

# **The Ministry of Education's Medium-term Public Education Development Strategy**

**Budapest, 2003**

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## Introduction

This medium-term strategy for public education development (the 'Strategy') has been a multi-purpose exercise, with the major goals including the following:

- a more detailed description of the educational policy objectives set forth in the Government programme, and promoting discussion and consultation concerning the core aims in educational policy;
- supporting initiatives and design processes in progress, and facilitating the coordination of the same;
- supporting the planning of necessary educational policy measures and medium-term development schemes;
- facilitating the effective deployment of funds earmarked for development within the state budget;
- identifying a framework for a detailed strategic document („white paper”);
- facilitating and encouraging a dialogue with stakeholders in the public education system;
- supporting strategic communication by the Ministry of Education on educational policy.

The Strategy builds on the values and achievements of Hungarian public education so far, as well as the best traditions in Hungarian public education. It must, however, also offer solutions for the problems in the public education system which are acceptable for everyone, and it must be conducive to meeting the challenges of the 21st Century through education. This double aim requires a strategy which – in keeping with international trends – is based on development, the inspiration and encouragement of stakeholders of education, and the strengthening of accountability.

Implementation of the strategy can be divided into two main phases.

The **first phase** involves creation of an environment favourable for development. This includes

- identifying the priorities of development,
- implementing the necessary adjustments to the system of regulation,
- preparing the detailed strategic document („white paper”),
- planning of the specific development schemes,
- increasing the capabilities required to implement the development.

The **second phase** will involve implementation of the specific programmes, effecting the regulatory adjustments approved in the first phase, and measuring and analysing the effects of the changes on educational policy.

The system of strategic planning within the Hungarian public education system is a multi-level and multi-player process. The system of governmental measures and development actions, described in this document, is complemented by a basically bottom-up planning system involving multiple levels (schools, maintainers, county/region). The Ministry of Education is aiming at providing greater freedom of movement to local and regional players in education and at preserving the division of responsibilities which has evolved over a long period in the Hungarian educational system. The Strategy wishes to provide guidance to local educational players and in the course of implementing the various strategic priorities, gives

precedence to indirect means (incentives, development, training, assistance and strategic communication) which allow the implementation of local and regional priorities.

In the course of preparing this strategy, a great emphasis was placed on the objectives identified in the related design documents. Consistency was sought primarily with the means and objectives in the National Development Plan, more specifically, the Human Resources Development Operative Programme. A very important additional resource has been the rich system of educational policy objectives of the European Union and the means for the implementation and distribution of these policies on a national level. Another important source has been the analyses and recommendations of the OECD.

The Strategy consists of three major parts. The *first part* contains an outline assessment of the current situation, summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the Hungarian public education system. This is intended to identify the issues for which a solution needs to be found in the course of public education development efforts in the coming years. The *second part* summarises and explains the vision for education, as well as the most important priorities and development objectives of the medium-term programme. The *third part* describes the means of implementation of the Strategy. It pays special attention to the regulatory tools for implementing the Strategy in practice, and to the various governmental specific programmes.

# 1. Situation Assessment

## 1.1. Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats

To start developing and implementing the Strategy, it is essential to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses of the Hungarian public education system, as well as the opportunities and threats defining the possibilities in educational policy. It can be noted that strengths are usually also opportunities for further development, while weaknesses often present themselves as threats to be eliminated. Consequently, in the table below, we have aligned those strengths and opportunities which act synergistically to facilitate development, and also those weaknesses and threats where it is especially important to fight the synergistic negative effects. Naturally, the decisions to categorise something as strength or weakness, or as opportunity or threat, depend on the frame of reference used for the assessment. When assessing the situation in Hungary, we used mainly the countries of the Central Eastern European region as a basis of comparison.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
Over the last 15 years, a diverse and pluralistic infrastructure has evolved in public education.	Relatively high level of formal education of the Hungarian population.
Expansion of the secondary level of education (leading to the secondary school-leaving exam) and of higher education has taken place.	
The percentage of children participating in organised pre-school education is very high when compared to international data.	Individuals are interested in participation in schooling, the approach to learning as a form of investment in the future is strengthening among students and parents.
Continuous widening of learning opportunities for those who have left school-based education.	Outstanding emphasis on certain exceedingly important skills (languages, ICT skills) within the expectations of parents concerning schools.
Recognition of extracurricular activities at school, the possibility of their integration in education activities.	
Significant increase in the proportion of 14-18 year old students holding a language examination.	
Relative openness of educational policy, certain segments of the vocational training system and the higher education system to the labour market and employment policy.	Existence of workforce with internationally competitive skills in numerous professional fields.
	Strengthening of the link between education and attainable income.
In certain fields of public education, openness, adjustment and application skills have strengthened.	Experience and development resources becoming available in the course of the European Integration.

Huge pool of useful experience accrued through local institutional development efforts.	High level of availability of teachers with professional education. Establishment of the quality assurance, quality improvement and evaluation system is in progress.
Educational initiatives for the education of disadvantaged students, existence of schools for the teaching of disadvantaged students.	Established organisational framework of support systems in the field of social assistance, child protection, family support, as well as equal opportunities for persons with special needs, and rehabilitation through employment.
Funding system enabling the use of educational policy incentives, readiness of educational players to take into account such incentives.	Relatively high proportion and level of recognition of funds for social integration within educational expenditure.
Established, demand-controlled systems of services consumed by schools (e.g. the in-service training system, textbook publication, counselling etc.) which include mechanisms for internal quality assurance.	Development capacities and willingness, developed over the last decades.
Established system of local and institutional responsibilities.	Existence on the various levels of the competences necessary to exercise the local and institutional responsibilities.
	Strengthening of the joint responsibility of the teaching staff, as well as internal communication.
	With the upcoming transformation of public administration, micro-regional and regional co-operation between local authorities will be strengthened.
The local communities are interested in and open to public education, high publicity of public education, and active communication.	Relative and increasing openness of Hungarian schools to their local environment, existence of partnership-oriented management and regulatory frameworks.
High level of activity of teacher's professional associations and the civil society interested in public education.	Existence of established formal consultative mechanisms.

<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
Gaps in the IT section of education	The improvements in IT education and the provision of IT equipment have been insufficient to prevent the deepening of the „digital divide” along social boundaries.
In the field of professions for which the secondary school-leaving exam is not a precondition, the level of vocational training is often unsatisfactory.	Transformation of technologies in the economy (e.g. the growing need for simple semi-skilled work) devalues high-level vocational qualifications in certain fields.

<p>A significant portion of students study at institutions or follow programmes which provide hardly any chances – or not at all – for successful participation in the labour market and in the society.</p>	
<p>The network of 'second chance' schools and learning centres has not been established</p>	
<p>In the current school structure, the initial phase devoted to the development of core skills is too short, while, when compared internationally, the phase of lower secondary education is longer than the average.</p>	<p>Under the current timeframes, curricular objectives can hardly or rarely be met, students are unnecessarily overburdened and there is insufficient scope for the development of key competences.</p>
<p>The current school structure and framework curricula cause the entire school education content to be covered both in primary school and in secondary school.</p>	
<p>In international comparison, with regard to key competences the efficiency of Hungarian public education is low.</p>	
<p>Hungarian students are required to learn an unnecessarily high volume of lexical knowledge, and new cross-curricular fields continue to be hard to include in their education.</p>	
<p>A significant number of teachers are in favour of a fact-oriented approach to education.</p>	
<p>There is a relative shortage of requisites of language learning in schools – available timeframe, adequate and inexpensive teaching materials and aids, trained language teachers.</p>	
<p>An unacceptable high proportion of students leave the public education system without a completed academic or vocational qualification.</p>	<p>The initial teacher training system can only slowly and imperfectly adjust to the changing demands concerning the profession. The structure of the teaching profession, as well as the structure of professional training is unnecessarily segmented, which is a significant hindrance both to improving professional training and to effective employment of teachers.</p>
	<p>The mechanisms intended to link teacher in-service training offers and actual needs in the field of in-service training are relatively weak.</p>
	<p>The devaluation of the teaching career, which has taken place over several decades, as well as the lack of wage increase have long-term negative effect on the quality of professional supply and on loyalty to the profession.</p>



