup>15</sup> is still another programme initiated by HUNRA. It is targeted at children in state care. On coming of age they are donated a pack of books to help them start their adult life as readers.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hunra.hu/>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://meseutca.hu/betufalo/a-programrol/>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hunra.hu/rolunk/olvaso-tarsasag/>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://hunra.hu/hirek/598-meseszolgalat-es-koenyvbatyu/>.

Readers' Night<sup>16</sup> is a yearly event organised by actors in the book industry to create a fresh image for reading. The event features a variety of colourful programmes in a number of locations - taking place from early in the afternoon till midnight and after. A number of bookshops all over the country have late night shopping on this day.

Chameleon Readers' Club<sup>17</sup> is a four-round reading competition for lower primary pupils aimed to improve their reading skills and make them familiar with contemporary children's literature. Children participating receive a professionally compiled and aesthetically illustrated task sheet four times during the school year by mail. There is a separate set of tasks based on different works for each grade which ensures that children receive tasks matching their skill levels and interests. The competition is organised by Chameleon Book Community Foundation.

The Tale Museum and Workshop<sup>18</sup> (Mesemúzeum) in the first district of Budapest – inspired by the idea of poet Kányádi Sándor and sponsored from project funds offered by the Ministry of Human Capacities – provides an interactive, indoor adventure space for young children to run, play, and explore the basic elements of fairy tales. The mission of the museum is to prepare infants (3-4) with the necessary emotional and developmental tools that pave the way for reading and literature; to engage kids of five, six, and seven and encourage their language awareness, speech, and comprehension skills; and to instill in older children an interest in the basic elements of literature and a fascination with classical and contemporary fiction. Mesemúzeum is concerned with children's moral and emotional education, and seeks to connect literature, drama, and art into a single experience that expands children's knowledge and imaginations.

The latest teaching aid offered by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development to teachers and parents in supporting children with their reading development is a monthly entitled Mikkamakka<sup>19</sup> – published since autumn 2015. The magazine, named after Lázár Ervin's well-known tale character, is targeted at children of 6-10 and aims to convey quality children's literature to its intended audience. Every month it features a wide selection of folk tales, the best of children's poetry and prose – artistically illustrated. The literary texts go with challenging, age-specific tasks aimed to improve the young readers' vocabulary and comprehension skills. The publication also offers space for book reviews.

**Challenge:** The number of initiatives is many, yet the projects are sometimes isolated, of limited scope and lack coordination and coherence. They are often not extensive enough and do not always reach out to those most in need.

### **Offering attractive reading material for children and adolescents in print and non-print**

Although in the computer age we expect book sales to decline, children's literature remains a prosperous branch for publishers. According to statistics by the Association of Hungarian Book Publishers and Distributors<sup>20</sup> sales in children's print books increased by 23.98% and had a share of 28.59% in the total market in 2015. Traditional quality publishers and newly founded ones release fresh literature in printed and old in re-printed books year by year, and to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations,

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<sup>16</sup> <http://ujkonyvpiac.hu/index.php/cikkek/columns-3/item/370>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.rainbowkatalogus.hu/olvasoklub/jatekleiras.php>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mesemuzeum.hu/>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://folyoiratok.ofi.hu/mikkamakka>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.mkke.hu/konyvforgalom-2015>.

digital applications are also available. Bookr Kids<sup>21</sup> is an example of the latter. This application offers young readers a digital library of about 100 interactive animated books with a read-out-loud function. All the tales are richly illustrated and narrated by famous Hungarian actors. The constantly growing digital library is accessible for a reasonable subscription fee.

## 5.2 Improving the quality of teaching

To improve the quality of teaching, important aspects need to be considered:

- The quality of preschool
- coherent literacy curricula
- high-quality reading instruction,
- early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners
- highly qualified teachers (cf. Frame of Reference for ELINET Country Reports).

Especially crucial is the quality of teaching and of teachers, as the report “How the world best performing school systems come out on top” (McKinsey et al. 2007) states: “The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” (McKinsey et al. 2007)

### 5.2.1 Quality of preschool

While early childhood education has long been neglected as a public issue, nowadays early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been recognized as important for “better child well-being and learning outcomes as a foundation for lifelong learning; more equitable child outcomes and reduction of poverty; increased intergenerational social mobility; more female labour market participation; increased fertility rates; and better social and economic development for the society at large” (OECD 2012 *Starting Strong III*, p. 9). In all European countries pre-primary education is an important part of political reflection and action.

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated:

“Increasing investment in high-quality ECEC is one of the best investments Member States can make in Europe’s future human capital. ‘High quality’ means highly-qualified staff and a curriculum focused on language development through play with an emphasis on language, psychomotor and social development, and emerging literacy skills, building on children’s natural developmental stages.” (High Level Group Report, 2012a, p. 59).

While there is no international or Europe-wide agreed concept of ECEC quality, there is agreement that quality is a complex concept and has different dimensions which are interrelated. In this report we focus on *structural quality* which refers to characteristics of the whole system, e.g. the financing of pre-primary education, the relation of staff to children, regulations for the qualifications and training of the staff, and the design of the curriculum. There are some data concerning structural quality, but there is a lack of research and data about process quality, practices in ECEC institutions, the relation between children and teachers, and what children actually experience in their institutions and programmes.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.bookrkids.hu/?lang=en>.

### **Annual expenditure on pre-primary education**

According to Eurostat (2014, Figure D3), the total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP in Hungary is 0.7%. The range is from 0.04% in Turkey and 0.1% in Ireland to 1.01% in Denmark (for an overview of European countries see table D1 in Appendix B).

### **Ratio of children to teachers in pre-primary school**

According to Education at a Glance 2014 (OECD 2014, p. 451) the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools for children at the age of four in Hungary is 11.2. For the other European countries OECD (2014 p.324) provides information about the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools (for an overview of European countries see table D2 in Appendix B).

### **Percentage of males among preschool teachers**

According to Pordata (2014), 0.2% of the pre-primary teachers in Hungary are males. The range is from 0.2% in Bulgaria and Hungary to 17.7% in France (for an overview of European countries see table D3 in Appendix B).

### **Preschool teachers' qualifications**

As in most of the European countries the minimum required level to become a qualified teacher is Bachelor level (ISCED 5). Continuing Professional Development is obligatory (Eurydice/Eurostat 2014, pp. 104-105).

**Challenge:** There is a discontinuity in the career path of teachers. If preschool or primary teachers plan to acquire a higher qualification (MA level or PhD), they have to choose a different kind of (teacher) training.

### **Preschool language and literacy curriculum**

The design of the kindergarten curriculum is an important aspect of quality. Therefore it is included in this section and not in the next section "Literacy curricula in schools". It also takes into consideration that young children have learning needs than are sometimes different to those of school children.

There is a National Core Programme both for kindergarten/nursery school and creche education in Hungary, which apply to all kindergartens/nursery school and creches respectively, regardless of the maintainer. Both are a core curriculum defining the general pedagogic principles and objectives of education and care. The staff in each kindergarten/nursery school and creche is responsible for developing the local educational programme (i.e. local curriculum) in line with the National Core Programme.

According to the National Curriculum of Nursery School Education (ONOAP 2012) the main purpose would be rather to satisfy children's physical, mental and intellectual claims than concentrating on the expectations of schools. ONOAP provides methodological freedom for kindergarten teachers. The most important tool of kindergarten education is playing, which is regarded as most effective for the development of children. The significance of playing has to be reflected in the daily timetable and schedule of the kindergarten. Kindergarten education is mainly based on the following activities:

- Poems, stories,
- Singing, music, singing and playing,
- Drawing, modelling, craft,

- Physical exercise,
- Learning actively about the external world. (Eurypedia)<sup>22</sup>

### **Engaging and motivating children in literacy-related activities**

Fostering the development of emergent literacy skills is an important function of pre-school institutions, providing a basis for formal literacy instruction in primary school. Pre-school programmes should focus on developing children's emergent literacy skills through playful experience rather than systematic training in phonics or teaching the alphabet. There is no evidence that systematic instruction of reading in preschool has any benefit for future learning (Suggate 2012). The authors of this report consider the following to be key components: oral language development, including vocabulary learning and grammar, familiarisation with the language of books (e.g. through hearing stories read and told), being engaged and motivated in literacy-related activities, experiencing a literacy-rich environment, developing concepts of print, and language awareness (for more information see the frame text of country reports).

In general, the Hungarian core programme provides methodological freedom for nursery school teachers, but seriously rejects all trends pointing towards formal school education. (At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the 1970's, in kindergartens, direct, formal instruction was characteristic.) Today, even if "kindergarten pedagogues come under pressure from parents to teach reading and writing, they have strongly resisted the direct teaching of literacy and numeracy" (OECD 2004, p. 20). The national core programme does not include guidelines for children's engagement in emergent literacy activities. The programmes anticipate activities integrated in everyday life (EASE. Overview of the national organisation of early education and early primary services: Hungary).

Kecskemét College has an aim to improve children's and young learners' reading skills through informal ways of learning. "Reading belongs to everyone, even to you" was a project that aimed to make students (8-14 years of age) capable of using cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies that match the expectations of Hungarian mother tongue education. The target group of the programme was students in Sándor Petőfi Practice School. Different groups had been formed based on test results. During the project period, 7 sessions were held in a library and 8 lessons in a camp. Volunteers, teacher trainees, were also involved in the project. The main goal of the project was to make students apply reading strategies in an efficient way (Szabó 2012).

**Challenge:** The National Core Curriculum does not integrate the question of pre-literacy education with literacy education at schools. Therefore various interpretations of pre-school literacy are the basis for local programmes. However, the over-generalised definitions are not sufficient since early childhood programmes can contribute to the prevention of reading difficulties, like developing skills necessary for reading/writing and providing young children with a rich literacy environment. If the fundamental document (the National Core Curriculum) does not declare this point, this lack allows for extreme interpretations. In order to avoid encroachment, kindergarten teachers have a large responsibility. Nevertheless, it is the time when pre-literacy should be incorporated into the National Core Curriculum, which is right now under revision; the revised version is to be introduced in 2018.

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<sup>22</sup> More details on ECEC system and curriculum: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/hungarian-ecec-specificities\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/hungarian-ecec-specificities_en.pdf).



## Improving early language and literacy screening and training

The provision of books and children's engagement in storytelling activities constitutes the central aspect of literacy development (EASE. Overview of the national organization of early education and early primary services: Hungary). Children should have the opportunity to play with language, using nonsense words and rhyming (Eurydice 2011, p. 55).

**Challenge:** There is no systematic assessment of children in order to identify language development problems. Kindergarten teachers have general assessment responsibilities (EURYDICE<sup>23</sup>). Some screening tools exist, though (GMP, INIZAN, BENDER A), and can be applied and used by qualified experts. There are no expectations regarding the written aspect of literacy.

### 5.2.2 Literacy curricula in schools

The current Hungarian curriculum system is a three-level and two-pole model, in which both government and local school regulations play a role. The highest level of content regulation in public education is represented by the National Core Curriculum (NCC). Its first version was drafted in 1989. Since then it has undergone significant changes both in approach and in content – among other things – due to the fact that in 2007 the key competences for lifelong learning were included on EU recommendation. The latest version issued in 2012<sup>24</sup> is renewed in mission as well as in content, for it presents not only general development tasks but also specific subject knowledge content. The centrally issued framework curricula developed in accordance with the NCC constitute the second level. They define the themes, the detailed requirements for specific subjects, and grades. There is a separate framework curriculum for each type of school at all educational stages. Schools are obliged to develop their local curricula based on the national framework curricula. They are guaranteed a certain amount of freedom which they can use to adapt the frame to local needs and to include school specific features.

