



**The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme  
for Public Employment Services**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**Dealing with low-skilled young job-seekers: The  
Hungarian PES's perspective**



National Employment Service,  
National Employment Office

**Peer country paper Youth Guarantees  
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# 1 COUNTRY SPECIFICS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – RISKS FOR LOW-SKILLED YOUNG PEOPLE

The overall employment rate in Hungary is the lowest among the Member States (15-64 years, 54.5% HU and 63.7% EU-27 (2010Q1), whereas the number of hours spent at work is almost up to the European average (-1.7%, 2009), which means that employed Hungarians work longer hours than the European average.

The Hungarian Central Statistical Office applies the same terminology for the youth as EUROSTAT, but the Hungarian Employment Act makes a distinction for career-starters; if the career-starter has gathered 200 working days since the graduation she/he is entitled for job-seeker's assistance, after 365 worked days the job-seekers' benefit is available. According to the current service agreement of the National Employment Service (henceforth according the international abbreviations: PES) secondary-school graduates can be registered as young job-seekers, but they are not eligible for job-seekers' benefits under the age of 25 except if they already have 365 worked-days. Degree-holders are taken into account up to the age of 30. Parallel with that they have full access to the ALMP measures.

The overall employment rate of the working-age population (15-64 years) is significantly lower among those with low schooling (Bálint, Cseres-Gergely, Scharle 2010). It is 24.6% (2010Q1) for primary school leavers; 62.4% for vocational trainees with no final exam; 58.6% for secondary-school graduates, and much higher than the EU 2020 overall goal for degree-holders at 78.2%. The employment rate of young people (ages 15-24) was 34% in 1998; 20% in 2008 and, as a direct effect of the crisis, only 18.1% in 2010. The overall unemployment rate was 9.1% in 2009 and that of 15-24 year-olds 26.5%.

In the school year of 2008/2009, 88% of the age group of 3-22 year-olds was enrolled in school. The relative shares of the three types of secondary schools was the following: 41.2% of students aged 14-18 chose vocational secondary school with school-leaving exam; 35.5% general secondary school, and only 2.3% went to trade-school (without GCSE) providing no school-leaving exam<sup>1</sup>. In 2009 only 216,000 young people (ages 15-24) were employed in the labour market (HCSO STADAT). The average length of schooling in Hungary was 17.6 years in 2004, with 85.5% of the 15-19 year-old enrolled in secondary education (Education at a Glance, 2006). The average age of exit from the school system (including higher education) and entry to the labour market is 23 years. Early school-leavers represented 12.4% (2006), which dropped to 11.2% in 2009 (EUROSTAT)<sup>2</sup>. The NEET rate of the Hungarian youth was 13.4%, i.e. one percent higher than the EU-27 average of 12.4%, in 2009 (EUROSTAT, LFS).

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<sup>1</sup> Hungarian Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2008/2009.

<sup>2</sup>

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/images/e/e9/Youth\\_education\\_attainment\\_level\\_and\\_early\\_school\\_leavers\\_%281%29.png](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/images/e/e9/Youth_education_attainment_level_and_early_school_leavers_%281%29.png)

Only six out of ten people with a vocational qualification (and no GCSE) find employment in their own vocation. The New Széchenyi Plan identified this problem as a result of the 12 years long compulsory schooling. After the modification of the Public Education Act (1996) the compulsory school-age is 18 years, As a result the drop-out rate in the four year trade-schools (without GCSE) at grade 9-10 is very high. (approx. 30%) (New Széchenyi Plan 2011, p.289.).

#### PES data

In December 2010, 7.2% of the population aged 15-24 was registered as a job-seeker. 15.2% of the young registered job-seeker had recourse to the active measures and services offered by the Hungarian PES. In 2009, 57.5% of the registered young people left the PES registry due to some positive event (placement, enrolment in training etc.), and 76.4% among them had received some services as well (guidance, placement, job-seekers' club, assistance at Vocational Guidance Centres etc.). In January 2010, 2% of 15-19 year-olds (11 963 persons) and 12.1% of 20-24 year-olds (75 815 persons) appeared on the PES registry of job-seekers.