	The role of human resources is undervalued both centrally and locally.
The current institutional quality improvement system is not integrated into a comprehensive quality policy system, and there are no synergies between the objectives of education, the evaluation system, programme development and quality improvement.	The mechanisms intended for evaluation of the teachers' work and for accountability for the work of educators are underdeveloped, and there is little room for differentiation and motivation.
	The infrastructure for the measurement and evaluation of public education is underdeveloped.
	The development and innovation system for public education is immature, there is no assurance for the quality and relevance of innovation, and there are no established solutions for the distribution of innovation and the sharing of experience.
In the practical procedures of funding and assessment, insufficient emphasis is placed on the added value in education.	Management by the maintainers is often based on other factors than quality; self-evaluation by the schools is not complemented by an external evaluation system.
	Politics-oriented decisions made in the course of decision-making by local authorities often disregard requirements arising from the real life situation.
The activities and achievement of students in education are affected to an unacceptable degree by their social and ethnic background and the type of settlement they live in.	A differentiated approach to teaching, which is based on active learning, has been introduced only at a few places. Therefore, the ability of Hungarian schools to compensate for social disadvantages by pedagogical means is usually low.
There are tremendous differences between primary schools both in terms of human and physical resources, and the performance of students.	
A very significant portion of children with special education needs study at non-integrated educational institutions.	
The regulatory components and mechanisms which would prevent discrimination and segregation of the students are underdeveloped and powerless in the Hungarian educational system.	
There are gaps in the network of complementary specialist services providing assistance to the educational infrastructure, and also in the institutional infrastructure for special tasks.	

Similarly to other countries in the region, the Hungarian educational system is characterised by the wasteful management of available resources; the planning and decision-making system attached to the central budget does not ensure cost-effective financial management.	Maintainers of the institutions are unwilling to form partnerships, the system of regional planning and development is inefficient.
Approximately the half of primary school buildings in Hungary would need to be rebuilt, 40% are in need of partial renewal and 9% are in need of full renovation. Most of the schools are in a bad technical condition, their inner layout and lighting does not meet the relevant standards, and their maintenance involves disproportionate expenses.	A huge volume of tangible assets would need to be purchased to satisfy the requirements defined by the approved list of teaching tools and equipment, the cost of which greatly exceeds the possibilities of most of the maintainers of the schools, i.e. the local authorities.

## 1. 2 Problems Requiring Educational Policy Action

As it is apparent from the information above, the Hungarian public education system has strengths – partly traditional, partly resulting from educational policy reform efforts and developments in the recent decade – which, in comparison to the other countries in the region, constitute favourable conditions for the education to adjust to the various arising challenges. At the same time, the well-documented weaknesses of Hungarian public education, coupled with threats coming partly from outside the system, create a problem for which the medium-term development strategy needs to offer valid, reasoned answers. It is useful to group these problems by criteria which allow the identification of objectives guiding development and intervention.

The main issues requiring educational policy intervention are linked to the following fields.

### *1.2.1. Effectiveness of Education and the Development of Core Skills*

Scores achieved in both the national and international surveys (PISA, MONITOR, IEA, SIALS etc.) indicate that there are serious problems with the initial phase of public education, the development of core skills. This is in part due to the shortness – only 4 years – of the initial phase of primary education, which is too short a time to master core skills. Second, it is because the second phase of primary school pays less attention to the further development and mastery of these skills. Both the regulatory provisions applying to content, both a significant portion of the teaching profession favour the traditional, fact-oriented content, and therefore the number of students who enter the next stage of education with a partial or total lack of the core skills is very high. Then in the next stage, they will lag further behind.

The social value of foreign languages has undergone a dramatic change over the last decade. In many fields, working language skills have become essential to finding or keeping a job, and foreign languages are increasingly needed in everyday life as well. With this recognition, the prestige attached to language skills has increased, and attitude to language learning is positive both among school students and the adult population. At the same time, the level of working language skills has hardly changed; by European comparison, neither the level achieved nor the rate of improvement is sufficient. Around the mid-nineties, only 12% of the population claimed to have working foreign language skills, and this figure has not

changed considerably since. The average languages skills attainable through public education remain below the desirable level. In all types of secondary schools, parents spend the most on language classes of all the paying extra classes – an indication that the school in itself cannot realise its goals in the field of language teaching.

It is very important to note that with respect to developing competencies gaining increasing weight with respect to success in the labour market (e.g. ICT skills, foreign languages, co-operation, learning to learn and certain social skills), the performance of the Hungarian public education is below the desirable level. This forces parents to purchase development of these skills – especially language skills – outside the school, in the form of paid classes, provided that such services are available at the location where they live and provided that the family has the required financial background. Consequently, differences between the settlements increase the effect of social inequalities. Naturally, this issue is not only important from the aspect of performance, but also because it increases inequality arising from differences in prosperity and social standing.

The curricular requirements cannot be satisfied in the available timeframes (especially near the beginning of the school year) for most of the students, or they present an unnecessary burden. The conceptual system presented by the curricular requirements is not in accordance with the characteristics of the students stemming from their age. Due to the excessive load for their age, there is no time left for skills development and differentiation. A further important problem is the lack of action-based methodology in the Hungarian public education.

The regulations applying to educational content, as well as the development of programmes and teaching tools and equipment face numerous problems which need to be solved. Two of the most important issues are transferring the need for development-oriented approach into the local system of curricular requirements, and the gaps in teaching tools and equipment and programmes offered for competence-based education.

### ***1.2.2. Inequalities***

Educational statistical figures and research findings indicate that the Hungarian schools are mainly unable to apply pedagogical methods to offset the effects of social drawbacks on learning achievements. As shown in the PISA survey, differences between institutions are tremendous by international comparison, and are directly linked to the type of settlement, to the social background of students, which is in part the reason for and in part the result of the very high selectiveness of the educational system. There is a high level of separation and segregation. The range of offers open to students who fail in general education, who are unsuccessful in terms of progress or the skills learnt, or who simply do not travel the route to higher education is poor, and the programmes which are available for them represent low pedagogical added value. Addressing inequalities in education is hindered by the lack of general agreement about the issue, by the sporadic nature of teaching methods appropriate for addressing the problems underlying inequalities, the lack of means for the distribution of successful models, and elitist nature of the mechanism capable of targeted development and service provision and the system for identifying educational objectives. Finding a solution for the problem is also hindered by the gaps in, and lack of national coverage of the network of complementary specialist services providing assistance to the educational infrastructure, and also the institutional infrastructure for special tasks – which means that too often, institutions and teachers are left on their own.

### ***1.2.3. The Quality of Education and the Assessment of Quality***

In the course of the recent years, a quality improvement programme compatible with the European patterns and based on self-evaluation, self-improvement and partnership has been

tested. However, upon completion of the pilot phase which was basically built on voluntary participation, a comprehensive quality system formed with the European Union guidelines in mind, could not yet be established. The programme currently being carried out in this field does not fit into a comprehensive multi-tiered quality policy. There are no synergistic relationships between educational objectives, the evaluation system, the development mechanisms and quality improvement on one hand, and the individual levels of this system on the other hand. There are inequalities in the distribution of funds for quality improvement. There is an excess of often bureaucratic components intended to provide information for purposes of educational policy, and thus the quality improvement process is less conducive to meeting the demand for development and innovation, generated by the programme. The pilot project has so far not covered the maintainers, which therefore remain uninterested. It is hard to imagine how the quality improvement process could cover all public education institutions in the current structure of interests.