The development of the key competences – of which communication in the mother tongue stands out as a priority - is a main focus of the NCC. The improvement of mother tongue communication in this context basically equals the improvement of literacy. Its improvement – as that of a basic and transversal skill – has a cross-curricular aspect. Being a horizontal goal, mother tongue competence development is present among the aims in all subject areas – e.g. maths, history, visual culture. It is also highlighted as an objective in extra-curricular learning programmes and activities.

With respect to the general principles and goals relating to the subject area Hungarian Language and Literature, the NCC also emphasises the importance of mother tongue education in the acquisition of all other subject areas and it concludes that the development of the mother tongue competence is a task for all subject areas and that it promotes and serves as a basis for independent knowledge acquisition and – as a closely related factor – differentiated thinking and the ability of and desire for lifelong learning.

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<sup>23</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Separate\\_Special\\_Education\\_Needs\\_Provision\\_in\\_Early\\_Childhood\\_and\\_School\\_Education](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Separate_Special_Education_Needs_Provision_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education).

<sup>24</sup> [http://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/ofipast/2014/04/NAT\\_2012\\_EN\\_final\\_2014marc14.pdf](http://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/ofipast/2014/04/NAT_2012_EN_final_2014marc14.pdf)

## **Contents of literacy curricula**

The recent version of curricula in Hungary is much closer to the modern definition of literacy, reading, writing skills, but basic literacy skills still developed mostly at primary school level. Requirements of useful literacy skills are getting higher, that is the very reason for the need of more time for the teaching of basic literacy skills, not only at primary level. Other subjects and disciplines do not pay attention to literacy skills, they are mainly included in language and literature.

The new National Core Curriculum adopted in May 2012 recognises literacy as a basic and transversal skill which has to be developed across the whole education system. The Core Curriculum makes a reference to the 8 key competences and describes them as essential competences for the 21st century. Literacy is mentioned in the description of communication in the mother tongue and learning to learn. Learning to learn is a key competence which must be addressed by every teacher in every subject. Literacy is included in the developmental tasks of Language, Literature, Foreign language, Mathematics and Media Literacy. However, it is not mentioned in the parts belonging to sciences.

The last version of the curriculum pays more attention to functional literacy, literacy in everyday life in primary, elementary and middle schools. The national curriculum focuses on teaching, learning functional, digital literacy skills. This appears at a cross curricular level, for instance in the field of teaching methods and strategies.

## **Literacy curricula in primary schools**

The framework curriculum for Hungarian Language and Literature as a subject in grades 1-4 contains reading instruction and teaching reading comprehension as a separate area to be developed. The primary goal of reading instruction at this stage is to make reading a basic skill that enables students to comprehend the text and instructions in schoolbooks while reading silently. They should learn to retrieve information and use it in new tasks. In addition, students learn to read aloud expressively and form a basis for analytical, critical, and creative reading.

The Eurydice report "Teaching Reading in Europe" offers broad information about the content of reading literacy curricula and official guidelines (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice 2011). In order not to duplicate this work only two aspects were addressed in the ELINET country reports whose importance might not yet be acknowledged and therefore might be missing in the literacy curricula and official guidelines: explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (phonics), and reading strategies.

### *Explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences*

The curriculum in Hungary includes all five indicators for knowledge of phonics during the primary years and three of six indicators for word identification, namely progression in recognising words (short and long), enriching vocabulary, and writing other words from memory (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Figure 1.2, p. 56). It is also noted that knowledge of phonics and word identification are taught mainly in primary grades in Hungary.

The use of grapheme-phoneme correspondences features in the National Frameworks for 1-4 grades (6 to 10 years, lower primary section) introduced in 2013.

The National Framework for Mother Tongue and Literature education for grades 1-2 states that the following skills of children in grade 1 should be developed in the preparatory stage of teaching reading (25 lessons):

- phoneme awareness,
- the ability of making distinctions, attention span, pace, rhythm, vocabulary,
- use of Hungarian,
- communication rules,
- recognizing directions,
- vocabulary of relations,
- language awareness.

Children are expected to be open to and motivated in reading; they are expected to have the adequate knowledge and vocabulary about reading and literacy; their subskills should meet a certain level.

The National Framework for Mother Tongue and Literature education for grades 1-2 has a block titled "Reading, comprehension of written texts 2. – acquiring the signs of reading, developing decoding abilities" (70 lessons).

The following activities are included in this block:

- developing vocabulary related to reading (e. g. author, writer, title, reader, text, punctuation, paragraph);
- raising awareness about the function and process of reading;
- recognising letters, letter-sound, phoneme-grapheme correspondence rules should become automatic;
- reliable letter contraction skills;
- the ability to recognise and correct reading mistakes.

Children use their phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately.

In relation to writing, the same document says in its block titled "Preparation of writing, the technical basics of teaching writing" (20 lessons):

- The development of phoneme awareness and hearing is a prerequisite.
- Children should be enabled to find the position of sounds in words, and decide on the duration of sounds (short and long vowels or consonants).
- To achieve this aim, students' analytic and synthetic skills are to be developed.

The next block about writing aims "To develop writing techniques" and children are expected to write short words (no longer than 6 letters).

Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways that match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words.

In the first two years of the lower primary sector, students should be taught to:

- Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words.
- Respond with the correct sound to grapheme (letters) for all the phonemes.
- Read accurately sounds in unfamiliar words containing grapheme-phoneme correspondences that have been taught

- Read common exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound and where these occur in the word.
- Spell words containing all the phoneme-grapheme correspondences already taught.
- Apply rules of division of words in common words.
- Be able to apply the rules of the “one phoneme two letters” (spelling rules) in 30-40 pre-taught words.

Phonics continues to feature as children progress through grades 1-2. Students should be taught to:

- Continue to apply phonics knowledge and skills as the route to decode words until automatic decoding has been embedded and reading is fluent.
- Read accurately by blending the sounds in words that contain the graphemes taught so far.
- Segment words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes spelling.

Although children in grades 3-4 continue to apply knowledge of phonics in both reading and spelling, the emphasis shifts towards the more meaning-focused technical aspects of reading and writing (i.e., vocabulary, types of texts, reading strategies, spelling, punctuation and grammar). There is a block devoted to “Knowledge and application of spelling rules” which includes areas that are connected to phonics and phoneme-grapheme correspondence, e.g.:

- Using the right letters for the short and long version of sounds.
- Safe and correct spelling of short words in which spelling follows pronunciation.
- Reliable usage of our only phoneme which has two graphemes in a list of pre-taught.
- Applying the rules of segmenting and diving words when writing simple words.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Teaching of reading strategies in primary schools*

While literacy instruction in the early years is more focused on code-based skills, in later stages it is important to develop and foster a wide range of comprehension strategies with all children. Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies may improve reading comprehension among readers with different levels of ability. These strategies include:

- Drawing inferences or interpretations while reading text and graphic data
- Summarising text and focusing selectively on the most important information
- Making connections between different parts of a text
- Using background knowledge
- Checking/monitoring own comprehension
- Constructing visual representations
- Pupils reflecting on their own reading process (Eurydice 2011, p. 55).

According to the Eurydice report, *Teaching Reading in Europe* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Figure 1.4, p. 60), the following reading comprehension strategies appear in curriculum documents at primary level:

- Drawing inferences
- Summarising texts
- Using background knowledge
- Making visual representations

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<sup>25</sup> [http://kerettanternv.ofi.hu/01\\_melleklet\\_1-4/index\\_alt\\_isk\\_also.html](http://kerettanternv.ofi.hu/01_melleklet_1-4/index_alt_isk_also.html).

More explicit information regarding all the age groups in primary education is included in The National Framework for Mother Tongue and Literature Education. Grades 1-2 (age 6-8/9) the following reading strategies are taught:

- Preparation of reading strategies
- Using sensory images
- Using graphic organizers
- Summarising
- Skimming

To prove their comprehension, children are able to

- draw inferences,
- find the most important information in the text,
- summarise events/the plot,
- evaluate the events.

In the same grades, children are expected to make connections between the title of the text and the text itself and use illustrations with the given text for meaning making.

In grades 3-4 (age 8/9-10/11) students have to be able to apply the following reading strategies:

- scanning,
- activating background knowledge,
- anticipation,
- goal setting and finding the right way of reading the text.

Students meet different types (continuous, non-continuous texts, fiction and non-fiction texts).<sup>26</sup>

Strategies not mentioned in curriculum documents include: making connections between parts of a text; and monitoring own comprehension.

**Challenge:** Curricula provide a normative framework for teachers and a guideline for their teaching aims, methods, materials and activities. However, very often there might be a difference between the intended curriculum - as outlined in official documents – and the implemented curriculum, i.e. what actually happens in the classroom. Schools and teachers should be provided with tools and means to implement this aspect of the curricula effectively and the implementation process should regularly be monitored and supported. There is a strong need for change in attitude and content area literacy training both in initial and in-service teacher training.

### Reading for pleasure

According to PIRLS 2011 Encyclopaedia, there is some emphasis on reading for pleasure in the intended language/reading curriculum in Hungary. Hungary is among a group of 11 countries participating in PIRLS 2011 which reported some emphasis on reading for pleasure in the curriculum. Four of the EU-24 countries in PIRLS 2011 reported that reading for pleasure was given a little or no emphasis and 9 countries that it had major emphasis (Mullis et al. 2012b, Vol.1, exhibit 9, p. 36).

The NCC encourages teachers to select common readings in the learning process which meet students' interests and are appropriate for their ages, and thus to help develop a positive attitude

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<sup>26</sup> [http://kerettanternv.ofi.hu/01\\_melleklet\\_1-4/index\\_alt\\_isk\\_also.html](http://kerettanternv.ofi.hu/01_melleklet_1-4/index_alt_isk_also.html).

towards reading. Teachers are recommended to be open to children's culture and contemporary literature in their choices.

### **Literacy curricula in secondary schools**

Literacy remains an accented area at upper primary / lower secondary and secondary level as well. Reading comprehension and text construction at these stages too constitute part of the Hungarian Language and Literature framework curricula, but appear as separate and focused areas to be improved. The mother tongue curricula have been developed in harmony with the most modern approach to literacy represented by the NCC as detailed above to serve the goals to

- develop language competence so that – at a level defined by their age characteristics – students have a mastery of the tools of oral and written communication and become capable of applying them in practice;
- to lay the foundations for independent knowledge acquisition and – as a closely related factor – differentiated thinking;
- to lay the grounds for the ability of and desire for lifelong learning;
- enable students to understand, analyse and critically deal with various texts;
- enable students to recognise and reflect on the meanings that arise from secondary or abstract expression;
- enable students to comply with the ethical, aesthetic and cultural requirements which are in harmony with the communicative situation and the characteristics of the audience and arise from the intention of the creator of the text, from readers' needs and from the norms of text genres.

**Challenge:** Teaching reading strategies has no long tradition in the school system, they have been included since 2013 with the introduction of the new frameworks. Curricula at upper primary and secondary level should be focused much more on practical, functional literacy. Reading strategies are not included in the framework for every subject. They are seen as parts mainly of mother tongue education. There are some cross-curricular references in the frameworks of mathematics education, however, no reading strategies are mentioned even there. Although the principle of content area literacy might be deduced from the NCC, not all subject teachers are prepared to be and willing to consider themselves "literacy teachers" or "mother tongue teachers" as well.

