Hungary

19		Upper secondary school **General** (56 %) **Vocational** (44 %)
18		
17		
16	Compulsory schooling	Lower secondary school (Common track)
15		
14		
13		
12		
11		
10		Primary school (Common track)
9		
8		
7		
6		
5		Pre-school
4		
3		

30.7% Population aged 25-34 with a tertiary degree [a]

4.6% Percentage of immigrant stock (% population) [b]

12.4% Population below the poverty line [c]

10.6% Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) [d]

Average TIMSS/PIRLS scores (4th grade) [e]

Center point: 500

554	523	529
Reading	**Math**	**Science**

Average PISA scores (10th grade) [f]

OECD average

476 *487*	481 *489*	481 *489*
Reading	**Math**	**Science**

4.6% public spending in education as a % of GDP [g]

7.2 billions allocated in NPRR [h]

Sources: a, b, c, d, g: World Bank Indicators ; e: TIMSS 2019 report, PIRLS 2016 report; f: PISA 2018 results, h: European Commission

General features

Educational system

Compulsory education in Hungary starts at age 3 and lasts until pupils are 16. Students stay in the same school throughout primary and lower secondary school, but have the option of early enrolling in general education after grade 4 or after grade 6. Available tracks in secondary school are (i) general education (which lasts 4 or 5 years) (ii) technical school and (iii) vocational school. Figure 1.7 summarizes the structure of the educational system. Students can access higher education upon passing a final school leaving examination, which can be done in all three tracks. The percentage of students enrolled in private secondary school is higher than in other countries (27% in 2019[91]), however, the majority of the educational system remains public. Immigrant stock accounts for 4.6% of the overall population, and immigrants' main countries of birth are Romania (35%), Ukraine (12%) and Serbia (7%), while Ukraine, Romania and Germany were the top three nationalities of newcomers in 2019.[92] The rate of early school leavers is slightly higher when compared to the EU average (12.2% versus 10.2% in 2019), while the percentage of people with tertiary educational attainment is lower than the EU average (30.7% compared to 40.5%). The percentage of youth not in employment nor in education and training is slightly lower when compared to the EU average (10.6% versus roughly 13%).

Governance and funding

Education is financed primarily by public funds. The entity maintaining the overall responsibility of the educational system is the Ministry of Human Capacities, with the exception of the school-based vocational and education training, which is managed by the Ministry of Economy. Starting from 2013, the educational system became more centralized, and the state now is in charge of maintaining schools, with the exception of pre-primary school, which are the competency of local authorities[93]. This has been done with the intention of shortening the existing gaps in school quality across different municipalities.

Performance

According to the last PISA assessment (2018), students in Hungary scored lower than the OECD average in all the subjects of the assessment (reading, maths and science) although the percentage of people who reached basic skills is similar to OECD averages (75%, 74% and 76% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, maths and science respectively, compared to the OECD average of 77%, 76% and 78%).

Throughout the PISA editions, the overall trend in performance across disciplines is declining, especially in science. This decrease is due to the fact that the proportion of low-achieving students (the ones who do not have basic skills in the said discipline) increased by roughly 9% from 2006 (the first year in which Hungary participated to PISA for the science subject) to 2018.

The gender gap in reading is in favour of girls (26 percentage point), but this is not significantly different than the OECD average (30). However in maths the gap is reversed, with boys outperforming girls by 9 points (compared to 5 points average in OECD countries). In science, the gap between boys and girls is not significantly different.

Socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged one by 113 score points, a number that is larger than the OECD average of 89, and only 8% (OECD average: 11%) were able to score in the top quarter for reading. Socio-economic status explained a higher portion of the variation in performance when compared to the OECD average: respectively 24% of the variation in maths and 21% of the variation in science compared to the OECD average of 13% and 14%.

The gap in reading performance among natives and immigrant is very low (7 points in favour of natives, compared to the OECD average of 24 points).

On average, self-reported absenteeism is lower than the OECD average (12 % versus 21 % of students reported to have missed a class in the preceding two weeks of the PISA test) and the percentage of late entries to school is similar to the OECD average (41% versus 48%).

Students' career aspirations reflected gender stereotypes: among high-achieving students in mathematics and science, 17% of girls expected to work in an engineering or science job, compared to 25% of their male counterpart. 25% of girls want to work in the health-related sector (compared to 10% of boys) and only 1% of girls expected to work in an ICT related job (compared to 13 % of boys).