#### ***1.2.4. Situation of the Teaching Profession***

In the past decades, the prestige of the teaching profession has from every aspect decreased. This process has been the result of the following problems, which worked to mutually strengthen one another:

- The social standing of teachers is low, their revenue – similarly to other public service areas – is much lower in terms of the country's GDP than in most of the European Union's Member States, even though significant efforts were made in the last years to mitigate this problem.
- The adjustment capacity of the system of initial training is low. Initial teacher education is still subject-based, where the subjects basically correspond to scientific disciplines. Training focuses on learning the relevant scientific content and equips teachers with little methodology skills. The three-level teacher education system corresponds directly to the 4+4+4 school structure. The mechanisms intended to link teacher in-service training offers and actual needs in the field of in-service training are weak or non-existent.
- The mechanisms which would ensure the professional accountability of teachers on an institutional level are in part missing and in part – in the field of internal audit and evaluation – not operated properly, which devalues performance expectable for the salary. Tools for differentiation and promotion are not sufficiently integrated in the funding of education, which prevents the application of appropriate incentives.
- There are only rudimentary beginnings of an evaluation system providing feedback on the work of teachers, which makes it difficult to identify the guidelines for required self-training and in-service training. Also, it prevents the actual needs from becoming clear to the professional community.
- Further problems come from the underdeveloped human resource development cultures of institutions.
- Although a large number of professional associations have been created by teachers in the past 15 years, relatively few teachers are actively involved in these organisations, which leaves self-organisation of teachers weak. Due to their weakness in enforcing their interests, the participation of teacher's organisation in the operation of the system is not given sufficient emphasis.

#### ***1.2.5. Use of Information and Communication Technologies***

Despite the development programmes implemented in the past six years in the field of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) at school, serious gaps remain. There

are gaps in the IT infrastructure which is the basis for e-learning, especially in institutions attended by a larger number of disadvantaged children. In many instances, students have no access to the equipment even when they are existing, primarily because the available equipment are intended only for computer classes included in the curriculum. There is no solution for the need for a support system which would cover the operation, maintenance and replacement of IT equipment and which would compensate the significant differences in the financial means available to maintainers.

Still only a small portion of teachers are capable of using the IT equipment and integrate their use in their teaching practice. The content and methodology needed to develop competencies essential to success in the evolving information society, the educational use of the Internet are given insufficient scope in the content and procedures of education. The range of available teaching materials, tools and in-service training programmes needed for computer-aided learning is below the desirable level, and the existing development capacities and resources do not meet the relevant needs.

### ***1.2.6. Physical Resources***

The great majority of nursery school, primary school and secondary school buildings, as well as the buildings of vocational training institutions are in need of rebuilding, partial or full reconstruction. Most of the buildings are in a bad technical condition, their inner layout and lighting does not meet the relevant national standards (and the European standards even less), and their maintenance involves disproportionate expenses.

The picture is similar with respect to availability of teaching tools and equipment. A huge volume of tangible assets would need to be purchased to satisfy the requirements defined by the approved list of teaching tools and equipment, the cost of which greatly exceeds the possibilities of most of the maintainers of the schools, i.e. the local authorities. In a significant number of schools, the tools and equipment required for the efficient learning of foreign languages is substandard or non-existent. There are significant differences – both in the condition of the buildings and the deficiencies in their equipment – between settlements categories and regions. Although schools with bad conditions can be found both in towns and in villages, still, due to the funding system, settlements with non-existent or limited revenue – villages and small towns – are in practice unable to finance even conservation.

### ***1.2.7. Cost-effective Management***

It is an inherited trait of the Hungarian educational system that – similarly to other countries in the same region – the efficiency of the use of available funding is low *compared to the effectiveness of education*. While by international comparison, Hungary spends a similar portion of its gross national product on public education as other countries, the salary which we provide to teachers – in terms of per capita GDP – is much lower. The Hungarian public education system requires a much higher volume of workforce than other systems: in the Hungarian system, 20-30% more teachers are needed to teach the same number of students. One reason for the low level of cost-effectiveness is the constant lack of funds in the system, which also causes a hardly manageable situation for school maintainers when the salary of teachers need to be raised.

The effects on the infrastructural network of the dramatic deterioration of demographic trends and the sharp fall in the number of children and students have essentially been „delegated” to the local maintainers by the central administration. This way, the constraints and decisions concerning a more rationalised operation of the institutions were not

connected to national and regional strategic priorities. Often, individual decisions on funding are not even related to actual specific costs.

There is little link between planning and decision-making mechanisms on the national, regional (county) and local level. Often, the capitation grant system induces mechanisms which are not related, and sometimes contrary or harmful to educational policy objectives. One of these phenomena is the fact that the regulations on access to certain additional capitation grant types encourage segregation through budgetary means.

The willingness of maintainers to form partnerships is very low, for reasons of local politics, but often for reasons of tradition. County-level planning and development work with very limited financial headroom, and in the current regulatory framework, have very little ability to influence undesired processes. Despite the steadily increasing weight and ratio of central funding, the financial means available to the national administration of education hardly have any effect. The possibilities to enforce policy objectives and to give a direction to ongoing procedures in the system are limited, both on the national and on the regional level. In the practical procedures of funding and management by maintainers, insufficient emphasis is placed on the added value in public education services. A significant portion of the managers of educational institutions are reluctant to adopt and use the methods of efficient management, and only rely on their own experience when improving their management competences.

## 2. Objectives of the Public Education Development Strategy

The objectives underlying the process of preparing this development strategy need to be identified on two levels. For one, it is useful to outline those comprehensive *long-term objectives* which determine the desirable lines along which the Hungarian education system should develop, and which define a clear *vision of the future*. Obviously, these objectives transcend the time horizons of a single governmental cycle. For two, we also need to determine *medium-term objectives* which define clear priorities for development and which make it possible to plan specific measures and development schemes, and serve as the frame of reference for measurable and accountable criteria of success.

### 2.1. Long-term Strategic Objectives: a Strategic Vision

The strategic vision assumes that in the future, Hungary will be characterised by

- ever strengthening democracy, solidarity becoming a major force in society, and the bridging of divides splitting society,
- continuous improvement of the profitability and competitiveness of the economy, and, consequently, the improvement of living standards,
- preservation of the natural environment,
- guaranteed possibilities for realising human potential, improvement of the quality of life and of human relationships.

Following this vision, Hungary is committed to becoming a successful member of the community of advanced market economies and democratic states, and, more specifically, the European Union.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Education finds it necessary to launch or reinforce processes in the Hungarian educational system in the upcoming period which will be conducive to education

- becoming an effective tool assisting the development of children and young people, the enrichment of their personalities, and their preparation for lifelong learning and active citizenship,
- becoming an effective tool in promoting primary social objectives such as the operation of a democratic state, protection of the environment, improvement of the health and quality of life of the citizens, maintaining the demand for cultural goods and reinforcing the country's international integration and responsibility;
- being flexibly adaptable to the ever changing demands of the labour market, and being able to ensure human resources needed to maintain economic competitiveness, capable of renewal;
- guaranteeing the enforcement of solidarity and equity, strengthening cohesion in the Hungarian society, providing choices and the freedom of decision to all children and young people without prejudice to their social background, gender, origin or religion, and facilitating the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants in Hungary without requiring their assimilation,
- being an effective factor in Hungary's successful European integration, and reacting adaptively to the challenges arising from global technological transformation and the widening of international relations.

In order to achieve these long-term objectives it is necessary that the educational system

- continuously renew its educational goals and adapt them to the demands of society, and be open to the criteria and interests of users and stakeholders of educational services, as well as local communities;
- make it possible, and enforce continuous learning for players and institutions in the field of education, and provide high-quality services of development and support to schools and school staff;
- ensure the appropriate conditions for the stable and high-quality operation of its institutions, and for the staff of the institutions, the conditions for a secure career and opportunities for progress;
- enforce the requirements of professional accountability;
- use the funds allocated to it in an efficient manner and facilitate the implementation of transparency and democratic decision-making within education;
- provide its services through institutions headed by qualified, effective management;
- co-operate closely with other public service systems.

## **2.2. Medium-term Objectives: Development Policy Priorities**

In addition to the situation assessment and the vision presented above, as well as the comprehensive policy objectives adopted by the European Union, there was one additional factor which had great influence on determining the objectives and priorities of the *medium-term* public education development policy, namely the *National Development Plan*. Based on all this, the following medium-term development objectives and priorities are defined under the Strategy:

- underpinning lifelong learning through the development of key competences,
- mitigating inequalities in education,
- improving the quality of education,
- promoting the development of the teaching profession,
- improving the use of information and communication technologies,
- improving physical conditions of education,
- improving cost-efficiency and governance in public education.