Although the new National Curriculum (2012) and frameworks (2013) do not represent this view and literacy is spread throughout the whole curriculum, it is known from research that education is the field where changes happen very slowly. Because of this, it is important to inform principals, decision makers in conferences, workshops, seminars about the state-of-the art research results, and convince them of the importance to teach literacy across the curriculum.

### **Digital literacy part of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools**

There are national strategies covering training measures for ICT in schools, digital/media literacy, e-learning and e-inclusion. There are central steering documents for all ICT learning objectives. According to these official steering documents, students and teachers should use ICT in all subjects in class and for complementary activities (knowledge of computer, hardware and electronics, using multimedia, social media and developing programming skills). At secondary level ICT is also taught as a separate subject. Public-private partnerships promote the use of hardware and software in schools (p. 4). According to the study of Emedus, in Hungary, media literacy is a competency and a set of skills

which is integrated into the curriculum of secondary education as a cross-curricular subject. Only at upper-secondary (in years 9-12) media literacy is a separate subject. Students should acquire skills in order to use computer tools, software, info-communication resources and resources in libraries. They should also learn to understand the phenomenon of the information society (pp. 2/3).

### 5.2.3 Reading Instruction

While most literacy researchers have clear concepts about effective literacy instruction, we do not know much about what is actually going on in classrooms in Hungary or other European countries. In order to describe the practice of reading instruction we would need extensive observational studies. However, there are only rare observational studies (Philipp 2014). There is a noteworthy shortage of data on actual reading instruction in school. Only PIRLS offer some data for primary schools, albeit based on self-reports by teachers (PIRLS) which might not be valid and may be biased by social desirability.

In PIRLS 2006, fourth-grade reading teachers reported about instructional materials, strategies and activities. In a latent class analysis Lankes and Carstensen (2007) identified 5 types of instruction:

- Type 1: Teacher-directed instruction in the whole class without individual support
- Type 2: Individualized child-centred instruction, seldom whole-class instruction
- Type 3: Whole-class instruction with little cognitive stimulation and little variety in methods, without individual support
- Type 4: Variety of methods with high individual support
- Type 5: Highly stimulating whole-class instruction with didactic materials.

There were significant differences between countries concerning these types of instruction (Lankes and Carstensen 2007). Also, the analysis of PIRLS 2011 teacher self-reports revealed differences between the approaches to reading instruction in European countries (Mullis et al. 2012a, Tarelli et al. 2012). Hungary was not included in this analysis.

### Instructional time spent on language and reading

In PIRLS 2011 principals and teachers provided some information on language and reading instruction. Concerning the **instructional time spent on language and reading**, the following results are of interest.

In 2011, pupils in Hungary spent fewer hours per year at school (760) than on average across EU-24 countries (850 hours). Students in Hungary spent 285 hours (about thirty per cent of all instructional hours) on instruction in the language of the PIRLS test, compared to an EU-24 average of 241 hours. In Hungary, 81 instructional hours per year are spent on reading as part of language, compared with and EU-24 average of 68, though the EU-24 average is itself low relative to, for example, the United States and New Zealand (both 131 hours). Teachers in Hungary report allocating more time to teaching reading across the curriculum and in reading classes (206 instructional hours per year) than on average across EU-24 countries (147 hours).

According to the PIRLS 2011 Encyclopaedia, the curriculum for Hungary specifies that 32-42% of instructional time (in grades 1-4) should be spent on language/reading time (Mullis et al., 2012, Vol. 1, Exhibit 6). In the same volume, Balkányi and Ostorics (2012) note that, in the course of Grade 1, 80 hours is allocated to teaching the system of signs for reading, including usage of capital letters and punctuation, articulating vowels correctly, combining letters and learning syntax.

No comparable data are available for secondary schools.

**Challenge:** Primary school teachers in Hungary report allocating more time to teaching reading across the curriculum and in reading classes (206 hours) than on average across EU countries (147 hours). Still, our results do not reflect this huge sum of hours spent on teaching reading.

### **Activities of teachers to develop student's comprehension skills and to engage them**

PIRLS 2011 provides information on the frequency with which teachers in Hungary engage students in specific reading comprehension activities. The following are the percentages of students in Grade 4 in Hungary and on average across the EU-24 who engage in specified comprehension activities 'every day or almost every day' (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table I1):

- Locate information within the text: 88.6%% (EU-24 = 65.5%)
- Identify main ideas of what they have read: 74.0 % (EU-24 = 55.5%)
- Explain or support their understanding of what they have read: 90.6% (EU-24 = 61.6%)
- Compare what they have read with experiences they have had: 62.3% (EU-24 = 34.7%)
- Compare what they have read with other things they have read: 48.5% (EU-24 = (22.4%)
- Make predictions about what will happen next in the text: 34.9% (EU-24 = 22.4%)
- Make generalisations and inferences: 66.1% (EU-24 = 36.5%)
- Describe the style or structure of the text: 38.0% (EU-24 = 22.7%)
- Determine the author's perspective or intention: 31.8% (EU-24 = 21.0%)

More students in Hungary than on average across the EU-24 are engaged in each strategy on a daily or almost daily basis. Nevertheless, a few strategies, such as making generalisations and inferences, describing the style or structure of the text, and determining the author's perspective or intention are practiced by relatively small proportions of students in Hungary.

PIRLS also assessed which instructional practices teachers use to **engage students in learning** (for an overview of responses in Hungary and other European countries S. Table I.2 in Appendix C). PIRLS 2011 demonstrates that students whose teachers used instructional practices to engage students learning in most lessons (items: summarizing the lesson's goals, relating the lesson to students' daily lives, questioning to elicit reasons and explanations, encouraging students to show improvement, praising students for good effort, bringing interesting things to class) had higher scores in reading than those with such practices used in only about half the lessons or less (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 8.6, p.220).

In PIRLS 2011, teachers were asked a series of questions designed to ascertain the extent to which students are engaged in learning. These included: "I summarise what students should have learned from the lesson"; "I relate the lesson to students' daily lives" and "I use questions to elicit reasons and explanations". Based on a scale summarising frequencies across all six items, 90% of students in Hungary were deemed to be taught by teachers who implemented instructional practices to engage learning in "most lessons". The corresponding EU-24 average was 70% (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table I2). These findings, together with those based on frequency of student engagement in reading comprehension strategies, suggest high levels of reading engagement classrooms in Hungary, though they may need to be verified by observational studies.

**Challenge:** There are big differences among students in the field of motivation, engagement. Personalised teaching methods, cooperative teaching, learning, and project methods could improve the performance of reading comprehension. Teachers in Hungary report that they are engaging



students in a range of reading comprehension strategies with greater frequency than on average across the EU-24. Nevertheless, relatively little attention is paid to higher level strategies such as describing the style or structure of a text, or determining the author's perspective or attention.

#### **5.2.4 Early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners**

Effective assessment tools upon entry to primary school will help teachers identify literacy skills from the very beginning of formal education. Regular formative assessment throughout primary school will ensure that literacy problems do not continue to go unrecognised, and that students receive the support they need through education that matches their learning needs. This should prevent children leaving school with unrecognized literacy problems (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012a, p. 67).

Since 2005, an evaluation kit, provided by the Ministry of Education, is available to schools to assess first-grade students' basic competencies in social development and skills, elementary arithmetic, fine-motor co-ordination for writing, and comprehension of and vocabulary for relationships. At the beginning of the 2009-10 school year, 31.4% of students in First grade were assessed with this tool (Balkányi & Ostorics, 2012).

#### **Standards as basis of assessment of reading difficulties**

Standards of reading achievement, allowing teachers, parents and school leaders to understand the rate of progress of learners and to identify individual strengths and needs, should be integrated in the curriculum and should be the basis of assessments. The High Level Group pointed out that there is a need to establish minimal standards of literacy achievement (benchmarks) for each grade, and to administer regular tests based on these standards, to allow for identification of struggling readers/writers (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012a, p. 43).

All EU countries have defined learning objectives in reading to be reached at the end of primary and secondary education cycles. However, only a few Member States have detailed standards (benchmarks) at each grade (school year) which form the basis of assessments allowing for early identification of reading difficulties and subsequent allocation of attention and resources. These standard-based assessments allow teachers and school leaders to judge children's progress and to target additional reading support.

Assessment standards and methods are prescribed by the language/reading curriculum in Hungary (Mullis et al. 2012, Vol.1, exhibit 7, p. 33). In the National Core Curriculum the outcomes of each 2-year cycle educational unit is clearly regulated with defined assessment standards. In half of the European countries that participated in PIRLS 2011, assessment standards and methods are not prescribed by the language/reading curriculum.

#### **Screenings for reading competence to identify struggling readers**

As noted above, there is a diagnostic test, the Diagnostic Development System, available to schools to assess students' readiness for schooling at the beginning of First grade.

In PIRLS 2011, 94% of students in Hungary were taught by teachers who reported that a major emphasis was placed on the evaluation of students' ongoing work to monitor students' progress in reading; the corresponding EU-24 average is 83%. In addition, 65% of students were taught by teachers who reported placing a major emphasis on the use of classroom tests for this purpose (EU-24

average = 51%), and 28% were taught by teachers who reported placing a major emphasis on the use of national or regional tests (EU-24 average = 25%) (ELINET PIRLS Appendix, Table I8).

According to Balkányi and Ostorics (2012), parents may request an expert evaluation if they suspect that their child suffers from dyslexia or dysgraphia. Schools or child-care agencies can also request this testing after notifying parents.

### **How is adolescents' progress in reading and writing assessed?**

Since the 2001–02 academic year, Hungary has administered its National Assessment of Basic Competencies (NABC) nine times to examine student performance in mathematics and reading. Since 2004, all students in Grades 6, 8, and 10 have taken part in the testing. The assessment measures students' ability to use their skills and knowledge to solve problems modelling everyday situations, and does not focus on textbook knowledge.

Since 2008, the implementation of assessment IDs has made it possible to track individual student development from Grade 6 through Grade 10.

Parallel to NABC, testing fourth-grade students' basic reading, math, problem-solving, and writing skills began during the 2005–06 academic year. The Public Education Act guarantees the annual administration of these tests and requires schools to monitor their performance as part of their quality-control programmes.

In addition to assessments, student performance and progress are regularly evaluated through grades. Teachers use interim grades as the basis for mid-term and end-of-term grades. The class teacher notes a grade for student conduct and diligence after consulting with other teachers who also work with that student.

### **At which level (classroom, school, regional, national) is the adolescents' progress in literacy monitored and by whom (teachers, principals, inspectors, others)?**

Development and practical application of the national system of diagnostic measurements have been implemented through the National Assessment of Basic Competences since 2001.

The Public Education Act ascertains that the performance and progress of students has to be regularly evaluated by marks, and parents should regularly receive detailed and definite information thereof. Schools are free to decide on the manner in which they wish to comply with this obligation, but should regulate this approach in their pedagogy programmes.

The method of assessment of student achievement is regulated under the Act on Public Education (Section 54) as follows: "Educators shall regularly evaluate the performance and progress of students during the academic year by marks and assess their half-year and year-end achievements by grades. Half-year and year-end grades shall be based on the marks obtained."

Formative assessment of a student's progress and development takes place on an ongoing basis. Teachers are free to select and use particular tools and methods used for the purposes of formative assessment, within the framework laid down in the school's local curriculum (Mullis, Martin et al. 2012).

