

HUNGARIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

BGSZC Eötvös Loránd Szakgimnáziuma és Szakközépiskolája



Basic facts about Hungary

Official name:	Republic of Hungary
Area:	93.030 sq km
Population:	10.135.000
Population density:	109.4 per sq km
Capital city:	Budapest, area 525 sq km
Population:	1.863.000
Time:	GMT + 1 hour
Daylight saving time:	last weekend of March to last weekend of September
Official language:	Hungarian
Public administration:	19 counties and Budapest

The Education System of Hungary

Until recently, education in Hungary was compulsory from the age of 6 to 16. Since September 2014, however, the duration of compulsory education is 12 years. Before starting school, children are required to attend nursery school, which is very convenient for working parents. Attending kindergarten is compulsory from the age of 3 and finishes at the age of 6. At the last year children are prepared for school and nursery teachers check children if they are ready for school.

Basic education in Hungary is provided by the general (primary) school, during two cycles of 4 years. Children attend general (primary) school up to the age of 14, after which they have to choose another school. Primary education normally starts at the age of 6 and finishes at the age of 14. At this age they can continue their studies in different types of schools.

Following economic and social changes and with regard to the decreasing number of pupils, in the 1990s the education system in Hungary was restructured. As a result of the changes, some of the general (primary) schools and general secondary schools provided longer or shorter schooling than formerly. Pupils received a wider range of opportunities, such as general secondary schools (gymnasiums) starting education for periods of 6 or 8 years besides the traditional 4-year-courses. These new school types made it possible to choose a school even at the age of 10 or 12. These two school types were initially favoured. However, at the end of the 1990s, their spreading was restricted by new regulations. As a consequence, these schools nowadays furnish only a small part of the secondary education.

Children can choose among secondary schools as follows:

- Vocational schools
- Secondary technical schools
- Secondary grammar schools (gymnasium)

Mentally handicapped children can attend special trade schools. They first obtain the certification of the 9th and 10th grades, and subsequently start acquiring competence in a trade. These schools prepare students for simple jobs.

Vocational schools

Those students who don't want to take Érettségi vizsga go to vocational schools. These schools train students to become skilled worker. They mainly learn only subjects in connection with the field they are specialised in. They study here for three years, then they usually take up a job. At the end of the third year they have to take an examination to get a certificate to become skilled workers, but they can't go to universities or post secondary course.

Secondary technical schools

Students who are planning to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate and wish to begin work immediately after the compulsory period of education, have the opportunity to attend a secondary technical school. During the first and second years of the secondary technical school (the 9th and 10th grades), students have to be taught not only general subjects, they can learn professional subjects from the 9th grade on. The professional orientation and preparation for the technical training starts in the 9th and 10th grades. However, the real technical training begins in the 10th grade, partly in the school, and partly in factories or school-workshops. The conditions for entry to vocational training are defined by the List of National Training Possibilities. If the practical training is provided by an organisation operating with the agreement of the chambers of trade, a contract of apprenticeship has to be made. Students attend this school for four years, and at the end they have to take the Érettségi vizsga, but they have to take four general one special subject, in this way they get not only Érettségi vizsga, but qualification as well. If they want they can go on a further education or they can take up a job.

Secondary grammar schools

The secondary grammar schools (gymnasiums) aim at preparation for universities and colleges, high level foreign language teaching and a thorough general education. After the last year of the gymnasium, the students take final examinations, on the basis of which they are entitled to apply for places at universities or colleges, to learn a trade, or to apply for a position demanding secondary school leaving certificate. The gymnasiums generally offer 4-year-long education – starting in the 9th grade and

finishing in the 12th grade. Here students have to learn general subjects like Hungarian grammar and literature, Maths, History, Chemistry, Foreign language etc.

6- or 8-year-periods of education and gymnasiums in which subjects are taught in two languages are exceptions. The latter schools offer 5-year-courses of education. In the 9th grade, learning a foreign language is emphasized and from the 10th year on certain subjects are taught in a foreign language.

They study here 4-6-8 years and at the end they have to take a final exam called *Érettségi vizsga*, and they get secondary school leaving certificate. In this exam they have to take 4 obligatory subjects: Hungarian grammar and literature, Maths, History, a Foreign language and the fifth one is optional, they can choose general subjects like Biology, Chemistry, Music, Art etc. Their choice depends on where they want to continue their studies. If they do the exam well, their application is accepted to the university.

Today, a majority of secondary schools offer various training forms. Students can choose from among different specialisations in the same school and also have the chance to change their specialisation within the school. Previously, students could not move from one course to another without changing school. The recent education system facilitates mobility among the various training forms.

In the 1990s, a new training form, short-cycled post-secondary Accredited Higher Vocational Training (AHVT) courses were introduced. These programmes are offered mainly by colleges (sometimes universities), and in many cases in cooperation with secondary vocational schools, for students with a secondary school leaving certificate. During the training participants earn credit points, which can be utilized when they apply for places at universities and colleges.

Higher education

The term higher education includes training at universities and colleges. These are mostly state universities and colleges; a smaller number are controlled by various churches and there are private colleges. Some foreign education institutions too exist in Hungary. There are altogether 72 universities and colleges with 176 faculties in the country. In the 1990s, several higher education institutions were merged. The number of universities and colleges decreased, but the training possibilities increased significantly. In the past decade, the numbers of students at universities and colleges have risen greatly.

The academic year consists of two semesters: the autumn semester generally lasts from the middle of September to the middle of December, and the spring semester from the middle of February to the middle of May. State-funded students can obtain their first degree free of charge at state universities and colleges. However, foreign citizens have to pay a tuition fee even at state institutions (with the exception of foreign citizens with permanent residence permission). Students who obtain a state scholarship can be exempted from paying the tuition fee. The tuition fee varies at the different institutions and faculties. Information can be found on site or on the homepage of the university.

Applications for basic training can be submitted by students who have obtained the secondary school leaving certificate or have a degree. There is generally no age limit for applications. Both Hungarian and foreign students can apply. The main condition of application is possession of a secondary school leaving

certificate, but this does not mean automatic acceptance. Most universities and colleges also have entrance examinations. Information can be obtained from the university.

During recent years, the number of courses in foreign languages has risen markedly (English, German and French). Competence in Hungarian language is not a criterion, with the exception of courses provided completely or partly in Hungarian. There are foreign language programmes, particularly at the medical, economic and technical universities and colleges, where competence in Hungarian is not needed. The high-level institutions afford a good opportunity for student mobility, through numerous international cooperation and participation in different European programmes (e.g. SOCRATES and CEEPUS).

The larger universities often offer Hungarian courses for students, for instance in the frame of summer university studies. Foreign students have the opportunity to take part in a preparation year in Hungarian if they wish to learn the language.

The degrees available at universities and colleges are as follows:

- Bachelor degree, particularly at colleges: 3-5 years
- Master degree: 4-5 years; medical universities: 6 years
- Doctoral degree, Ph.D, Doct. Of Liberal Arts (DLA): 3 years

Universities generally provide students with a master degree, and colleges with a bachelor degree.