These objectives are directly related to both the development priorities defined by the European Union and those set forth in the National Development Plan and the operative programmes linked to the Plan. It is essential to create the link between these and the public education development strategy, as in the upcoming period, funds provided by the European Union will constitute a decisive portion of the amounts which can be allocated to development of the public education, and these funds will be used primarily in the framework defined by the National Development Plan.

Although education is the competence of national governments within the European Union, and the Community's institutions have very limited authority in this regard, the current level of co-operation in the field of education within the Member States, as well as the increased importance attached to education in achieving the various social and labour market goals has given rise to Community initiatives which significantly affect the educational



policies followed by national governments, and which Hungary also need to take into account. Co-operation between the Member States in the field of education occurs through the so-called *open co-ordination procedure*. This procedure – without the Union assuming competencies – helps to approximate the policies and service systems of the Member States through the establishment of benchmarks and indicators, as well as the distribution of best practice and operative experience. The strategic education development objectives underlying this co-operation and co-ordination are indisputably valid in Hungary as well. These objectives include

- a. the promotion of quality and competitiveness,
- b. strengthening of social cohesion,
- c. ensuring the economic and social openness of the educational system.

As from 2004, the funds becoming available to Hungary under the Community's Structural Funds for the development of education, as well as the corresponding funds provided by the Hungarian state budget will be used in accordance with an established plan, it was imperative to harmonise the medium-term public education development strategy and those parts of the National Development Plan which were drafted by the Ministry of Education. The National Development Plan contains several operative programmes, of which the Human Resource Development Operative Programme has the greatest relevance for education. Two priorities under this operative programme, namely "*Improving the conditions for lifelong learning*" and "*Fight against social exclusion*" are directly interrelated with several medium-term development objectives under this Strategy, including underpinning of key competences, improving the quality of education, mitigating inequality in education and renewal of the teaching profession. Additionally, three medium-term objectives – improving cost-effectiveness and governance in education, IT developments in education, and improving the physical conditions of education – are related to infrastructural development for improving human resources, and, content-wise, to the operative programmes concerning improving economic competitiveness and regional development.

Co-ordination of the National Development Plan and the medium-term development strategy also takes place on the level of specific schemes. On one hand, this means the parallel alignment of objectives and expected results following an identical pattern, and on the other hand, creating a link between implementation of the specific schemes and utilisation of the Community funds. Naturally, the medium-term development strategy also contains numerous components which were not included in the National Development Plan, or are only indirectly related to the priorities therein. These will primarily be funded from the national budget.

Here follows a more detailed presentation of the medium-term development objectives listed above. It is important to point out that autonomous, much more detailed strategic conceptions could be attached to each of the medium-term development objectives presented here: indeed, such efforts are in progress in certain fields (for example the integration of Roma and disadvantaged students, teaching of foreign languages or quality improvement). It is also necessary to point out in advance that under the Strategy, a *specific scheme* (development project) is linked to each medium-term objective, such schemes constituting one of the most important means of achieving the relevant objective (the schemes are described in detail in Chapter 3 of the Strategy, under section „specific schemes for the implementation of individual development objectives”). There are also additional *specific priorities* attached to each medium-term objective; among others, they are defined exactly for the purpose of providing the basis for these specific schemes.

### ***2.2.1. Building the Basis of Lifelong Learning through the Development of Key Competences***

One of the most important objectives of public education is building the basis of lifelong learning. One of the most important tools to this end is the improvement of the *key competences* which make an individual able throughout their life to face situations which require them to adapt, or, in a wider sense, to learn. Obviously, the range of key competences to be improved is much wider than those which directly serve personal adaptability. These are indispensable to harmonious individual development and active social participation.

It is important to underline that building the basis of lifelong learning occurs throughout the entire period of public education, including the initial phase of public education, even pre-school education. The educational objectives for the initial phase need to be re-thought with the aim of making them conducive to teaching practice focusing on the development of key competences. Generally, improvements which facilitate the development of competences important for success in the labour market and in active social participation need to be given preference in all phases of the public education system.

When re-thinking educational objectives and in the course of actual teaching and learning, the focus should be on creating the appropriate balance of the various learning achievements (knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, talents and aspirations). Through defining educational objectives, sufficient focus needs to be ensured for the following key competences:

- *learning techniques*: conscious and routine learning practice, recognition of the need for learning in changing situations;
- *intelligent learning*: understanding the inner correlation within the content covered, problem-solving skill, recognition of links between various fields of knowledge;
- *applying knowledge*: attaching knowledge to personal experience and actual situations, the ability to understand changes, linking various components of knowledge, decision-making skill, planning, behaviour and self-control, application of the knowledge gained under changing circumstances;
- *tool-like competences*: flexible, routine application of language, communication, mathematical, IT and media use skills;
- *social competences*: the ability to recognise networks of social relationships, responsibility, conflict management ability, co-operation, reacting to social experience;
- *value orientation*: norm-controlled action patterns, social, democratic and personal values, autonomous action, reliability, tolerance, socially acceptable behaviour, cultural participation.

Focusing on key competences implies the complete renewal of the methodology used by schools and teachers. This is facilitated by, among others,

- the revision of educational objectives and the regulatory documents where they are defined,
- improvement of initial and in-service teacher education,
- the promoting of distribution of school-level pedagogic innovation and best practice,
- development of school assessment of students, and of the evaluation and measurement system in general.

Adaptation of the teaching practice might come about as the result of a long process, which needs to be assisted by all tools available to the educational policy. Accordingly, the elements facilitating adaptation to the educational objectives presented above need to be incorporated into all schemes for the implementation of the strategic objectives.

To achieve the strategic objective presented above, the following specific part-objectives need to be established:

- revision and amendment of the educational objectives,
- development of accredited pedagogical programmes,
- improving language learning,
- promoting the multicultural aspect in education.

The most important – though not the only – tool for the *revision of the educational objectives* is the revision and amendment of the central regulatory documents which regulate content. Amendment of the National Core Curriculum and the related examination requirements, as well as the relevant regulatory documents applying to content (guidelines) need to be carried out in a concerted and synergistic manner, focusing on adaptability and implementability by institutions, as well as measurability and accountability. The review of the National Core Curriculum should be aimed at producing requirements which reflect the aim of developing key competences. This implies the utilisation of possibilities inherent in teaching the various subjects and fields of knowledge, and especially in defining cross-curricular fields, as well as the strengthening of cross-curricular links, and the revision of timeframes assigned for the teaching of these subjects and fields of knowledge accordingly. When revising central regulatory documents, special attention should be paid to eliminating the excessive burden on students, on increasing the time available for skill development and differentiated education, and on exploiting the possibilities of extra-curricular activities. The timeframes directly allocated to core skills and key competences should be gradually increased. At the same time, improvement of the professional background of these activities need to be prioritised. The teaching cycles of public education, and in this context, the regulation of learning should be transformed so as to become conducive to improving core skills and competences.

Both input- and output-oriented regulating factors should be selected as tools for the improvement of key competences. Revision of the requirements of the secondary school-leaving examination is of paramount importance, as they in turn affect the entire process of public education. Also very important is the feedback provided by the measurement and evaluation system of public education to schools and teachers. Students' achievement should be measured by assignments which primarily assess comprehensive inter-curricular competences instead of subject-centred knowledge. When revising central documents and requirements, it should be kept in mind that the success of development efforts is greatly dependent on school-level programming and the evaluation methodology at school level. Requirements should be defined and the entire system of content regulation should be developed so as to make schools interested in creating pedagogical programmes, local curricula and internal evaluation systems which are geared towards the development of key competences and toward skill development in general.

*The development of accredited pedagogical programmes* is intended to act as a bridge between central documents of content regulation on one side and the programmes of educational institutions and within that, the local curricula on the other side. The greatest assurance for the spreading of school practices focusing on the development of key competences is the wide range of detailed, high-quality pedagogical programmes on offer. Creating this range of offers assumes a modern definition of the term 'pedagogical

programme' and the establishment of programme accreditation mechanisms which ensure compliance with present-day requirements. (This issue is addressed in more detail under the description of the strategic objective for the quality of education.)

What is needed is a definition of pedagogical programme which, in addition to defining educational content and the timeframes devoted to the teaching of various contents, also contains specific recommendations and suggestions for the implementation of the programme (e.g. definition of the target profile, description of the pedagogic competences necessary for implementation, presentation of the recommended teaching methods and educational and assessment tools, as well as information on the successfulness of the programme). In this context, efforts should be made to enable schools to enforce local priorities and take into account their various characteristics when creating and revising pedagogical programmes.