### **Formative assessments used by teachers**

In addition to assessments, student performance and progress are regularly evaluated through grades. Teachers use interim grades as the basis for mid-term and end-of-term grades. The class teacher notes

a grade for student conduct and diligence after consulting with other teachers who also work with that student.

In upper primary and secondary schools, grades range from excellent (5) to insufficient (1). In evaluations of conduct and diligence, grades range from exemplary (5) to poor (2).

Schools inform parents about student performance on a regular basis. Students keep their grades and school notices in a notebook that their parents and class teachers sign every month. Additionally, the school sends notices to parents at mid-term and the end of the school year. In Grades 1–3 and midterm in Grade 4, teachers present a written evaluation of student progress, describing it as excellent, good, or adequate and noting if the student requires tutoring.

Teachers also must give a detailed evaluation of student performance in the basic domains, speech, oral expressiveness, and attitude (Mullis et al. 2012b, Vol.1, p. 310, 311).

**Challenges** Teachers' skills in the field of assessment would be worth being improved, so that they may lead to correct, deep diagnosis of their students. The University of Szeged has developed a diagnostic tool that could be used to assess students' maths, comprehension and music skills through on-line testing (e-dia standing for electronic diagnosis). There are some on-line teacher training courses to enable teachers to create their own diagnostic tools.

## **Supporting struggling literacy learners**

### **Number of struggling readers receiving remedial instruction**

PIRLS offers some data concerning issues of remedial instruction in primary schools. One question was whether all pupils receive remedial instruction when needed.

Based on a question that class teachers answered in PIRLS 2011, it is estimated that 20.7% of students in Fourth grade in Hungary are considered to be in need of remedial reading instruction. It is also estimated by teachers that 18.2% are in receipt of remedial reading instruction (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table K1). On average across EU-24 countries, 18.1% of students in Grade 4 are identified by their teachers as being in need of remedial teaching, while 13.3% are identified as being in receipt of such teaching.

In Hungary, 19.2% of students in Fourth grade performed at or below the PIRLS low benchmark on overall reading (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table A6). Hence, the percentages of students in Hungary in receipt of remedial reading instruction (18.1%) is close to the percentage who performed poorly on PIRLS.

### **Kinds of support offered**

It is crucial that teachers provide support measures to help struggling readers. European Countries differ widely in their approaches, from in-class support with additional support staff (reading specialists, teaching assistants or other adults) working in the classroom together with a teacher, to out-of-class support where speech therapists or (educational) psychologists offer guidance and support for students with reading difficulties.

Based on teacher responses to a series of questions in PIRLS 2011, 42% of students in Hungary are in classes where there is always access to specialised professionals to work with students who have reading difficulties, compared with an EU-24 average of 25% (Table 14.12). Seven percent of students in Hungary are in classrooms where there is access to a teacher aide with the same frequency, while

3% are in classrooms where there is access to an adult/parent volunteer. Corresponding EU-24 averages are 13% and 3%. Hence, teachers in Hungary had greater access to specialised professionals, slightly less access to teacher aides, and similar (but low) access to adult volunteers.

Table 24: Percentages of Students in Classrooms with Access to Additional Personnel to Work with Children with Reading Difficulties, France and EU-24 Average

Access to...	Hungary			EU-24 Average		
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Always	Some-times	Never
Specialised professional	41.5	42.4	16.1	24.9	41.8	33.3
Teacher aide	7.4	14.9	77.7	13.2	33.6	53.2
Adult/parent volunteer	3.1	15.2	81.8	2.8	17.5	79.7

Source: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Tables K2-K4

According to responses provided by teachers in PIRLS 2011, 77% of students in Hungary are in classes where the teacher arranges for students falling behind in reading to work with a specialised professional such as a reading professional (Table 14.13). The corresponding EU average is lower at 55%. Sixty-one percent of students in Hungary are in classes whose teachers wait to see if performance improves with maturation – higher than the EU-24 average of 37%. Almost all students in Hungary (99%) are taught by teachers who spend more time working on reading individually with a student who falls behind – a little above the EU-24 average (90%). Finally, 96% of students in Hungary and 97% on average across the EU-24 are taught by teachers who ask parents to provide additional support to a student who falls behind in reading.

Table 25: Percentages of Students in Classrooms Where Teachers Engage in Specified Activities to Support Students Who Begin to Fall Behind in Reading, France and EU-24 Average

	Hungary (Yes)	EU-24 Average (Yes)
I have students work with a specialised professional	77.0	55.2
I wait to see if performance improves with maturation	61.0	36.6
I spend more time working on reading individually with the student	99.0	90.1
I ask the parents to help the students with reading	96.3	96.9

Source: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Tables K5-K8.

In Hungary five different tests have been developed in order to diagnose dyslexia. The tests measure reading skill (number of mistakes within reading time), reading comprehension, writing skill and vocabulary. If dyslexia is diagnosed by speech therapists, parents may send their child to training and counselling or speech therapy sessions. Or students may attend a public school offering either an integrated programme or a special needs-based curriculum that prioritises instruction for students with speech impairments or dyslexia (Balkányi and Ostorics, 2012).

In most cases children did dyslexia test provided by speech therapists, and in case of any problem, professionals can identify and examine them. In the school system, if teachers realise that students have some reading difficulty, a professional development teacher and/or psychologist can support children who have difficulties.

The performance and progress of pupils are regularly evaluated by teachers throughout the school year on the basis of principles set in the local curriculum (Eurydice, 2009). According to Article 80 of the National Education Law (CXC of 2011), there shall be national evaluations of the development of students' basic competences in years 6, 8 and 10. The evaluation in 2012 included two 45-minute reading comprehension tests (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma, 2012).

In Hungary, in order to access higher education, all prospective students have to sit an examination at the end of upper secondary level education which includes tests on reading skills.

### **Support for struggling readers – a legal right?**

Although the primary goal of the provision in Article 80 of the National Education Law (CXC of 2011) is to ensure school accountability and increased school effectiveness, in practice the results of the national evaluation are also used to track and analyse the progress of specific students (Ministry of Human Capacities, 2012).

The delivery of basic key competences (literacy and numeracy) has been strengthened by the extension of the first 4-year learning period to the first six grades. With this end in view, appropriate pedagogical tools and methodologies have been being developed and implemented, coupled with the necessary training, retraining and in-service-training of teachers (Eurydice, 2009).

As a result of reforms in Hungary, the time allocated to reading was extended. The 2003 educational ministerial decree has extended the teaching of reading beyond year 4. Teachers are now expected to teach reading skills to older pupils in order to help them become more advanced readers (Eurydice, 2011). The delivery of basic key competences (literacy and numeracy) has been strengthened by the extension of the first 4-year learning period to the first six grades and accordingly, appropriate pedagogical tools and methodologies have been developed and implemented, coupled with the necessary training, retraining and in-service-training of teachers (Eurydice, 2009).

The Hungarian education system provides relatively high levels of access to external specialist help, such as learning specialists or speech therapists. Pupils often have teachers who report spending more time working on reading individually with struggling students. The same reading materials are used, but students at different reading levels work at different speeds (Eurydice, 2011).

Public sector educational institutions and local governments provide free-of-charge speech therapy and dyslexia prophylaxis sessions as well as two hours of coaching per day for children with special educational needs (Eurydice, 2009).

## **5.2.5 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Teachers**

### **Entry requirements for Initial Teacher Education**

The requirements for both primary and secondary teachers are first of all the completed high school, its degree, then the successful application process. There is no oral or written entry examination, they

apply by their points which are based on high school performance and extra points they get for instance for language exams, competitions, and academic activity, such as scientific work.

The European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2013, Fig. A5, p. 32) concludes the process in the following way:

- Certificate of final examination of upper secondary education (decided at the level of the education authority)
- Performance at upper secondary level (decided at the level of the education authority)
- An interview specifically for admission to teacher education (decided at institutional level).

Since 2013 with the introduction of one-cycle teacher training, there is an aptitude test or exam for applicants in ITE. As the applicants can apply for several colleges/universities for admission, they have to pass the exam just in one place: at the college/university which they ranked first in their application list. This exam includes analysing a pedagogical situation, and introducing a pedagogical piece of writing students have prepared in advance. Before the exam, applicants are asked to hand in a letter of motivation which is a means of getting to know the applicant's communication skills, attitudes and motivation.

The education authority decides about the entrance numbers in each year (see: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013. *Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe*)

**Challenge:** The aim of having high quality teachers requires selective teacher recruitment policies (cf. OECD recommendations, 2005). These do not exist in Hungary at present.

### **Level of qualification and length of the required training for primary and secondary teachers**

Since 2013, a BA and an MA teacher qualification can be obtained in a one-cycle system. In both types (BA and MA courses), teacher trainees must have two majors/disciplines. Initial Teacher Education has three forms regarding its length: a 4 + 1-year type, a 4.5 + 1 year type and a 5 + 1 year type. The extra year is totally devoted to school placement. The ten-term training (4+1) provides qualification for primary schools (6-12 years of age), the eleven-term (4.5+1) one provides a mixed qualification, both for primary and secondary schools (6-18 years of age), and the twelve-term training (5+1) provides qualification for secondary schools (14-18 years of age).

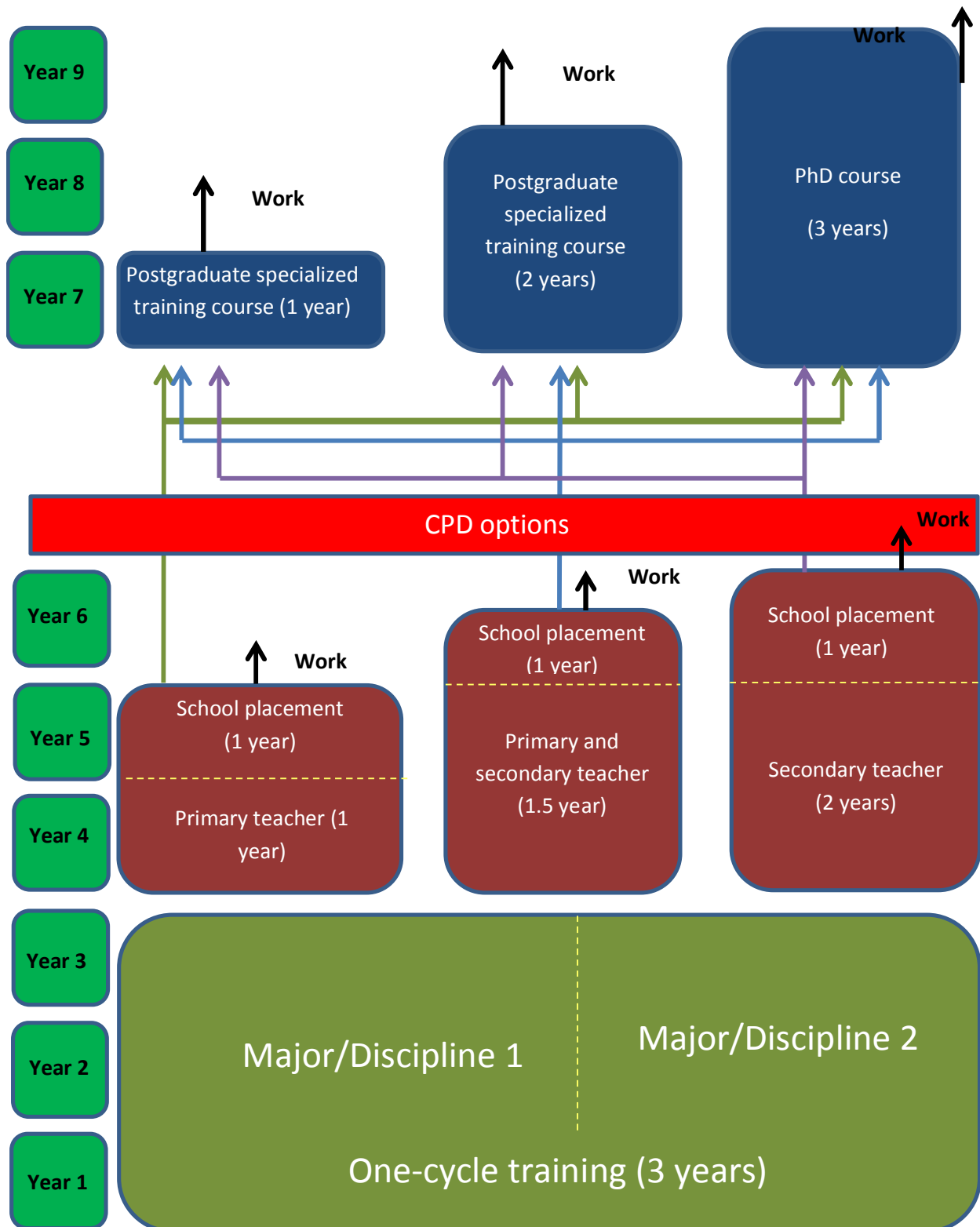
As the training is unified, there is no difference between the three types of trainings at the moment of application and admission. In all three types there is a common (unified) syllabus in the first 6 terms of the training (provided all the types exist in the chosen disciplines and the chosen university/college offers all the types of the training). Trainees should make a decision which type of training (primary, mixed or secondary) they would like to graduate from after 3 years of teacher education. However, there are some exceptions to this rule, e.g. a foreign language teacher qualification can be obtained only in the 5+1 type of training, a music teacher qualification can be obtained only in a 4+1 type of training.