## 2 PES ORGANISATION AND SERVICE PROFILE

The Hungarian PES went through a major restructuring in the last five years. In 2007, the originally county-based labour centres were merged into seven regional labour centres (at NUTS II level). In December 2010, the newly elected right-wing government introduced a brand new public administration system. The county (and metropolitan) employment service centres became parts of the County-Level Government Offices (Prefectures). Currently, the Ministry of National Economy is responsible for employment policy, and a minister of state was appointed for this task. He is responsible for five departments within the Ministry. The National Employment Office works under this ministry and has a methodological/supervisory function with respect to the county labour centres (see the chart in Annex 3).

The Ministry of Public Administration and Justice is fully responsible for the national public administration, including supervision of the Hungarian National Employment Service. The service changed its name last year as 'public' was replaced by 'national'. PES comprises the National Employment Office, 20 County Labour Centres, less than 20 branch office and service delivery centres and approximately 152 branch offices. NES covers 161 micro-regions out of the 174 Hungarian micro-regions (NUTS IV). It has annual service contracts with a total of almost 400 NGOs and other organisations which act as employment information points for citizens and companies. The branch offices differ significantly in terms of headcount. There are small offices with 4-6 persons and big ones with 30-50 staff members. This also means that the services they provide are different. In the capital city of Budapest, there is a special branch office dedicated to young people and to degree-holders.

The Hungarian National Employment Service used to be fully financed from the Hungarian Labour Market Fund (LMF). As of 2011, the PES is directly financed from the state budget. In 1991 the German, continental, model was adopted in Hungary. LMF has a tripartite Steering Committee. In 2004 (at the time of the EU accession of Hungary), the PES was designated as an agency to deliver employment programmes funded by the ESF. Currently, the two funding mechanisms are intertwined and PES's work is implemented through two parallel systems

The Hungarian NES is responsible for active labour market measures, the complex labour market programmes and passive measures as well. It operates the four main types of active measures according to the ILO standards (wage subsidies, training, public work, and setting up businesses/self-employment). However, since 2005 when the first Start-card for young persons was introduced, NES has played a much smaller part in delivering the ALMPs. Some subsidies and labour market programmes are mediated by the National Tax and Customs Office (Hungarian abbreviation: NAV) and the National Development Agency, as well as the Regional Development Agencies. PES branch-offices had 1.1 million visitors in 2009 (cumulated data) and deals with some 300 000 – 400 000 employers annually (e.g. notification of vacancies, outplacement services, contribution to short term labour market questionnaires etc.) Each county labour centre has one Occupational Guidance Centre (FIT), each centre approximately has 1-3 career information or

career counsellor specialists. At national level in 2008 488 career specialists worked for the service, half of them were employees of the PES and another half was outsourced (internal evaluation, Borbély-Pecze -Punczman 2008).

### 3 ENSURING ACCESS TO PES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Hungarian PES has been playing a significant role in career guidance activities. The Hungarian career and education guidance system was abolished in the early 1980s, before the change of the regime. In the early 1990s, the newly formed PES was almost the only national provider in the field of career information and career guidance. From 1991 on, the National Employment Office (NEO), the head office of the Hungarian PES, had recourse to German Federal State the US AID as well as World Bank donations to cover the cost of many guidance-related developments. Until 2000, when the WB project came to an end, career-guidance-related developments had been assigned to an independent unit. The most significant items and issues were the followings: adaptation of the Choices 1996 and 2000 Canadian career software; curricula development for career guidance professionals; preparation of a Hungarian Occupational Handbook; questionnaire development; adaptation of the German BIZ (Vocational Guidance Centre) system and its tools (occupation folders, films) The new Rules of Operation and Organisation is under approval by Ministry of National Economy; among other things, it proposes that Education and Guidance be an independent department of the National Employment Office.