*Improving language learning* – the ability to communicate in a foreign language is foreseen to become a basic requisite of personal success in the labour market and of active and successful social participation in the near future, just like the ability to use information and communication technologies. Existence of this ability fundamentally affects the international competitiveness of Hungarian workforce and thus of the Hungarian economy, and, consequently, success on both the level of the individual and the society. Similarly to ICT, a common European policy with specific development objectives exists for this field as well, with Community aid schemes attached. On a longer run, Hungary must join those European countries where the population speaks foreign languages. To this end, it should be established as an important objective that each student completing public education should speak one - or preferably two - foreign languages at a level which enables them to enter further studies or find a job in accordance with their needs. It should also be an important objective to enable each young person to maintain and further develop their language skills and to learn further languages.

*Promoting the multicultural aspect in education* is intended, first of all, to establish more open and inclusive educational practices in a cultural context. In addition to the enrichment of educational content, this also aims at ensuring that curricula, textbooks and teacher behaviours do not contribute to the development of stereotypic attitudes.

### ***2.2.2. Mitigating Inequality in Education***

One of the most important medium-term objectives in Hungarian public education should be the reduction of the dramatic differences existing between schools, as well as the effect of the social, economic and ethnic background of individual students on their learning performance. These objectives make it necessary to invoke various synergistic tools at the same time, including:

- eliminating the practice where the different students are placed in schools following radically different pedagogical programmes at a relatively early phase of their education;
- ensuring equal access to quality education, and eliminating obstacles to such equal access;
- improving school practices to strengthen the ability of schools to offset social disadvantages and to promote the spreading of differentiating and integrating teaching methodology;
- development and propagation of effective means of fighting failure at school and drop-out, including the extension of institutional possibilities of progress at a different rate and catching-up, and restricting the possibility for using repetition of the school year as a mean of education;

- developing a legal framework which is effective in fighting the more hidden forms of segregation and discrimination within the educational system, as well as the operation of educational paths which negatively affect the student's chances for later education and for personal success;
- linking tools within and outside education (tools of employment and social policy) and improving the school-based social assistance system in a need-based manner;
- Using national and international resources to develop and propagate new school models which are effective in eliminating disadvantages, with a special emphasis of the 'second-chance' schools and new forms of education assisting in the transition from school to working life.

The two key terms of the tools employed here are *integration* and *pedagogic skills and knowledge*. To ensure integration, those structural and school organisation solutions need to be supported in general which enable the education of students with different talents and capacities side by side. At the same time, schools should receive significant assistance to provide teachers with teaching tools enabling the efficient education of heterogeneous groups of students. Consequently, we do not only need to achieve that the large number of children (Romans and children with special education needs, mostly with slight mental handicap) currently attending non-mainstream schools are educated at schools following the mainstream curriculum, but also that all educational institutions in Hungary are prepared to provide educational services to these children which offer them success in learning.

The possibilities inherent in legislative regulation of educational cycles, content regulation and development, incentives in the funding system, local and regional planning, as well as infrastructural development should be used concurrently and concertedly to ensure that *each student in lower secondary education can follow a pedagogical programme which leaves open the possibility of obtaining a completed secondary education qualification. Each student, without exception, must have the opportunity to obtain ICT skills and language skills while in their compulsory education age, and each student should leave the school system with a qualification which is useful in the labour market.* The medium-term strategic objective of mitigating inequalities in education may only be achieved if the programmes and measures for the development of public education can significantly reduce failure at school.

To this end, the following specific objectives seem appropriate:

- increasing pre-school education for disadvantaged groups of children,
- modernisation of the network of trade schools, which are attended by a large number of disadvantaged students,
- integration of Roma and disadvantaged children,
- eliminating discrimination in education,
- integration of children with special education needs.

*Increasing pre-school education for disadvantaged groups of children* is a decisive component of the strategy intended to improve their level of success at school. In order to achieve this, locally available nursery school facilities need to be provided and social benefits attached to attendance of pre-school education should be extended to the target groups identified. Improvement of the pedagogic skills and knowledge available at nursery schools is also necessary. Each socially disadvantaged child should be given the opportunity to enter pre-school education free of charge after 4 years of age. When determining the content for pre-school education, and when organising such education, special emphasis should be attached to nursery school education as a mean of compensating social disadvantages.

*Modernisation of the network of trade schools, which are attended by a large number of disadvantaged students* is relevant to more than just these groups of students. Modernisation of trade school education is essential primarily in the context of requirements of the modern economy and the need to improve economic competitiveness. The current situation, where the training of specialists indispensable to various services is 'exiled' to institutions with low pedagogic added value, poor resources and poor quality of education cannot be sustained. It must also be kept in mind that most socially disadvantaged young persons attend trade schools, and that failure at school and drop-out are especially problematic in this form of education. The modernisation of this sector could in itself contribute to the compensation of disadvantages, but significant efforts are also needed to fight drop-out and failure at school. The performance of this sector of education need to be improved through co-operation between education and the economy, the propagation of modern teaching methodology, creating the institutional framework needed to provide effective assistance to catching-up, as well as through improving the resources for practical training.

*Integration of Roma and disadvantaged children* need to be promoted by replacing the current schemes of low effectiveness with integration programmes pursuing measurable objectives. To achieve this, it is indispensable that the methodology and professional culture of integrative and differentiating education become widely available and deployable. Without doubt, these objectives required the establishment and operation of a wide-ranging system of assistance, development and training.

*Eliminating discrimination in education* comprises two essential goals. First, we need to reinforce the current anti-discrimination legislation in accordance with the recommendations of the European Union. This needs to include the interpretation of negative discrimination in a way which provides guidance for educational players, as well as the definition of sanctions and procedures related to violation of the rules. Second, the new elements of the legislative framework need to be enforced in practice. To this end, a warning system to detect cases of discrimination should be established, and training and conflict management services need to be provided.

In the context of integration of children with special education needs, efforts should be made to increase the proportion of students with special needs who study at mainstream schools and secondary schools. Also, they should be able to participate in education and training appropriate for their capabilities and interests at or near their place of living, so that they can continue to live with their families and that the chances of their social integration improve.

### **2.2.3. Improving the Quality of Education**

The strategic objective of improving the quality of education requires the development of a comprehensive, coherent evaluation and quality improvement policy. This must build upon the relevant development efforts to date and must also take into account the recommendations of the European Union in the field of quality evaluation in public education.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the required quality assessment system shall

- serve social inclusion and gender equality,
- contribute to building the basis for lifelong learning,
- ensures the balance of school self-evaluation and external assessment,
- supports schools in adapting to the needs of the changing world,

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament and Council Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2001 on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (2001/166/EC)

- is based on a clear definition of the aims and conditions of self-evaluation,
- applies external assessment which assists self-evaluation by schools and the improvement of schools.

The strategic objective of quality assurance and quality improvement implies the existence of a comprehensive quality evaluation system which enables the assessment and monitoring of the performance of public education on a system level, local/settlement level and institutional level, and which is in accordance with the educational objectives. A comprehensive quality evaluation system consists of several synergistic components, each of which need to be improved. These components are as follows:

**(a) tools based on the *measurement of students' achievement*:**

- comprehensive national performance assessment programmes,
- participation in international performance assessment programmes,
- providing schools with school-level performance figures stemming from national assessment exercises,
- propagation of systems allowing the monitoring of individual students,
- self-evaluation of schools based on the evaluation of students' performance.

**(b) Other *qualitative quality evaluation tools based on the use of indicators*:**

- ongoing evaluation of public education in an international context, using thematic surveys,
- comprehensive self-evaluation of schools including evaluation of teachers' performance,
- comprehensive evaluation of schools by external experts (on the basis of internal self-evaluation),
- information systems based on data collected on the level of the system and of schools,

The following specific objectives seem useful to achieve the objective above:

- further development of the national measurement and evaluation system,
- further development of the system of local/institutional quality improvement,
- improving the programme accreditation system and the regulatory framework for the local implementation of programmes.