Regarding its content, one-cycle teacher training has four types: teacher of a discipline, teacher of art, teacher of trade, and teacher of religious education.

The two majors/disciplines that students have to choose from are paired by the higher institution which provides the training. It means students cannot choose any two majors they would like to learn, they have to choose a pair of majors offered by the university/college. Regarding their majors, students

can choose whether they want to graduate with having two BA or MA majors, or with one BA and one MA major.

Figure 4: The structure of one-cycle teacher training in Hungary<sup>27</sup>



<sup>27</sup> <http://tkk.elte.hu/hallgatoknak/>.

## The role of literacy expertise in Initial Teacher Training

More information about reading teachers' formal education is offered by PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2011, exh. 7.1, p. 188). 3% of fourth grade students have teachers who completed a Postgraduate University Degree, 95% had teachers who completed a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent but not a Postgraduate Degree, 2% had teachers who completed post-secondary education but not a Bachelor's Degree, and 0% had teachers with no further than upper secondary education. The EU-24 average for the last category is 6%.

According to an analysis of guidelines for Initial Teacher Education institutions, generic skills or methodology for teaching reading is a topic in ITE (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Fig. 2.5, p. 99). It is included not only in ITE for primary teachers, however, literacy or disciplinary literacy is included mainly in ITE for teachers of Hungarian literature and language (see below).

According to the legal requirements, teachers have to be familiar with printed and non-printed information sources they could use in their content area teaching; teachers have to be able to choose the most suitable methods and strategies taking the teaching aims into consideration.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, from 2014, teacher trainees are obliged to pass a written and oral mother tongue exam, in which their language and communication skills are assessed. Learning to learn is a part of ITE according to curricula of teacher training institutions, however, it is not explicitly stated whether content area literacy is included or not. Documentation of the training programmes and the descriptions of curricula of training usually have a part about knowledge/skills on reading instruction (Eurydice, 2009, 2011), and this description is available on the website of the training institution. The common literacy-related qualification requirements are stated in 8/2013 (I. 30.) Order of Ministry of Education, which will be referred to below.

In PIRLS 2011, teachers reported their areas of specialisation in their formal education and training (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 7.2, p. 190). In Hungary, 88% of the fourth grade students had reading teachers with an educational emphasis on language, 88% had teachers with an emphasis on pedagogy/ teaching reading, and 33% had teachers with an emphasis on reading theory. These figures are above the corresponding EU-24 means. On average across the EU-24, 74% of the fourth grade students had reading teachers with an educational emphasis on language, 59% had teachers with an emphasis on pedagogy/teaching reading, and 30% had teachers with an emphasis on reading theory (PIRLS 2011 Database).

There are some forms of framework of competences for teachers working at pre-primary, primary and general (lower and upper) secondary education (Eurydice, 2013). Every college or university has their own accredited training programmes, which are built on the national framework, and on the local traditions, too.

Among the qualification requirements in one-cycle teacher training there are literacy-related ones. However, these requirements are not included in each and every discipline. There are literacy related qualification requirements for teachers of

- Hungarian literature and language both in primary and secondary education: the teacher should be able to develop students' reading and comprehension skills; support students' independent reading activities; make them independent readers; promote reading for

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<sup>28</sup> 2. melléklet a 8/2013. (I. 30.) EMMI rendelethez.



pleasure; apply modern information comprehending processes; be aware of modern methods of improving learning to learn skills.

- Library and Information Science: the teacher is aware of the special methods of teaching and improving reading skills; the role of public libraries in developing reading skills; the role of reading in developing cognitive skills; the effect of reading on personal development and self-concept;
- Physics: the teacher is aware of the role of teaching Physics in developing students' reading and comprehension skills.<sup>29</sup>

**Challenge:** Initial teacher education needs a compulsory focus on developing literacy expertise among future primary and secondary teachers. The problem is that literacy is still regarded to be the expertise of primary teachers or teachers of Hungarian literature and language both in primary and secondary levels. There are only few other disciplines (e.g. physics), where teachers deal with content area literacy.

Teachers of lower primary sectors (grade 1-4) think that developing (content area) literacy is not an expectation in secondary sectors. They think that reading skills should be acquired in the lower primary sector and later should be automatically applied. Secondary teachers think that incorporating development of literacy skills into their disciplinary lessons is time-consuming. Only a few of them understand that it is a means of making teaching and learning processes more efficient. It is mainly the conductive teachers who could appreciate such a course, however, they do not teach whole classes and they are not disciplinary teachers.

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Eight countries explicitly state that skills relating to the teaching of reading must be practised during in-school placements (Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, the United Kingdom (England and Wales), Norway and Turkey) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, p. 100-101).

"On average in the EU, teachers teaching reading-related subjects reported participating in one more day of CPD activities than other subject teachers. However, the difference is mostly due to Hungary, where teachers teaching reading-related subjects participated in two more days of CPD than other teachers (total 16 and 14 days respectively)"<sup>30</sup> (Teaching Reading in Europe: Contexts, Policies and Practices. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Brussels, 2011. p. 94)

Courses/workshops on reading-related subject matter or methods and/or other education-related topics were undoubtedly the most common form of CPD in the EU. On average in the EU, 86 % of teachers teaching reading, writing and literature attended at least one course or workshop during the previous 18 months. Percentages were high in Estonia, Lithuania, Malta, Austria and Poland (reaching over 90 %), and in Hungary, Slovakia, Norway and Turkey were somewhat lower (53-76 %). (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011, p. 94)

### **General structure of CPD in Hungary**

In-service teacher training is centralised in Hungary. It is centrally organised, controlled and financed. According to the 2011 year CXC Act on School Education 62 § (1) paragraph, every 7 years, further training is compulsory for teachers. Now it is possible to take part in 30, 60, 120 hours of training or 4 semester long training (on BA level). There is a list of training opportunities which can be used for this

<sup>29</sup> 8/2013. (I. 30.) EMMI rendelet; [http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1300008.EMM](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1300008.EMM).

<sup>30</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/130en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/130en.pdf), p. 94.

purpose. According to the Order 277/1997 (XII.22.), the school principal is to make a further training plan for 5 years which the staff can and should comment on and the body running the school has to approve. In case of state schools, it is the head of the school district, not the school principals themselves, who is authorised to make such a plan. The list of training opportunities can be altered only once a year. The list of accredited training opportunities is available on the [www.oktatas.hu/tovabbkepzes/pedakkred](http://www.oktatas.hu/tovabbkepzes/pedakkred) website, where the tuition fee for each training is published. According to the Order 277/1997 (XII.22.), a 120-hour course is compulsory every 7 years for in-service teachers; the topic is optional but the course must be an accredited one. According to the Act on School Education, which came into effect on 1 September, 2012; teachers who were of age 52 then, are not obliged to take part in in-service training anymore; teachers who were then under 52 years of age are still obliged until the age of 55. Training is compulsory; if anyone who does not meet this requirement (does not take part in in-service training or does not finish the courses) through their own fault, can be dismissed (2011. year CXC. Act on School Education, 62§ (2))<sup>31</sup>.

Teachers find it hard to predict the content of the courses offered for further training. There have been too many courses labelled new and innovative; teachers have become sceptical about them.

**Accreditation rules for the institutions that offer in-service training are as follows:**

"Any organisation or legal person may have a further training course accredited whose list of services includes the license for adult training. The application for permission for founding the further training course contains, in addition to the detailed subjects of the training, the staffing and equipment requirements of the training, as well as the procedures for quality assurance. After obtaining the licence for operation, the organiser of an in-service extension training course for teachers may request from the Educational Authority to enter the course in the list of extension education courses fifteen days prior to the commencement of the course. When such an application is submitted, all data that are requested by the relevant statute have to be supplied about the course.

The founding permission for courses is issued by the Minister responsible for education as recommended by the Accreditation Body for Further Teacher Training (Pedagógus-továbbképzési Akkreditációs Testület, (hereinafter PAT). (The operation of the Body is regulated by Ministry of Education and Culture decree 46/1999. (XII. 13.) on the Accreditation Body for Teacher Further Training). PAT obtains an expert opinion before making decisions. In case a continuing professional development course is to take place in the field of nursery school education or school education in a national or ethnic minority environment, the Educational Authority has to obtain the opinion of the National Committee for Minorities, which has been set up pursuant to Article 98 (1) of the act of Parliament on public education, before issuing the license for launching that course". (Eurypedia Reports on CPD)

"Teachers' post-graduate professional examination may take place only in teacher training institutions of tertiary education, in the framework of professional further training. The duration of the training is 4 terms, and at least 360 lessons". (Eurypedia Reports on CPD)

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<sup>31</sup> Szabó, Ildikó: National Report on ISIT: Implementation Strategies for Innovations in Teachers' Professional Development/ISIT 539512-LLP-1-2013-1-DE-COMENIUS-CAM in Hungary. p. 4.

### **Incentives or sanctions to participate in CPD**

The teachers' career model was introduced in 2013 in Hungary by the Order 326/2013 (VIII. 30). According to this model, teachers are still obliged to take part in CPD; the main change regarding this field is that they cannot speed up their professional and financial promotion by completing 120-hour courses as they could before this order was enacted; completing these courses is a must if they do not want to be dismissed. This change is very relevant, especially regarding teachers' motivation in CPD.

Financing of the courses has also been modified: according to the Order 277/1997 (XII.22.) courses are free of charge for teachers working in state schools. In case of non-state schools either the teachers themselves or the running body of the school must cover the expenses. If the in-service course is a pre-condition of meeting the expectations of the professional qualification system, career model and teachers' external evaluation, the sustaining body of the school can finance the whole course.