In the pre-accession period, three regional PHARE projects were implemented to promote the development of regional guidance networks, of the relevant web pages and textbooks. The regional PES centres hosted the hubs of the career guidance networks. Primary and secondary schools, cultural centres, and family assistance centres were the main partners. As a result of these developments, NEO updated and improved the first version of the national career guidance portal ([www.epalya.hu](http://www.epalya.hu)). Since 2008, NEO has been responsible for the programme to develop a national lifelong guidance system. This provides professional support in the whole school system, on a cross-cutting basis. Within this programme, 2000 practitioners received 30 hours in-service training in the field of career information, and another 76 were trained for career guidance in the form of two-year part-time post-graduate studies. A new LLG portal was completed ([www.eletpalya.munka.hu](http://www.eletpalya.munka.hu)), and 40 new questionnaires (including questionnaires for young people and the low-skilled) were designed. The national career guidance system run by PES had 27 059 visitors in 2010. 3 792 persons among them were provided face-to-face counselling in five steps, and 6 368 took part in 3-day group sessions. The head office of the Hungarian PES hosts the Hungarian Euro Guidance Centre which provides services mainly for the youth. The national career guidance portal offers e-mail and chat functions to visitors. PES has an '8:00-16:30' network of guidance practitioners on duty. They are available on-line through the system. The Hungarian PES has no call centre. Twenty county-based Occupational Guidance Centres (FIT) are available from 9:00 to 16:00. These special offices often host school groups from primary or secondary schools.

PES is also responsible for the national career fairs. The main target groups of these events are school-leavers and students in primary and secondary education. The PES regional offices are also responsible for organising career fairs across the

country. There are between 6 and 14 per region, and in 2009 these were attended by a total of 117 739 people, including 64 985 primary school pupils, 20 987 secondary school students, 1 948 university undergraduates; there were 17 534 registered job-seekers, 6 174 parents and 6 111 teachers. Exhibitors included employers, professional associations, chambers of industry and commerce, and educational and training institutions. PES is also responsible for contacts with outsourced service providers (e.g. NGOs).

Career guidance accessible within the school system is provided mainly by form masters/mistresses, mainly during their special 'form master's lessons'. It includes, in particular, help to those who intend to enter higher education or the VET system with the selection of the appropriate line of education and with the admission formalities. A survey made in 2009 indicated that 57% of teachers were form teachers, spending 3 hours per week in this capacity. PES staff are also responsible for outreach services to reach young people (e.g. career classes, career fairs in the schools, jointly with theatres career dramas also organized for the youth.)



## **4 PES SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

According to the current legislation, registered job-seekers as well as citizens asking for services can be the clients of PES. Full-time students cannot be registered as such unless they drop out from school and are older than 16. As already stated above, young people are not eligible for job-seekers' benefits or allowances. Eligibility for any type of benefit is conditional on the certification of at least 200 days spent at work within the previous 4 years. For the full job-seeker's benefits, 365 days are required. Young persons who cannot meet these conditions can participate in the active labour market measures and they can be provided guidance services.

A special complex programme (Youth Employment Programme) was designed for young people in 1996 when the youth unemployment benefit was abolished. Since then a wide variety of active measures and services have been made available for registered young adults (ages 16-30). Although according to the Hungarian Employment Act (Act IV of 1991), unregistered young adults or school-age children cannot be registered-jobseekers of PES, the Service offers many opportunities for them (e.g. career fairs, school classes, extra-curricular activities). First interviews and various follow-up methods tools are used as well, but not exclusively for young people. In some counties and in Budapest, there are special local offices dedicated to them. Every registered job-seeker has to sign a job-seeker contract. Unregistered young people (at school, in group counselling sessions) can use career questioners on a virtual basis. The job-seekers' action plan (JSAP) is compulsory for young people within the first month of registering.

PES runs a short-term prognosis system. Every 3 months, 7 600-8 000 employers are asked about prospective vacancies and lay-offs. PES jointly with the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry are also responsible for the yearly employment survey. The Hungarian Labour Market Outlook is published yearly<sup>3</sup>. Employers can indicate their needs, although this system was not specially designed for young people. The head office is also responsible for special service agreements with larger companies. At the current stage, PES is not engaged in apprenticeship brokerage, but it is an open question. The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has made a commitment to the Ministry of National Economy to renew the national vocational education system. The development of a dual training system is a set goal.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gvi.hu/index.php/en/research/list.html?id=6>

## 5 EFFECTIVE PES MEASURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Hungarian PES has been using all types of active labour market measures and it has been responsible for having performance indicators and monitoring system as well in place. The county labour centres are responsible for the daily operational tasks related to the measures; the head office takes care of the national monitoring and evaluation system.