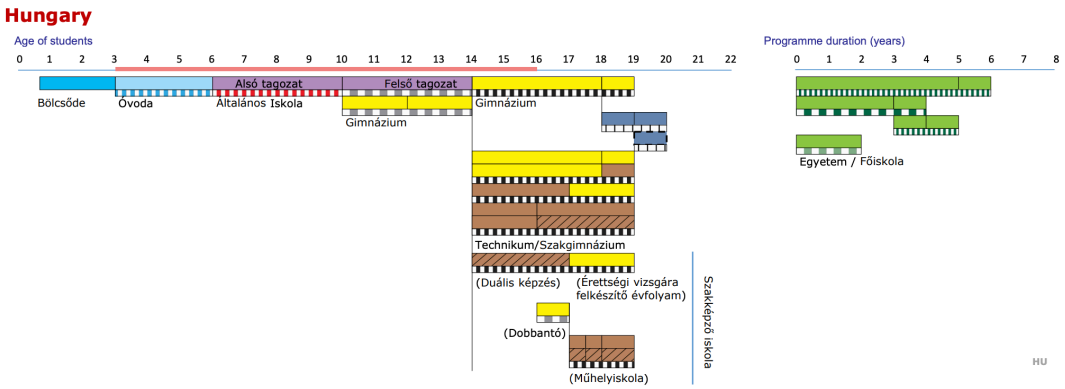
Among high-achieving students, a high percentage of disadvantaged students (roughly 50 %) expected not to complete tertiary education, compared to roughly 10% of the advantaged students.

[91] UNESCO data, 2019

[92] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f8c87bfe-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f8c87bfe-en

[93] Hungary Country Profile, OECD

Figure 1.7: Educational system in Hungary



Key policy challenges

Hungary faces challenges in improving students' basic learning outcomes and ensuring educational equity. In 2020, Hungary slightly increased the number of early leavers[94], which were concentrated within the least developed district and marginalized groups, such as Roma people. The proportion of people at risk of dropping out is unequally distributed along the territory, and the school system tends to be quite selective, with disadvantaged pupils concentrated in some areas and some school types (mainly vocational training schools)[95].

Another key challenge is represented by the reduction skill mismatch between education and labor market. To do this, it will be necessary to reform the Vocational and Education Training (VET) curriculum to attract more people, making sure that skills taught are in line with the demands in the labor market.

Tertiary educational attainment is very low compared to the EU average (30.7% versus 40.5%). Therefore, it becomes necessary to enact policies to improve the overall quality of higher education and reduce students' dropout.

The teaching workforce is ageing and unevenly spread across the territory and subjects. For this reason, attracting young talents into the teaching profession and providing them with high-quality training is pivotal[96].

Students' well-being and mental health in Hungary has been deteriorating during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a UNICEF survey, more than half of the parents reported attention disorders, sleep problems, loneliness, restlessness or anxiety among their children and fear this might have long-term consequences on their child's future. In particular, students with disadvantaged socio-economic background seemed to be more at risk of developing mental health problems[97].

Recently enacted policies and investments

In partnership with the European Social Fund, Hungary developed a series of projects aimed at integrating marginalized people[98]. For example, the "*Growing/Women's Opportunities – Training and Employment*" started in 2016, with the aim of helping Roma women, who face discrimination in the labor market. it provides training for becoming (i) a child and youth inspector or (ii) a social care provider and nurse[99].

To reduce early school leaving, Hungary launched a project to modernize the training of school teachers: The Education Authority, in partnership with seven universities is providing some teachers with skills on how to deal with pupils in a diverse group, integrating experiential methods and games into education[100].

Hungary has taken important steps to support digitalizaiton in education and promote digital training practices: the *Digital Pedagogical Methodology Center (DPMK)* is working towards strengthening the use of digital practices by teachers in schools, providing them with train-

[94] Education and Training Monitor 2021
[95] Education Policy Outlook, Hungary
[96] https://www.oecd.org/education/Hungary-Profile.pdf
[97] https://unicef.hu/mental-health
[98] https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/projects/hungary-jobs-disability
[99] https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/projects/unemployed-work-and-self-esteem
[100] https://www.komplexalapprogram.hu/

ing, support and resources. During the period of distance learning, the DPMK supported teachers by providing webinars and e-learning opportunities on how to implement blended learning. Moreover, building from the initial experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hungarian Ministry of Innovation and Technology, in partnership with the OECD, is working to promote digital learning in higher education with the program "*Support for the Digital Transformation of Hungarian Higher Education*" [101].

[101] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-policy-outlook-2021_5c792274-en