Nowadays most in-service training courses are connected either to EU or national grants, which means they are funded from that particular grant. The pedagogical institutions/cabinets offer their already existing courses to state schools free of charge; this service is based on a need analysis of the educational institutions.<sup>32</sup>

### **Time frame and quality standards of CPD**

In PIRLS 2011 teachers were asked how much time they had spent on professional development in reading in the past two years. In Hungary, 31% of the students have teachers who spent 16 hours or more (EU-24 average: 18%), 48% had teachers who spent some time but less than 16 hours (EU-24 average 53%), and 21% had teachers who spent no time (EU-24 average 29%) (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 7.4, p. 196). These figures show a high engagement of Hungarian teachers.

The Educational Authority supervises and updates the records of in-service teacher training courses in an online system (PedAkkred). There are tools, questionnaires to evaluate the courses; besides, the Educational Authority is authorised to visit any courses any time to check whether the course follows the requirements. This top-level education authority assures the quality (Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013, Fig. C6, p. 64), but this quality assurance is rather administrative rather than professional. "The minister oversees the following activities: keeping a register of the properly-licensed in-service training courses, ensuring public access to information about the registered courses, unbiased, external evaluation of the courses, including the measuring of their effectiveness, collecting and making public international experiences that have relevance to those courses". (Eurypedia Reports on CPD)

### **Time spent on professional development related to literacy**

In Hungary during ISIT-project research it turned out that school principals and other decision makers in education do not think literacy should be incorporated in the expertise of all disciplinary teachers. "In all participating countries (of the ISIT project) there is a lack of awareness for the importance of content area literacy and the required qualifications for teachers of all subjects. The educational agendas and topics as well as the involved teacher training programmes and institutions change in

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<sup>32</sup> Szabó, Ildikó: National Report on ISIT: Implementation Strategies for Innovations in Teachers' Professional Development/ISIT 539512-LLP-1-2013-1-DE-COMENIUS-CAM in Hungary. p. 4

accordance with political changes (e.g. due to elections) and often do not allow for the necessary continuity of educational reforms"<sup>33</sup>.

### **Does CPD interlink theory and research on the one hand and practical work in the field on the other (e.g. action research)?**

Less than 15% of the teachers in Hungary are involved in individual or collaborative research. "In contrast to short-term courses and conferences, conducting research is ongoing, job-embedded professional learning which enables teachers to generate their own knowledge about effective teaching and learning. It is therefore encouraging that, on average in the EU, 40 % of teachers reported involvement in individual or collaborative research. Over 50 % were doing so in Denmark, Spain, Lithuania and Portugal. However, very few teachers (less than 15 %) were research-oriented practitioners in Hungary, Slovakia and Norway". (Teaching Reading in Europe, S. 94). Peer support activities are popular forms of CPD. "(...) peer support activities seem to be popular forms of CPD in many central and eastern European countries (Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia)". (Teaching Reading in Europe, S. 96)

### **The role of the universities in CPD programmes**

The new centres of teacher training (universities), which are now overtaking the responsibilities from teacher training providers, may focus on teacher competences, whose development the university already has courses on and may not be interested in offering completely new ones. In the new CPD system, it will be mainly the universities, who will offer teacher training courses.

There is a national policy that encourages a whole-staff approach, meaning that it not only involves classroom teachers or teachers of mother tongue languages. It means the introduction of literacy-related textbooks and CPD programmes. The government aims to promote the publication of textbooks which more explicitly address students' reading literacy. Furthermore, teachers are recommended training courses which help them improve their competences of teaching literacy.

A nationwide project to renew the whole system of CPD is called Social Renewal Operational Programme (TÁMOP) 3.1.5/12: Development of Teacher Education. The project is financed from state budgets and European Structural Funds (€ 35,3M). The coordinator is the Educational Authority and the partners are the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development and Education. The following tasks belong to the Institute:

- Teachers' career model: contribution to the development of teachers' certification procedure by providing a proposal on how to integrate the evaluation of teachers by the pedagogical advisors and developing a support scheme for interns in the framework of young teachers' induction programme.
- Renewal of teachers' pedagogical support services: development of a system of support services for teachers and the aspects of teachers' evaluation by pedagogical advisors, development of a system for the education of pedagogical advisors, provision of availability of pedagogical services and piloting of pedagogical services, e.g. formative assessment of teachers, in predefined fields and institutions.

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<sup>33</sup> Garbe, Christine: Building Content Area Literacy Expertise among European Teachers of Secondary Schools. A Report about two European Comenius Projects. In: Improving Literacy Skills Across Learning. CIDREE Yearbook, 2015. p. 172.

- Teachers' Continuous Professional Development: evaluation of existing training courses, survey and analysis of demands, providing training for trainers and teachers, development of a support system to CPD.

The Educational Authority and Education Pedagogical Service Provider as one of the other two partners of the projects will be informed about the cooperation between the Institute and the College. The Educational Authority, which will be responsible for the external evaluation of teachers, will also be approached and cooperation will be offered. The aim of this cooperation will be to involve elements related to the teaching of literacy in the external assessment of teachers' everyday practice.

Cooperation between the two institutions, the College and the Institute, will further improve if the two international project proposals with their common partnership receive funding.

**Challenge:** The quality and participation rates of continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers should be improved. There is no general basic course in teacher training at all (for all teachers), which aims at developing students' reading comprehension skills.

Content Area Literacy-courses, especially BaCuLit, are not widely known. There was not enough time given and devoted to make them known among education professionals and/or teachers themselves. However, there is huge potential in such a course. In Hungary, education has been undergoing significant changes in the past years. Innovation and reforms could be really efficient if they are large-scale and ongoing (no "one-shot" events). Enhancing CAL-courses/BaCuLit courses could have such effects.

### 5.2.6 Digital literacy as part of initial teacher education

The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Israel and Switzerland have developed their own national ICT certificates for teachers (either for initial or in-service training). There are compulsory training and national accreditation standards for the programmes (ICT and Initial Teacher Education: national policies, 2011) in Hungary. Inclusion of ICT in the initial education of all teachers (EACEA; Eurydice, Key Data on Learning and Innovation through ICT at School in Europe, 2011) is an obligatory requirement.

**Challenge:** Fostering digital literacy skills of teachers and students needs a stronger emphasis.

### 5.2.7 Improving the quality of literacy teaching for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples

#### Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development

The Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development undertakes research and development activities aimed at enhancing the efficiency and performance of education; the school system and the sectoral governance of school education are the responsibilities of the Institute. The courses offered by HIERD have very high professional standards, however, teachers are not very much helped to participate in them in the present system. At the moment a very large-scale national, EU-funded project on reforming Hungarian education is in progress.<sup>34</sup> It would be very fruitful to accredit a course on literacy within this project. The Institute is involved in two large-scale programmes co-financed by the government and the European Structural Funds. In one of them the Institute is

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.oktatas.hu/tovabbkepzes/projektek/tamop315\\_pedkepzes\\_fejl](http://www.oktatas.hu/tovabbkepzes/projektek/tamop315_pedkepzes_fejl)

responsible for the establishment and development of the institutional background of professional pedagogical services and within the framework of the other programme, the Institute is involved in the establishment of a teachers' career model by contributing to the development of teachers' certification procedure with a proposal on how to integrate the evaluation of teachers by the pedagogical advisors and by developing a support scheme for interns in the framework of a young teachers' induction programme.

### **Projects or campaigns supporting content area literacy**

An international teacher training programme, called BaCuLit (Basic Curriculum for Teachers' In-Service Training in Content Area Literacy in Secondary Schools) highlighted teaching successful and efficient teaching of content area literacy. In the BaCuLit project, the Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty implemented the curriculum October 2011 until June 2012 among 20 teachers, and took part in developing the module on metacognition. Meanwhile the research results were incorporated into pre-service teacher training courses at Kecskemét College. The three researchers who took part in the project translated the BaCuLit Teachers' Workbook into Hungarian, helping to make the curriculum available to all teachers interested in it. Accreditation of this programme as an official in service teacher training course has been completed in Hungary in 2015. Within the BaCuLit course, content area literacy (CAL) is part of CPD of secondary teachers of all subjects. All secondary school subjects are focused in this project.

After the successful completion of BaCuLit, Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty and HIERD took part in the ISIT (Implementation Strategies for Innovations in Teachers' Professional Development) project. ISIT builds upon the results of the Comenius project BaCuLit, providing a comprehensive curriculum in CAL for CPD, including course materials and trainer handbooks. ISIT aimed at implementing this concept into the CPD structure of Germany, Hungary and Romania, where a total of 30 teacher educators from 25 different training institutions were planned to be made familiar with CAL instruction. The researcher team of the project developed a blended learning course in the area of literacy. Those who completed the course became certified BaCuLit trainers, so in Hungary the first cluster of trainers included 13 Level One BaCuLit trainers and 2 Level Two BaCuLit trainers<sup>35</sup>.

One of the BaCuLit trainers offered an in-service interactive course titled "Reading is a societal task" in August 2014. The course was offered for secondary teachers. The aim of the course was to offer a toolkit for teachers in teaching content area literacy.

The course had six modules:

- 1) The changes of the definition and significance of teaching reading, Lesson Planning.
- 2) Metacognition and Teaching Reading Strategies.
- 3) Supportive Teacher-Students, Student-Student Interaction, Involving Students in the Learning Process
- 4) Reading Materials/Resources and Engagement
- 5) Reading Strategies/Diagnostic (Formative) Assessment
- 6) Lesson Planning/Making your own lesson plan

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<sup>35</sup>Szabó Ildikó – Szinger Veronika: „ISIT”: Távoktatási tanártovábbképző program az össztantárgyi olvasásfejlesztésért. Anyanyelv-pedagógia. 2015. 3. szám <http://www.anyanyelv-pedagogia.hu/cikkek.php?id=584>).

Altogether 15 teachers participated from Borsod-Abaúj county; the attendance was 100 per cent on every occasion.

A 30-hour training titled "Preparing teachers to efficiently activate learning abilities" was held for 21 teachers (16 secondary disciplinary teachers) by another BaCuLit trainer. The content of the training could be decided by the trainer, that is why BaCuLit programme could be introduced here, and certain elements of it were practically implemented.

HIERD launched a 30- hour CPD course titled "The possibilities to develop comprehension skills in secondary education" in 2015<sup>36</sup>. The aim of the training is to guide teachers on how to help their students to handle information in content area texts.

Eduweb Multimédia Zrt. is a company that can organise CPD courses. They have a 30-hour course titled "Developing comprehension skills with communication oriented methods. Identifying and treating reading/comprehension deficits"<sup>37</sup>. The participants learn how to analyse textbooks with a learnability checklist and how to support students with reading difficulties to handle the different textbooks.

Consilium-Tender Oktatási, Szolgáltató és Tanácsadó Ltd. is another company authorised to organise CPD courses. They have a 30-hour course titled "Modern methods, techniques and tips to promote the development of reading, comprehension and writing skills"<sup>38</sup>. To change the role of the teacher is at the centre of the course, just like the BaCuLit course.

### 5.3 Increasing participation, inclusion and equity

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (HLG Final report 2012, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents (PIRLS, PISA).

The **socio-economic gap** in literacy refers to the fact that children and adolescents from disadvantaged families have lower mean performance in reading than students from more advantaged families. However, the degree to which family background relates to the reading literacy performance varies from one country to another even in Europe. Family background measured as parents' educational level and/or occupation or measured as economic, social and cultural status is one of the most important predictors of reading literacy performance. Family background also explains some of the performance differences between schools.