The Hungarian Parliament accepted the National Youth Strategy on October 26, 2009. The national strategy is in line with the European initiative, Youth on the Move. The strategy designated various services to promote the social and labour market inclusion of the youth. These are the following:

- Career guidance services
- Career fairs
- Re-evaluation of the START card scheme (a tax discount programme for youth)
- Work experience programmes
- Training, guidance and work experience mixtures
- Scholarship for the youth in the shortage vocations
- Development of co-operation between the police and the county/local PES offices
- Fostering the development of the youth NGOs and student unions

The Hungarian PES plays a very active role in the implementation of the strategy. It offers work experience programmes to qualified young job-seekers. In order to qualify, job-seekers must be registered with PES at least for 90 days and they must have at least a basic level of vocational qualification. The subsidized employer must offer a contract for at least 4 hours of work per day for 365 days. The job must match the young job-seeker's vocational qualification.

PES regional centres also offer integrated labour market programmes (ILMP) for young people. ILMP means a mixture of ALMP tools (e.g. public work and training, group counselling and training, internship and training or guidance etc.) Between 2007 and 2010, 260 young persons were involved in these types of programmes in three Hungarian macro regions. Two special programmes with 220 young participants were meant to answer young degree-holders' needs.

### **New Practices**

The new Hungarian Government has a new initiative concerning **community service for young people**. According to the current proposal, this would mean 60 hours of compulsory work during the secondary school period. This arrangement could be fruitful also from the perspective of PES, although the Service has not been consulted so far. As this is a new initiative, further details on the scheme are not yet available.

## Best Practices

1.) In 2005, a **special wage subsidy scheme** was opened for young people. It is called *START Card*. **START cards** are issued to young school-leavers under the age of 25, or under 30 if they finished or interrupted post-secondary education, to facilitate the conclusion of a first employment relationship by offering tax relief to employers.

The subsidy scheme is available for a maximum of two years. The scheme exempts the employer from paying contributions on 10% of gross wages in the first year and 20% of wages in the second year. The employers' contributions in the January 1, after START-generated employment for the card be enforced as follows:

- primary and secondary education of young school leavers with no qualifications or employment of the employer social security contributions, 27% of the aggregate amount of the first year of employment instead of the monthly gross earnings of 10%, second year 20% of the corresponding payment obligation,
- employment of young graduates of higher education in the social security contribution instead of the aggregate amount of employment in the first nine months of gross salary to 10%, followed by three months 20% of the appropriate public dues, the employer is obliged to pay.

The benefit of the employer's basic and secondary education or education for young school leavers with no more than one and half times the minimum wage, for young school leavers with higher education equal to twice the minimum wage base for contributions after application. The excess earnings after the employer is obliged under the general rules of the contributions paid.

The card is valid for two years from the date of issue. After 1 January 2010, the young school leavers with higher education triggered by the START-card validity period of change. Primary and secondary education of young school leavers with no qualifications the START-card valid for two years for higher education graduates for one year. (sources: NFSZ.hu)

2.) **The programme for developing a lifelong guidance system** in Hungary is part of the Social Renewal Operational Programme. The overall objective is to further develop career guidance and information tools available to all concerned and, as a result, to increase the labour market efficiency of the working-age population.

The programme rests on four major capacity-building pillars carrying significant individual and social consequences for all labour market participants:

- a core network of lifelong guidance professionals,
- a wider lifelong guidance delivery network at various delivery levels,
- an increased number of career guidance professionals, and
- development of career information tools.