*Further development of the national measurement and evaluation system* needs to fit into the system of strategic regulative components concerning content regulation (National Core Curriculum, requirements at state examinations), and need to take into account national and international experience. It is very important that the system of evaluation must enable the assessment of the performance of teachers and students, as well as the effectiveness of the programme and the institution. Thus, it must be possible to link it to planning, development of methodology, and self-evaluation of institutions. An institutional and professional background to the evaluation system, should be established and permanently operated and the relevant infrastructure needs to be further developed. This should also make it possible to participate in international surveys and co-operation projects at a high quality. There is a need for the creation of a public education evaluation centre, which should pursue its activities at a high level of professionalism and should be equipped with the necessary infrastructure. The division of tasks between this institution and OKÉV (National Evaluation and Examination Centre), which is part of the public administration system, should be re-thought. High-level legislation should set forth the tasks of national student achievement evaluation which should

cover each student attending a certain grade, also making sure that the results can be used directly by schools for their self-evaluation. When developing the statistic and information system for public education, the needs of quality evaluation need to be considered.

In the context of *further development of the system of local/institutional quality improvement*, the strengths of the national programme (Comenius 2000) launched earlier should form the basis of the establishment of a multi-tiered quality improvement service with diverse functions. The optimal operation of institutional quality management and quality improvement systems is assured by linking the content and service on offer in the network with the findings from local external evaluation of the institutions, as well as internal self-evaluation. Development of the quality improvement system should include the establishment, testing and implementing of a quality management system operated by maintainers, as well as the linking of institutional quality improvement with quality management by the maintainer. The legal framework for local/institutional quality improvement also needs to be strengthened by making each school and school maintainer formally required to create and continuously upgrade a quality improvement programme, while, at the same time, guaranteeing the diversity of application at local and institutional level.

A fundamental component of the local/institutional quality improvement system is the arrangement whereby self-evaluation of the institution is coupled with an external evaluation which is based on the former. Hungary's tasks stemming from the situation assessment presented earlier, and the quality evaluation recommendations of the European Union may be performed – among others – through the *further development of expert systems*. What is needed is a significant increase in the number of experts of public education who receive appropriate training to enable them to carry out a comprehensive (qualitative) evaluation of the institutions, and also that school maintainers are required by a high-level legislative act to employ expert services to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the institutions regularly (at least once in each management cycle). Furthermore, through the more accurate definition of OKÉV's relevant responsibilities, it should be made sure that the findings from these institutional evaluation exercises are distributed nationally, and that corrective actions are guaranteed to be taken whenever serious quality problems are detected by the evaluation.

*Improving the programme accreditation system and the regulatory framework for the local implementation of programmes* should be considered a decisive factor in improving the quality of education. These ensure that schools can obtain professionally sound programmes which are in conformity with the applicable regulations and professional standards, and which are thus able to guarantee the quality and professional level of their local curricula. Regulation of the accreditation system and the local implementation allow schools to freely choose between accredited pedagogical programmes which they can adapt to create their own local curriculum, without possessing competences for comprehensive curriculum development.

When establishing the framework for accreditation, it is useful to build upon the experience gained earlier, in the course of accrediting teacher in-service training programmes and higher education programmes. The criteria of accreditation must be based on the requirements defined earlier for pedagogical programmes, making sure that these are enforced in the accreditation process. To this end, the procedures for programme accreditation, as well as the content and methodology for in-service training of experts in programme evaluation need to be established.

It is also very much in the interest of the country to make the accredited programmes developed as a result of national development measures and institutional innovation efforts available to all institutions, and to create an appropriate regulatory framework for the institutions to adapt these programmes to their own needs and conditions. The current decree



on the framework curriculum needs to be transformed to become a comprehensive regulation on local programme development.

#### ***2.2.4. Promoting the development of the teaching profession***

In order to meet the challenges public education is facing and to implement the development objectives set out in this document it will be necessary to increase considerably the social recognition of the teaching profession and to develop the knowledge and professional skills of teachers. This means the acceleration of the process to make the teaching profession really professional, which may imply both increased requirements for the profession and significantly higher wages for the practitioners. Without the teaching profession becoming professional in this sense, none of the objectives formalised so far can be implemented.

Any further increase in teacher incomes and the concomitant increased cost of employing teachers will raise the value of cost-effectiveness and efficiency in the context of teacher employment. As a fundamental condition of improving the quality of teaching, accountability must be strengthened. To this end, differentiated remuneration and the application of other incentives should be encouraged, and the system of evaluating the work of teachers should be extended to all schools. Teachers will not be able to meet the challenges created by the new educational objectives, unless the content of the offerings of both initial and in-service training providers undergo a strong development. In all educational institutions, it is necessary to encourage the development of mechanisms that are capable of identifying teachers' in-service training requirements and needs in a foreseeable manner. To this end, the following three specific objectives must be set:

- Developing the teaching profession.
- Increasing the income proportion which enables differentiated remuneration;
- Promoting the creation of a single system of teacher education.

The *development of the teaching profession* should be based on a vision of the profession that takes into account the needs of contemporary society and economy, the new requirements relating to lifelong learning, and all the challenges schools are currently facing (e.g. the spreading of modern technology in teaching, developments in our understanding of the human learning process, the growing heterogeneity of the learning society, the imperative of differential development, high academic failure rate, changes in the immediate social-economic environment of schools including child rearing in the family, etc.). The set of requirements in the initial, in-service and postgraduate training of teachers and the developments for the enforcement of such requirements should be adapted to reflect those. Investments into in-service teacher training and professional development should be increased significantly, and at the same time it is necessary to strengthen those mechanisms that can guarantee the quality and relevance thereof.

Following the major pay rise effected in 2002, it is now possible to *increase the income proportion which enables differentiated remuneration*. While as a percentage of the GDP it remains low in international comparisons, the base wage of teachers has reached a level, where further pay rise can only be ensured by bonuses or by increasing the proportion of wages suitable for differentiation. However, this should be coupled with strengthened external measuring and assessment systems allowing teacher accountability and the development of the evaluation of teaching within educational institutions. As a fundamental objective, each institution should be given a guarantee for access to budgetary funds which

can be spent on wages only. At the same time the actual method of using such funds within a regulated framework should be the responsibility of the management of the institutions.

*Creating a single system of teacher education* is the main instrument of developing teacher competences. The objective here is to make the current diffused system of initial training, which dramatically limits the possibility of professional development, more homogeneous by reducing the types of initial training to two basic forms: one path for teachers involved in pre-school education and the early phase of school education, and another one for teachers teaching on the lower and upper secondary levels. The creation of a single system of teacher education presupposes the co-operation of higher education institutions offering teacher training programmes. The autonomy of this sector, however, will only allow the launching of pilot programmes with the involvement of those institutions that can identify themselves with these strategic goals. These programs should be conducive to the renewal of teacher education not only in terms of organisation but also in terms of content, with the latter being in line with what has been said earlier in relation to the development of competences, reduction of social inequality and quality. To this end, a network of stakeholders should be created to encourage higher education institutions offering teacher training programmes to implement the desirable changes. All these will make it necessary to review the requirements of teacher training as well.

### ***2.2.5. Improving the use of information and communication technologies***

Improving the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is a far-reaching set of objectives in itself. It includes the development of new competences with increasing value from the perspective of labour market success and the modernisation of the country, the creation of the necessary physical and human conditions, and IT developments aimed at improving the efficiency of management, development and service systems. Improving the use of ICT in education is a key priority of the common educational policy of the European Union, and the Community has set a number of specific developmental objectives for the Member States in this field.<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary societies, it is impossible to achieve personal success and participation in social life without the use of ICT. Therefore, all students must be equipped with the key competences of ICT application. This presupposes that the physical and human conditions of using ICT are ensured in all schools providing lower secondary level education. Extending the use of these technologies to all schools and integrating it into the learning and teaching environment is also a means of enhancing teachers' methodological toolkits. In fulfilling this objective, special emphasis should be placed on reducing inequalities in access to ICT and to improving the related competences. To this end, access to the application of ICT and the contents serving the purpose of application must be ensured to all students, teachers and other actors in the educational system. Consequently, there are grounds for setting in particular two specific objectives:

- Extending the development of educational content and educational services;
- Extending the use of information and communication technologies.