The **migrant gap** refers to unequal distribution of learning outcomes between the native students and immigrant students who in most countries have lower levels of performance in reading than the native students. In many countries the migrant gap is associated with the socio-economic gap but this explains only a part of it, because the migrant gap is also associated with home language differing from the language of instruction at school which increases the risk of low performance in reading. It is noteworthy that even language minorities with high status in the society (and above-average socioeconomic background) show below average performance if the language of school is not supported at home, which signals the importance of a good command of the language used at school.

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<sup>36</sup> [http://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/tamop315\\_kulsofejl\\_szoveg\\_tanar\\_prospektus\\_bj\\_150410.pdf](http://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/tamop315_kulsofejl_szoveg_tanar_prospektus_bj_150410.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> (<http://pedakkred.oh.gov.hu/PedAkkred/Catalogue/CatalogueDetails.aspx?Id=4989>).

<sup>38</sup> <http://pedakkred.oh.gov.hu/PedAkkred/Catalogue/CatalogueDetails.aspx?Id=4728>.

Another alarming gap in reading literacy in many countries is the **gender difference**, which is more vital for adolescents than for children. In all PISA studies, 15-year-old girls outperformed boys in reading in all the European countries, and boys are frequently overrepresented among the low performers. PISA 2009 results showed that these differences are associated with differences in student attitudes and behaviours that are related to gender, i.e. with reading engagement, and not gender as such. Therefore the gender gap is also related to growing up in a family or in a school environment that values reading and learning and considers reading as a meaningful activity.

To achieve fairer and more inclusive participation in literacy learning we need to close these gaps, which already start in early childhood, by supporting children, adolescents and adults "at risk". The groups of students "at risk" must have access to language screening and flexible language learning opportunities in school, tailored to individual needs. Furthermore early support for children and adolescents with special needs is necessary.

In the section below we address the following questions:

- Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors
- Support for children with special needs
- Promoting preschool attendance, especially among disadvantaged children
- Provisions for preschool children with language difficulties
- Support for children and adolescents whose home language is not the language of school.
- Preventing early school leaving
- Addressing the gender gap among adolescents
- (might be more).

This section refers to children and adolescents who out of different reasons can be considered as a group "at risk" (from disadvantaged homes, those whose home language is not the language of school, or those with "special needs"). The focus is on preventing literacy difficulties among members of these groups. There is a certain overlap with the topic "Identification of and support for struggling literacy learners", dealt with in the section, "Improving the quality of teaching", which is concerned with those who have already developed literacy difficulties (s. 5.2.4 ).

### **5.3.1 Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors**

The child's **socioeconomic and cultural background** has a strong impact on literacy. Material poverty and educational level, particularly of the mother, are well-recognized main factors influencing literacy (World Bank 2005, Naudeau et al. 2011). Socio-economic background also influences biological risks to children, by determining early exposure to risk factors and increased susceptibility (Jednoróg et al. 2012). The primary language spoken at home also influences literacy development (Sylva et al. 2004).

In order to describe the socioeconomic and cultural factors that influence emergent literacy, several indicators were used which stem from international surveys, thus providing comparability across Europe (for more information concerning the concepts and indicators s. Appendix A).

#### **Gini index**

The Gini index is the most commonly used measure of inequality, and represents the income distribution of a nation's residents with values between 0 (maximum equality) and 100 (maximum inequality). In the European countries participating in ELINET the range is from 22.6% in Norway to



35% in Spain (for an overview of European countries see table A1 in Appendix B). With 26.9% Hungary is quite in the middle of the distribution

### **Child poverty**

An indicator of child poverty is the percentage of children living in a household in which disposable income, when adjusted for family size and composition, is less than 50% of the national median income (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2012). With 10.3% Hungary is in the middle of the distribution of all European countries participating in ELINET. The range is from 4.7% in Iceland to 25.5% in Romania (for an overview of European countries see table A2 in Appendix B).

### **Mother's education level**

The PIRLS 2011 database offers information about mother's level of education referring to ISCED levels. The figures for Hungary are presented below and point to a very high proportion of mothers with level ISCED 1 or ISCED 2 compared with the average figures for the European countries participating in PIRLS (shown in parentheses) (for an overview of European countries see table A3 in Appendix B).

No schooling: 0.3% (0.6%)

ISCED 1: primary education: 18.4% (5.3%)

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education: 26.0% (16.7 %)

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education: 23.3% (36.1%)

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education: 5.0% (7.1 %)

ISCED 5B: Tertiary education (first stage) with occupation orientation: 4.7% (9.5%)

ISCED 5A: Tertiary education (first stage) with academic orientation 14.8% (13.9%)

BEYOND: 7.0% (10.1%)

Not applicable: 0.5% (0.9%).

### **Teenage mothers**

According to UNICEF (2001) the percentage of teenage mothers is 26.5 for Hungary. The range is from 5.5% in Switzerland to 30.8% in United Kingdom (for an overview of European countries see table A4 in Appendix B).

### **Single parent**

According to Eurostat (2012, Figure A 7), in Hungary the percentage of children living mainly with a single parent is 5.9%. The range for the European countries participating in ELINET is from 1.4% in Croatia to 30% in Denmark (for an overview of European countries see table A5 in Appendix B).

### **Migrant parents**

According to PIRLS 2006 (Mullis et al. 2007, Exhibit 3.12 – Students' Parents Born in Country), in Hungary the proportion of children with parents born outside the country (2.0%) or only one parent born outside the country (4.0%) is rather low compared to the European countries participating in ELINET (for an overview about European countries see table A6 in Appendix B).

## Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school

According to PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.3 - Students Spoke the Language of the Test Before Starting School, p. 118), the proportion of children speaking a different language at home from the one used at school is significantly low compared to the European Countries at 1.0% (for an overview of European countries see table A7 in Appendix B).

**Challenge:** The number of bilinguals, migrants, and minorities is very low in Hungary. The biggest ethnic group is the Roma minority but 75% of Romany households use only Hungarian at home (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012). The most severe problem concerning this group is not bilingualism, rather, it is other factors detailed below.

## Roma minority in Hungary

In 2003, the UNDP report provided the first robust statistical evidence that a significant number of Roma in the EU Member States surveyed (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia) were facing severe challenges in terms of literacy, infant mortality and malnutrition. On education in particular, the survey found that Roma education levels were 'dramatically low' and the report underlined that because education is directly correlated with labour market skills, inadequate education is a major factor behind Roma workers' decreasing competitiveness. Although there are some positive changes, and educational participation is improving in Hungary, we still have to face severe problems. (Roma survey – Data in focus Education: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States, 2014) To start with positive changes:

- Compared to older generations, a much higher share of young Roma adults attend school. Only 0%–4% of Roma in the 16–24-year-old age group have not attended school in Hungary. So only very few individuals have never been in education (Roma survey, 2014).
- Evidence about a growing number of Roma university students is provided by data about Roma scholarship holders. Within the framework of affirmative action policies, scholarships for Roma have been provided by the Romaversitas Foundation in Hungary since 1998 (Roma survey, 2014).

**Challenges:** Nevertheless, in Hungary labour force surveys indicated for 2009 that just about 1% of the overall population (aged 25 to 64) did not complete lower secondary education (OECD 2011, p. 38) the share of Roma that did not achieve this education level (13% in Hungary) is still considerable.

## We have to face the following severe problems:

1) Segregation is prevalent in Hungary, where attending segregated or mixed schools or classes correlates in some cases with poverty. Roma children attend schools or classes where all or many of their classmates are also Roma. The share of Roma students that attend ethnically segregated schools is above 20% in Hungary. The share of Roma students attending ethnically segregated classes in non-segregated schools exceeds 5% in Hungary (Roma Education in Comparative Perspective, 2012). The standard index of segregation shows that ethnic segregation more than doubled since the 1980s in areas with more than one school. In post-communist countries, since the 1990s, the introduction of the right of parents to choose between schools has intensified the concentration of Roma in certain educational institutions, and the 'white flight' phenomenon from schools where the share of Roma reaches a certain threshold. 'White flight' means, that in certain instances, non-Roma parents avoid enrolling their children in schools with a high share of Roma

pupils, or non-Roma parents transfer their children to other schools, if the share of Roma pupils within a school increases. Consequently, in Hungary, the rising autonomy of schools to accept or dismiss students, hand in hand with the introduction of freedom to choose schools, has strengthened educational segregation. This white flight behaviour might be partly a result of racism and partly a result of parents' fears that a higher share of Roma students might lower the quality of schooling. Very similar is the attempt of non-Roma parents to influence school authorities to keep schools "Roma-free". Middle class families increasingly enrol their children into schools with the best reputation and quality, while less affluent families still choose a school in closest proximity. Several studies have reported that students who attend segregated schools or classes are disadvantaged, in terms of school infrastructure and equipment, as well as the quality of teaching. A correlation between teacher fluctuation (indirect indicator of the quality of teaching) and ethnic segregation was found in Hungary (Kertesi & Kézdi 2005). Several successful litigation cases in which Chance for Children Foundation (CFCF) in Hungary represented Roma parents prove that municipalities maintaining schools have not taken effective measures against segregation, which is prohibited by law (Roma survey, 2014).

**Challenge:** The government, national and international organisations should foster Roma inclusion. Policies should tackle the existence of ethnically segregated schools and classes, especially if those are a result of institutional mechanisms. School desegregation projects might be well combined with housing policies that tackle residential segregation. Historically evolved arrangements between schools on the one hand, and Roma and non-Roma communities on the other hand, might be a trigger for school segregation that needs to be addressed with care, while bearing in mind the complexities of both the historical legacies, as well as the interests of different groups with a stake in the issue. Desegregation can be sustainable only if strict anti-discrimination legislation is matched by deliberate efforts to address the implicit lack of "segregation incentives" that often exist. It is also a matter of addressing prejudices and better awareness of and respect of diversity. The involvement of all actors, especially teachers and parents, might be a precondition for successful school desegregation. Students and parents need to be prepared for desegregation policies, as otherwise desegregation might increase school dropout. If school segregation is a direct result of residential segregation mechanisms, things such as travel support or scholarships might enable students to attend schools (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012).

2) Many special schools in Hungary are segregated education settings for the Roma, a high share of Roma attend special schools. The share of Roma that attend ethnically segregated special schools exceeds 30% in Hungary. Moreover, Roma have been found to be indirectly discriminated against through the use of intelligence or school readiness tests that guide streaming decisions. Diagnostic tests, such as the Raven's Progressive Matrices or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, which are used in Hungary, show cultural and language bias that disadvantage Roma children. As it has been observed for other disadvantaged groups, it is neither limited intelligence nor talent, nor physical or psychological dysfunctions, but rather their disadvantaged situation, which seems to trigger the streaming of Roma into special schools and classes (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012).

**Challenges:** The streaming of Roma pupils into special schools should be avoided, and inclusive schooling should replace segregated schooling. This might be achieved through the abolishment of all financial or institutional incentives of special school attendance – a blatant example of an implicit

segregation incentive. School funding schemes might be revised and designed in a way that neither diagnostic centres, nor special schools, have any advantage if more students are diagnosed as mentally disabled. Furthermore, states might permit only a small corpus of tools that are allowed to assess mental disabilities. Such tools should be adjusted in order not to disadvantage children that have language difficulties, or children who feel frightened or alienated in a test situation. Proven cases of direct or indirect discrimination against Roma students need to be sanctioned by the educational inspectorate. International evidence shows that children who do not suffer from severe physical or mental disabilities might well be enrolled in regular schools, and if done properly, inclusion is a win-win situation for all (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012).