These components provide the basis for development in that they improve both the career and self-knowledge of individuals who are seeking career guidance and their

ability to make adequate career and training choices. In addition, they also contribute to the development of life- and career-path building competencies. These changes will most certainly have a positive impact on the efficiency of the education system as well as on the success rate of individual clients trying to secure employment for themselves. On a socio-economic level, that will contribute to a decrease in labour-market mismatches which, in turn, will increase the economy's competitiveness, leading to higher employment figures and a reduction of the social benefit expenditure.

a). The core network of lifelong guidance services

To provide lifelong guidance delivery for those who would like to seek professional advice prior to making career-related decisions, a new complimentary network has been established with 50 professional career counsellors, based in 24 cities and towns. Career guidance services are free of charge for the public. To ensure a uniform standard of operation, a set of unified guidelines has been developed. The guidelines cover all major aspects of the career counsellor's work, including individual and group counselling, outreach programmes or the organisation of work visits. These services are available both in person or in the form of distance counselling (by phone, e-mail).

b) The wider network of lifelong guidance delivery

Networks have been set up in all the seven regions of the country to cover all professionals working in guidance-related roles and to let them get in touch with potential users of a lifelong guidance service. More than 3 500 such people have been contacted, of whom 600 work as trained career guidance providers and have some sort of lifelong guidance qualification. One of the main objectives is to encourage people working in different sectors (employment, public culture, education, social services, labour administration or entrepreneurial human resources) to develop a common identity as lifelong guidance professionals who belong to the same professional community. Participation at regional professional workshops organised on a regular basis constitutes the first step in that direction.

c) Increasing the number of career guidance professionals

Within the programme, special emphasis is laid on the training of professionals working in the field of career guidance or related areas. The long-term goal is to establish a professional community that is capable of providing high-standard career guidance services for people of all ages, educational backgrounds, circumstances and career ambitions. To this end, more than 2000 teachers, social workers and other professionals in human services have participated in short 30-hour training courses designed to train them in basic career guidance skills. In addition, as part of the TÁMOP 2.2.2 programme, support is being provided for two master's level programmes in career guidance in co-operation with two universities.

d) Development of career information tools

Substantial progress has taken place in the development of career information tools. In accordance with the new occupational classification system (based on ISCO-08, effective as of January 1, 2011), thematic films and file folders have been updated

and new ones produced. Work on a National Lifelong Guidance Portal has also started. Its Beta version is already accessible, and new functions and tools are being added to it on a continuous basis. While still under construction, the new portal will have several innovative components. These include, for example, a wide range of self-assessment questionnaires addressed to different target groups as well as databases covering all sectors of education, training and employment opportunities. In addition, a Virtual Community of Career Guidance Professionals will also be set up to help professionals get and keep in touch with one another

## **Results**

Between October 1, 2005 and December 31, 2010 180 499 young people were supported under the youth Start card scheme. In 2010 15.1% of the ALMP participants were under 25. 17 656 received in-service training as a preventive measure, 4 529 got a wage-subsidy, 857 were helped to start a business of their own and 2 345 did public work. 175 job-seekers under the age of 25 participated in Job Clubs; the new Hungarian Lifelong Guidance portal had 239 524 unique visitors in the first 18 months of the LLG Development Programme. 1 916 teachers, social workers, corporate HR specialists, trade union members received 30-hour in-service training in the field of LLG. A LLG national network was established where the Hungarian PES acts as a hub. 3 500 LLG practitioners from different areas (public education, community learning, social services, higher education, VET and PES) were gathered. The extended PES career guidance services had 26 700 end-users in 2009.

## **6 ASPECTS OF TRANSFERABILITY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The envisaged reforms of the primary, vocational, higher and adult education systems, respectively, are a topic of on-going debates in Hungary. The review of the different types of labour market prognoses is also part of these discussions. The issue of the labour market match or mismatch of the qualifications of young job-seekers is a focus point of these debates. The regular evaluation of the different active measures and services could support these policy debates.