*Extending the development of educational content and educational services* will require developments in content and methodology which enable the creation of providing services with educational content specifically designed for various target groups and schools.

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission: E-Learning – Designing tomorrow's education. 2000

This should include increasing interactive and multimedia based contents, as well as the development and dissemination of e-learning type teaching resources. Furthermore, improving ICT related competences, in particular the use of pedagogical techniques based on information technology, is also an important objective.

In *extending the use of information and communication technologies*, developments and support for schools catering for disadvantaged students or located in small settlements should be a key priority. Some further objectives of high importance are:

- to equip teachers with information technology;
- to integrate components facilitating the use of information technology in education into the initial and in-service training of teachers;
- to ensure access to professional services and specialised services in education through information technology;
- to make the products of the research and development system available and to develop the educational information system.

### ***2.2.6. Improving the physical conditions of education***

Most of the buildings used by the public education system in Hungary are in need of refurbishment, and many of them should be rebuilt. Most schools are in a poor technical condition, and do not meet functional requirements. Many of them are unable to comply with the effective health requirements in several aspects. Upgrading the equipment and facilities of institutions is a must, which should include the upgrading of information technology. In order to restore the reputation of education and to meet the objectives of education, the several decades' backlog in institution renewal and the provision of equipment should be gradually rectified by central development and by providing state guarantee for loans to finance local development. The fulfilment of the above objective requires the setting of the following two specific objectives:

- construction and reconstruction in the network of public education institutions;
- reviewing currently available tools and equipment, creating better equipped schools;
- providing more hardware and software for schools.

*Construction and reconstruction in the network of public education institutions* mean the modernisation of buildings used by public education institutions and the upgrading of related services (i.e. student dormitories, libraries, research facilities) background infrastructure. In accordance with the National Development Plan, the main goal is to improve the condition of the buildings and the means of education to a level that meets the requirements arising from 21<sup>st</sup> century educational principles and reflects the principles of equal opportunities and sustainable development, and at the same time facilitates education and training for labour market integration. It is important to ensure that the buildings used by public education as the second home of children represent the highest possible technical standards to ensure the integration of disadvantaged young people. Another aim of such developments is to create models to be used in the reconstruction programmes of subsequent periods.

*Reviewing currently available tools and equipment, and creating better equipped schools.* A prerequisite of this objective is to make sure that the created standards do not only comply with the expected technical and professional standards, but are actually available in all institutions. On the one hand, the current list of available tools and equipment is out of

date; on the other hand, it contains requirements that are impossible to meet, and are not conducive to levelling off the current, significant differences among institutions, thus further increasing the imbalance of equal opportunities. Therefore, the new list of equipment should comply with the fivefold requirement of adequacy, up-to-dateness, functionality, feasibility and health protection.

*Providing more hardware and software for schools* is a continuous objective arising mainly from the rapid development of computer technology – hardware and software, alike. In the 90s, Hungary had a relative competitive advantage in the region, which has not only ceased to exist, but has become a lag by now. It is necessary to develop servers and networks with high transmission capacity. Increasing the number of schools connected to the Sulinet (school-net) network is absolutely necessary, as that would be a great help to accelerate the inclusion of all primary level educational institutions to the system. The objective of increasing the number of teachers using a computer at home is conducive to promoting the use of ICT. It will, however, require assistance (e.g. tax allowance, loans, etc.) to purchasing the necessary equipment.

### ***2.2.7. Improving cost-efficiency and governance in education***

The development of public education in Hungary cannot rely on the involvement of surplus external funds only. Due to the low level of cost-efficiency in the system, the creation and continuous ensuring of human and physical conditions at the adequate level would demand a higher percentage of the national product to be spent on public education than in other countries. Clearly, on the long run, this would not be a realistic objective. Therefore, improving the cost-efficiency of public education is a key medium-term strategic objective. This will inevitably require the revision of the mechanisms used for allocating funds and the establishing of a stronger link between financing and educational effectiveness. The system of governance in Hungarian public education is highly decentralised, and responsibilities are shared both horizontally and vertically. Therefore, cost-efficiency problems cannot be solved unless the system of governance is modernised. The public education reform taking shape currently is another factor that makes a revision of the system of governance inevitable. The fulfilment of the above objective requires the setting of the following specific part-objectives:

- developing the system of financing education;
- developing local / regional planning systems;
- encouraging and improving associations and the co-operation between communities and institutions;
- developing the information and statistical system of public education;
- improving management at the institutional level.

*Developing the system of financing education* will require identifying the main reasons for poor cost-efficiency, and formulating concrete proposals after taking into consideration specific national and international features. The proposals for change can be finalised only after a full consideration of the results of conciliatory procedures following an extensive debate of the proposals at social and political forums. The new financing methods cannot be efficient, unless they are in agreement with the available funds and at the same time ensure the fulfilment of pedagogical goals and allow the enforcement of the principle of

accountability. It is practical to develop models whose effectiveness is proved by the success of previous programmes.

*The development of local / regional planning systems* is closely related to solving the problem of cost-efficiency and to improving horizontal and vertical co-operation. It is especially important to link local / regional educational planning to central planning and institutional planning, on the one hand, and to regional development, on the other hand, in accordance with the objectives and tasks set out in the National Development Plan. To this end, it is necessary to develop planning guidelines and try methods that can be applied on the various levels of public education governance. Training programmes and in-service training should be provided for those professionals who are responsible for the drafting and implementation of such plans and the evaluation of results and outcomes.

*Encouraging and improving associations and the co-operation between communities and institutions.* This specific objective has a key role in improving cost-efficiency. So far entities maintaining institutions have not exhibited much willingness to form associations, which has contributed to the evolution of the current diffuse institutional system and has increased cost-efficiency problems. At the same time the fact that small settlements insist on keeping their educational institutions for local political reasons should be considered as a long-term disposition. In this climate, the objective is to create a stakeholder environment and concrete forms of association and to disseminate functioning models, without prejudice to local interests, and in a manner that ensures the fulfilment of requirements relating to effectiveness and efficiency and professional governance.

*Developing the information and statistical system of public education* and ensuring the reliable functioning of such a system is a prerequisite of efficient governance and in particular the organisation of provision in public education. The ideal information and statistical system to be developed would be one which, in addition to providing information, also helps central and local decision-making, if new elements are added to it. The goal of this development is to ensure that databases are available and accessible for users (local decision-makers, parents, researchers) in the required form. It is necessary to create the necessary conditions for linking the existing institutional, financial, administrative and student databases to the necessary and lawful extent, so that they can be managed and used together, and not in isolation, as has been the case so far.

*Improving management at the institutional level* involves strengthening the co-operation of local governance and institutional management and making it more effective. It is important to identify the specific competences required to manage the various types of public education institutions and, in relation to that, the methods of selecting, training and further education of senior staff should be improved. In connection with quality improvement, procedures and methods for the assessment and qualification of senior staff should be developed and implemented in the framework of the evaluation of institutions. An important aspect of improving management is the development and dissemination of ICT related to institutional administration tasks performed by the management, and it should be ensured that the practitioners accept the use of such technologies.

### **3. Implementing the Public Education Development Strategy**

#### **3.1. The instruments used for implementing the Strategy**

A fundamental feature of public education in Hungary is that governance, which is based on shared responsibilities and the autonomy of institutions and their maintainers, only allows limited scope for direct intervention into local processes. While respecting this system, the Ministry of Education focuses its efforts to facilitate the implementation of the Government programme and its development programmes based on the Government programme by means of mainly indirect, incentive and persuasive instruments supporting local actors. To this end, the Ministry has launched schemes (Government projects) whose effect may induce changes that meet the above mentioned objectives. (Applying this project-based development is also part of the preparation for investing the Structural Funds provided by the European Union in the development of education.) Naturally, the efficiency of these schemes cannot be ensured, unless the systems of regulation, funding and governance in education are modified at several points. However, such changes may not lead to the disintegration of the system of shared responsibilities established among the various actors in the system of education.