3) Literacy results reveal a relationship between school attendance and literacy rates. Completing primary school appears to be an essential prerequisite to acquiring literacy (Roma survey, 2014). Self-perceived literacy of young Roma is close to 100% in Hungary. Improvements in self-perceived literacy rates between 2004 and 2011 are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) for Hungary (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012). Nevertheless, one cannot conclude that young Roma in Hungary have reading and writing competencies that allow them to compete in the labour market. Illiteracy is not a big problem anymore, rather functional illiteracy.

**Challenges:** Assessment tests should be used in order to provide a detailed picture about literacy skills of Roma students. Countries that take part in international student surveys might easily adapt the national student questionnaire used in such surveys. Furthermore, countries might ensure the coverage of Roma populations by introducing a boosted subsample to international surveys, or by running national surveys that explicitly include Roma students (Roma education in comparative perspective, 2012).

### 5.3.2 Support for children with special needs

Not only children from culturally disadvantaged families are “at risk” in their literacy development but also those with very low birth weight and severe prematurity, factors that are associated with developmental disabilities, including reading and writing disabilities. Also cognitive and sensory disabilities must be considered.

Children in Hungary with delayed or impaired development are being helped to reach their full potential thanks to a pioneering centre in Budapest. The Early Intervention Centre (EIC) provides a package of services for children aged 0-6 delivered by a group of specialists that focus on the development of the child as well as the needs and circumstances of the family. With a team of paediatricians, special teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and integration specialists, the Centre provides a complete approach to care by combining all their staff’s knowledge to help families in need. The main goal of their activities is to ensure health and well-being of the child, to enhance families’ abilities in caring for their children and to minimise developmental delays. “Our approach can be considered as unique as several different experts work together in an interdisciplinary team built around the child,” says Barbara Czeizel, manager of the EIC. “We provide a diagnostic assessment of the children, where a group of our highly qualified professionals review the medical history and recent problems, and then examine the child using the latest methods. After evaluating the assessment results, we choose from our special therapies those that best suit the needs of the child.” The centre specialises in helping children with autism, with severe and multiple disabilities and premature babies. Specialists do this by working with parents as partners and taking care of their

special needs too. Some of the therapies completely involve the parents whereas others just require them to attend and observe.

Hungary has no national diagnostic assessment of reading or learning disabilities (Balkányi & Ostorics, 2012). However, parents must report if any family members have learning disabilities. In addition, paediatricians are required to examine children at the age of five to assess school readiness and can recommend further testing or developmental training. Pre-primary and primary school teachers also have evaluation tools to assess subsets of abilities (e.g., speech, hearing, fine motor skills), and the use of such tools is increasing (ibid., p. 308).

Children/pupils with special educational needs have the right to receive pedagogical, therapeutic education or conductive education service corresponding to their condition within the scope of special care after their legitimate claim has been established (Eurydice, 2009).

The Public Education Act does not regulate if children/students with SEN have to be educated in special schools or classes established for this purpose or integrated in mainstream schools. It permits both opportunities. Although the NCC's unified development tasks should be applied in the case of students with SEN, the process of education must be organised in harmony with students' abilities, limitations and special needs. Children/students with SEN have the right to receive special education after their eligibility was determined. Parents consult the Educational Counselling Service. The service provides diagnostics and counselling; therapy and family care. If the child has specific educational needs or is struggling with adaptive, learning or behavioural difficulties an education rehabilitation committee is consulted. The Committee can either recommend that the student is placed in a specialised class or institution, or propose integration into mainstream education. Special needs education is provided in line with the rehabilitation committee's expert opinion. Parents, according to the Act on Equal Opportunities, have the right to select the educational institution that provides appropriate education for their children with SEN based on the relevant committee's expert opinion, taking into consideration the needs and possibilities of parents and children. The aim of the Hungarian education policy is to operate an inclusive system but also provide professional education to children/students with disabilities.<sup>39</sup>

### **5.3.3 Promoting preschool attendance, especially among disadvantaged children**

According to European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014, Figure C1 p.62), the enrolment rate at age 4 is 94.5%. Hungary reaches the European benchmark for at least 95% of children between age 4 and the start of compulsory education participating in ECEC (for an overview of European countries see table C1 in Appendix B).

The OECD Family Database (2014) offers more differentiated figures of participation rates at age 3, 4 and 5. According to 2010 statistical data, the participation rate is 96.2% for 5-year-olds, 92.1% for 4-year-olds, and 71.7% for 3-year-olds (OECD 2014) (for an overview of European countries see table C2 in Appendix B).

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<sup>39</sup> European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive education <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/hungary/national-overview/special-needs-education-within-the-education-system>.

PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 4.7, p. 128) provides information about the relationship between the length of preschool education attendance and average reading score in grade 4. These are the figures:

3 years and more: 86% (average reading score 548)

Between 1 and 3 years: 13% (average reading score 505)

1 year or less: 1%

Did not attend: 1%

(For an overview of European countries s. table C3 in Appendix B).

Hungary (and also the Netherlands) are the only European countries where there is no positive relationship between the length of pre-primary education and reading achievement in grade 4.

Pre-primary education is free for children aged from 3 to 6 years old (EURYDICE<sup>40</sup>). Hungary belongs to the half of the European countries where the entire period of ECEC is free. Many countries provide at least one year of free pre-primary education.

Hungary has very high rates of Roma children with preschool experience (92 %). Socially disadvantaged children are given priority in enrolment. Kindergarten places are free of charge to "multiple disadvantaged" children from the age of 3. The survey data present Hungary as a clear example with visible effect of early childhood education on school attendance. As many as 94 % of compulsory school-age Roma children currently attending school have passed through the preschool earlier in their life (they have had preschool experience). At the same time, only 15 % of the same-age Roma children in Hungary who do not currently attend school have had preschool experience before (Roma survey, 2014).

### **5.3.4 Provisions for preschool children with language problems**

Literacy competence strongly builds on oral language proficiency, word knowledge, and syntactic knowledge. Measures must be taken by governments and institutions to ensure that children with poor language development (second-language speaking children and those from a low socio-cultural background, as well as others who experience difficulty in learning language) acquire adequate levels of oral language in kindergarten, preschool institutions and in school. It should be ensured that at age 4 at the latest all children are diagnosed in their oral language proficiency, and that there are obligatory courses for children falling behind in their acquisition of language competence. The aim should be that all children entering school can speak the language of the school so that they can profit from reading instruction.

Older children in centre-based ECEC settings receive language support (European Commission/EACA/Eurydice/Eurostat 2014, p. 145). There is provision for support from educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and other specialized professionals only in some type of settings (EURYDICE et al., 2014, p. 109).

### **5.3.5 Support for children and adolescents whose home language is not the language of school**

Officially recognised ethnic and national minorities (e.g. German, Romanian, Slovenian, Serb, Croatian, and Greek) have public minority educational institutions where their own language is used as first or second language of instruction (Eurydice, 2009). According to the 2009 PISA results, in Hungary, unlike

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<sup>40</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Overview>.

in most other countries, migrant students do not have lower average reading levels than the mainstream students.

Officially recognised ethnic and national minorities (e.g. German, Romanian, Slovenian, Serb, Croatian, and Greek) have public minority educational institutions where their own language is used as first or second language of instruction (Eurydice, 2009).

### 5.3.6 Preventing early school leaving

One important, but certainly not sufficient, precondition for raising performance levels in literacy for adolescents is literacy provision during secondary schooling, as functional literacy is mainly acquired in school-based learning. Thus, the provision of secondary education for all adolescents and the prevention of early school leaving may serve as indicators for the opportunities of adolescents to improve their literacy performance especially related to basic functional literacy.

The duration of compulsory education in Hungary is 11 (or 13) years. Children start school at the age of 5; compulsory schooling ends at 16 (or 18) years (Compulsory Education in Europe 2013/14, Eurydice report).

As concerns students (ISCED 1-6) aged 15-24 years, we find that in Hungary, 66.3% of 15-24 year olds were in some form of education in 2011, which was above the average EU-27 value of 61.9%. This indicator is on a slightly increasing trend: by 2012 it stood at 66.6%.

The percentage of 18-year olds in education was 89.2% in 2011, which situated Hungary well above the EU-27 average (80.7%). By 2012, this indicator slightly decreased (89.0%).

**Challenges:** According to Eurostat, in Hungary, the rate of early school leavers was 11.8% in 2013, up from 11.5% a year before. The target value of the early school leaving (ESL) rate set for 2020 is 10.0%.

Early drop-out rates are high in the case of Roma children in more EU Member States. In Hungary a very high share of Roma (51 %) was recorded who dropped out while still in compulsory school. The gender gap is also large, with women stopping education before the age of 16 by 20 percentage points more than men. (Women selected marriage and childbirth third most often, with 16 % mentioning this, 10% mentioned failure at school as a reason for stopping education (Roma survey, 2014).)

### Policies / programmes to prevent early school leaving

In 2006, Hungary launched a Life Course Survey which follows 10,000 pupils from the 8th grade (last grade of primary education) until the end of upper secondary education using questionnaires. It allows for an analysis of the most important trends both in school success and in ESL. Regarding children with parents having only primary school education, the survey found that Roma children are at higher risk (25% points difference) of ESL than non-Roma. The most important reasons leading to ESL were identified as absenteeism, poor academic results, and the feeling that experiences of school-life are not relevant for the children (European Commission, 2013, p. 36).

The DOBBANTO programme in Hungary was a pilot project from 2008 to 2011 and involved 15 schools located in different geographical areas across Hungary. The focus of the project was to help students to re-enter school education or VET, adult education or employment. The pilot project targeted 15-25 year olds who for a range of multiple and complex reasons experienced difficulties with mainstream education. The starting point of the pilot was to change the physical learning environment

(welcoming, relaxation areas) together with the organisation of learning (small groups, small teams of teachers) and to provide creative and flexible learning experiences linked to employability and career development. A key focus was on the development of communication, social and learning competencies supported by innovative instructive methods such as cooperative learning, project based learning, experimental learning and out-of school learning.

As a student-centred pedagogical approach, one of the key elements of the pilot was to provide opportunities for young people to create their own personal development plans with a view to them taking responsibility for their own development and longer term plans. One-to-one teacher student/student meetings in addition to team building sessions facilitated this approach. Due to the success of the pilot project, plans are now in place to develop 'the Bridge Programme' in Hungary for low achievers, early school leavers and for young adults (European Commission, 2013, p. 44). Furthermore, in the Dobbanto programme, teachers receive specific training before the start of the programme, and receive regular training and support. This includes a monthly visit by a 'change mentor' to facilitate reflective thinking and the process of change, and to identify alternative solutions to problems the team is struggling with. In addition, regional meetings are organised, where teachers and managers of schools participating in the programme meet with the teams of four or five other schools every six months for a direct exchange of experiences and learning from each other. School leaders are encouraged to engage in a process of self-reflection and are supported in developing their own leadership practices by 'edu-coaches' with business skills and extensive experience in different aspects of education (European Commission, 2013, p. 46).

### **5.3.7 Addressing the gender gap among adolescents**

No particular programmes or initiatives in this field.

**Challenges:** Although the gender gap does exist among adolescents, no particular programmes or initiatives are offered for them or no research is carried out. Here the difference between the schooling of boys and girls should be taken into account. Boys tend to study in secondary vocational schools, where literacy is not the focus of the curriculum. On the other hand, girls tend to study in grammar schools, where literacy is more transparent.



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