From the perspective of the Hungarian PES, the following questions are relevant;

- What is the Austrian PES role in connection with apprenticeships?
- How can the PES, jointly with the VET system, provide advice and information on apprenticeship vacancies?
- Are there best practices of competency-based matching systems in operation?
- Is there a clear distinction between career guidance services and the job-brokerage services in the AMS?
- Is there any 'early warning system' for drop-outs in Austria? If there is such a system, can the PES get these data and work with them?
- Is there any special unit within the PES dedicated expressly to the youth?
- Are there any service agreements between the labour administration and primary and secondary schools at national level?
- What type of co-operation and co-ordination has been developed between the PES and chambers concerning apprenticeship?
- Are the AMS prognosis surveys being used to shape school enrolment figures? If so, in what sense?

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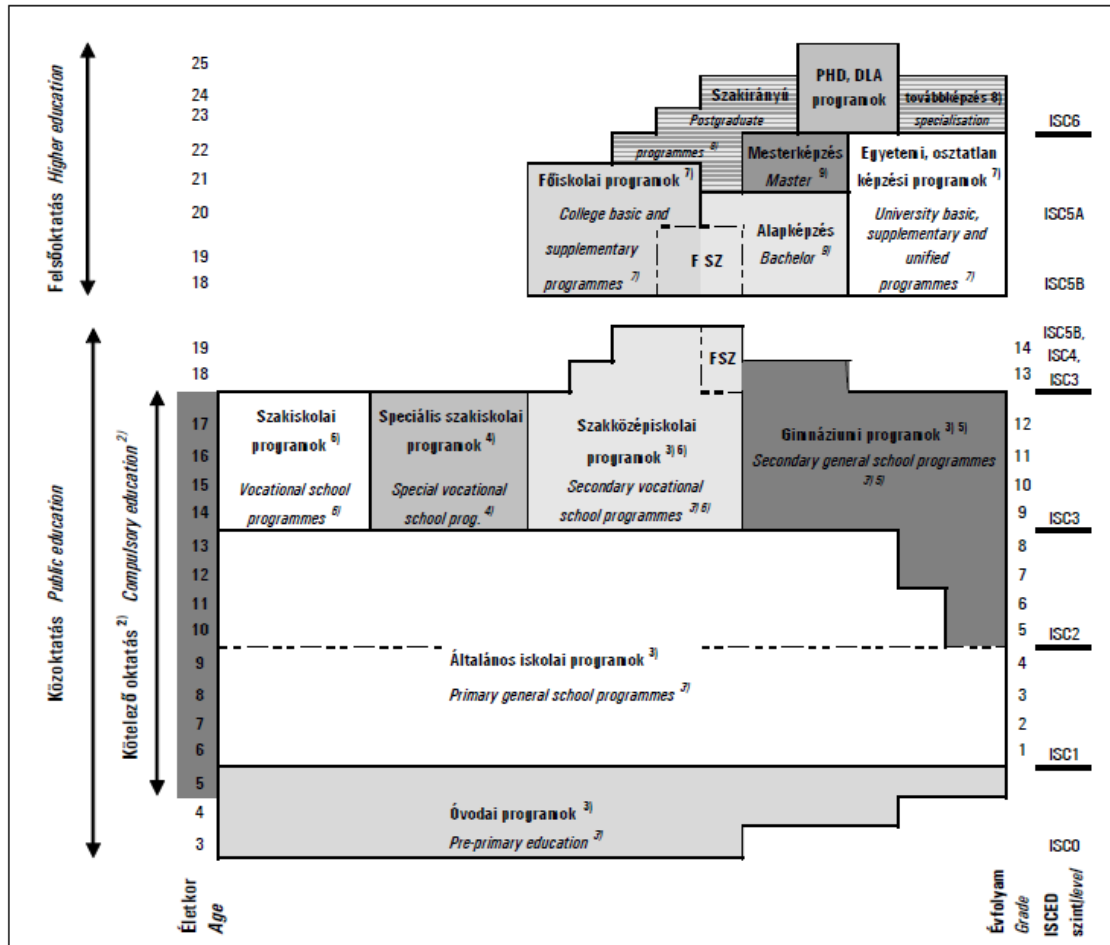
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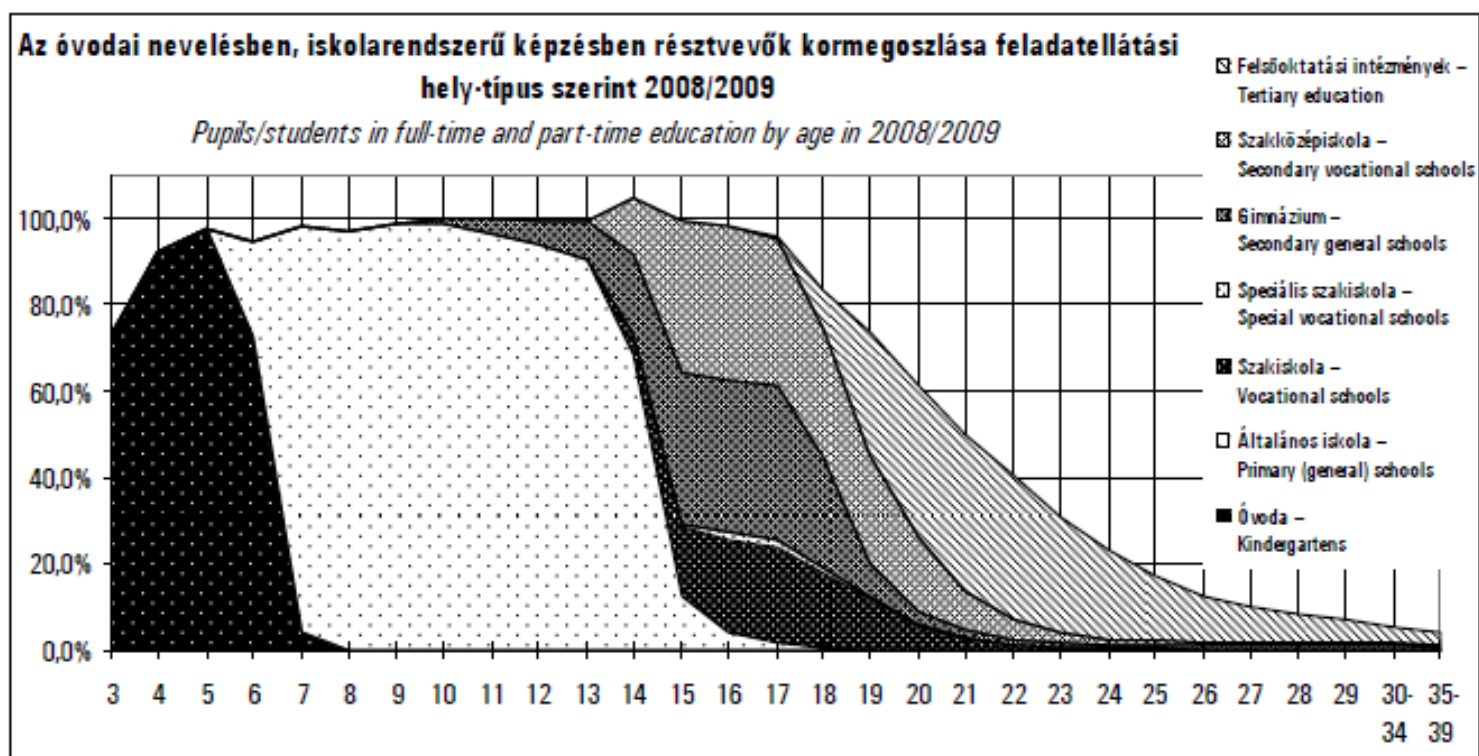
# ANNEX 1

**Az iskolarendszerű köz- és felsőoktatás szerkezete életkor, évfolyam és ISCED szint szerint <sup>1)</sup>**  
*The Structure of the Hungarian Public Education and Higher Education System by age, grade and by ISCED level<sup>1)</sup>*

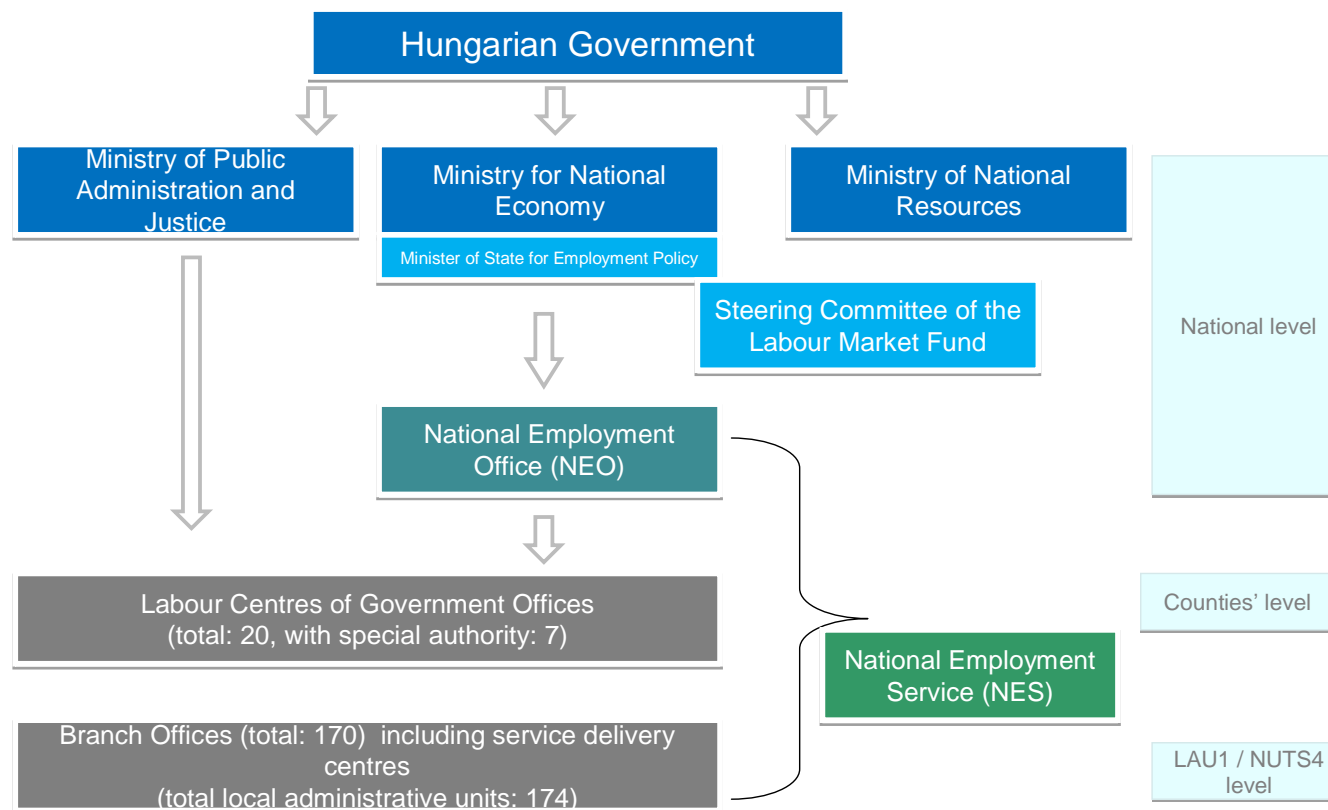


Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education 2008/2009

## ANNEX 2



## The new service structure of the Hungarian Employment Service



Gov. Decree 315/2010 (December 27, 2010)

***New structure of the Hungarian employment service after December 27, 2010***

## ANNEX 4

### Employees, clients and client/staff ratios of the Hungarian PES

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Employees of PES (full staff)	4 094	3 716	3 794	4 089
registered jobseekers in the whole year*	885 386	893 788	936 621	1 115 956
client / full staff	216.26	240.52	246.87	272.92
Staff of the central offices (NEO and regional centres)**	1 658	979	1 015	1 041
Staff of the local offices	2 436	2 737	2 779	3 048
Front-line staff (80% of the local offices staff)	1 949	2 190	2 223	2 438
Job-seekers/ front-line staff	454.32	408.20	421.29	457.66

(Source: Berde 2009)

\*one person is counted only once

\*\* with the County Labour Centres in 2006