##### ***3.1.1. Regulation and funding***

The draft amendment to the Act on Public Education is to be submitted to Parliament in the spring of 2003. While preparing the amendment, the Ministry of Education placed emphasis on including the regulatory effects of the programmes to be launched in the Act on Public Education, and on creating a new regulatory environment with favourable conditions for the implementation of the objectives set out in the programmes. Following the amendment of the Act, other elements of the legislation on education will be reviewed and amended, as appropriate. The Strategy includes, as an important regulatory component, the amendment of the National Core Curriculum, as well as adjusting the requirements of the secondary school-leaving examination - as a result of introducing a new, two-level examination - and adjusting the requirements of the examination of basic education.

The fulfilment of the development objectives of the Strategy will require certain changes in the system of funding education. Such changes will affect the system of basic funding (e.g. introducing new capitation grants, changing the level of certain types of assistance in accordance with the new priorities), the system of grants provided in support of programmes, as well as the planning of central appropriations for programme financing. The majority of these changes (e.g. the introduction of a capitation grant for integration) have already appeared in the budget for the year 2003. Increasing the proportion and amount of various types of assistance for associations of maintainers operating in small regions should be one of the major changes in the system of funding. Further important changes are needed in the weighting used in the funding of teacher wages. For example, the percentage of expenditure on the part of income coming from bonuses, allowances and differential remuneration should be increased in the coming years.

### ***3.1.2. Schemes and measure packages***

In order to support the desirable processes of modernisation in the public education system, the Ministry of Education is planning to launch 23 schemes and implement packages of measures (hereafter: schemes). All of these schemes are linked to medium-term development objectives. They are designed by identifying in advance certain general developmental requirements, as well as the expected costs, concrete results and effects of the various schemes. The Ministry of Education is delegating the detailed design and implementation of schemes to its background institutions and a working group of experts.

### ***3.1.3. Detailed planning, co-ordination and governance***

The far-reaching development system devised by the Ministry of Education will require the strategic co-ordination of the various schemes. To this end, a steering committee tasked with that job must be set up within the Ministry of Education, and a Co-ordination Office with a few number of staff should be established. The latter would co-ordinate the process of strategic planning and the design of schemes, and would have analysis prepared to help the work of planning, as needed, monitor the implementation of schemes and provide technical assistance and information to other actors of the educational system. The Steering Committee will make annual reports on the progress made under the various schemes.

### ***3.1.4. Improving the knowledge base of development***

The fulfilment of the objectives set under this Strategy – and the adaptability of the system of public education in general – highly depend on what sort of information the development process can rely on. In terms of improving the knowledge base, the current level of efforts should be considerably increased in particular in the following fields: supporting national, regional and local decision-making and the consultation process involving educational actors through the provision of additional analysing capacity; ensuring the diversity of information used for the design and implementation of central development schemes; improving the information system of financial planning; supporting the underpinning of developments serving innovation at institutional level by applied research. To this end, calculated and systematic investments and support systems are needed in order to respond the need for analysis and consultation in public education and to radically increase applied research carried out under development programmes. In this context, special emphasis should be placed on further building the “infrastructure” of the system providing a knowledge base for public education. The systems to be developed should include a system for measurement and assessment, a statistical and information system and IT systems providing access to information and the required institutional capacities.

### ***3.1.5. Strengthening readiness to accept institutional innovation***

For the fulfilment of the development objectives set under this Strategy, special emphasis should be given to tools that strengthen the readiness of institutions to accept innovation and increase the capacity of institutions to implement innovative projects. To this end, the applied incentives should strengthen teachers’ willingness to change. This can be achieved through training programmes improving innovative skills and strengthening the motivation for innovation and through supporting developments improving the quality of the operation of institutions / organisations. To this end, the system of innovation grants available by way of

application for project funding, which has a long-standing tradition in Hungary, should be applied more extensively. This will require the creation of a central development fund with a considerable financing capacity. It is necessary to promote the dissemination and exchange of information on innovative programmes implemented by institutions and the know-how created by them, as well as the establishment and functioning of networks providing a framework for horizontal learning and development. An active use must be made of the work of the various existing and newly formed service provider systems to promote these objectives.

### ***3.1.6. Publicity of the Strategy and the involvement of educational actors and social partners***

From the perspective of the implementation of this Strategy for development, it is very important to make the development objectives, the underlying intentions and the actions taken for the fulfilment of the objectives known to the public. The Ministry of Education intends to use all the possible traditional and electronic means of communication to ensure publicity. The medium-term development strategy itself should work as a living document; its adoption does not mean the end of the strategic planning process and the technical discussion thereof. Organising development around projects and the monitoring of implementation will allow continuous reflexivity and correction.

A development strategy cannot be successful without consultation with social partners and the various actors in the educational system. For this reason, the Ministry of Education intends to strengthen its relations with the organisations represented in the Public Education Policy Council and the system of sectoral conciliation, as well as the stakeholder NGOs. At the same time, the Ministry will review the working of local and regional conciliatory mechanisms, planning and decision-making and take action to broaden their scope and to ensure their stability.

### ***3.1.7. Measuring the success of development***

Both its administrative responsibility for the use of budgetary funds allocated to public education and the fulfilment of the development objectives require the Ministry of Education to resort to external, independent means of evaluating the various schemes and to make use of such services to a much greater extent than before. Depending on the type of schemes, the aim of evaluation may be the amendment of the scheme or the assessment of its effects. To this end, the performance indicators which will form the basis of evaluation must be identified for each scheme already in the planning phase, and the Ministry of Education must ensure the resources for financing the evaluation. In addition, a monitoring system must be put in place to measure progress towards the fulfilment of policy objectives and to help decision-making at national and maintainer levels. As a rule, the results of assessment and evaluation must be made public, so that they can influence the decisions defining the direction of development.

### ***3.1.8. International co-operation***

From the perspective of the implementation of the development objectives of this Strategy, experience from international co-operation is of overriding importance. In certain fields, such as multicultural education, integrated education for students with special educational needs or



the teaching of certain cross-curricular themes (e.g. environmental education or media studies), the adaptation of programmes applied in other countries is a major means of the required development. International contribution to the creation of the capacities required to introduce certain services which have been undervalued in the system of public education so far (e.g. external evaluation of programmes) is not of less importance. In terms of objective setting and measuring progress, co-operation networks allowing international comparison have an increasing role. Action must be taken to make widely known among educational actors the recommendations of the European Union and the information revealing the specifics of the Hungarian education system through international comparison.

### **3.2. Regulatory instruments and development tools assigned to the various objectives**

The development objectives of this Strategy will be implemented in two, more or less separate phases, by applying two types of instruments and tools in a co-ordinated manner. In the first phase, the regulatory systems defining the scope of activities for educational actors will be amended by keeping in view all development objectives. This will involve the amendment of the Act on Public Education, the review of the National Core Curriculum and the modification of certain requirements of the secondary school-leaving examination. In the second phase, targeted schemes will be launched. The schemes will be designed and implemented in line with the changed educational objectives and the new regulatory environment in the form of projects.

#### ***3.2.1. Regulatory instruments***

##### Legislation

The creation of a regulatory environment conducive to the implementation of the development objectives of the Strategy will involve, on the one hand, the amendment of Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education and the adoption of government decrees and ministerial decrees implementing the amendments, on the other hand. As the Medium-Term Development Strategy contains a fairly complex set of objectives, several components of the regulatory system must be modified as well. The key points of the envisaged regulatory change are the following:

- *Creating the legal basis for the changed regulation of content*  
With the amendment of the Act, the starting phase of education will become longer, and it will focus on the development of core skills. Accordingly, students are taught by primary school teachers in the first four years of education, and primary school teachers continue working in grades 5 and 6. Educational content is regulated as a single process throughout the entire period of public education. Framework curricula will lose the exclusive role they had earlier, and the Minister of Education will publish educational programmes to facilitate the development of the local curricula. With the amendment of the Act, the guidelines for the pre-school and primary school education of children with special educational needs will have to be revised and supplemented by the guidelines for integrated instruction and education.
- *Strengthening equal opportunities for students*

The amendment of the Act contains several points that intend to reduce the workload of students and facilitate their progress within the system of education. These include assisting the continuous development and progress of students in the first four years of education, incorporating further guarantees for traversability, strengthening assessment in the form of written reports and making enrolment procedures easier. The national system of professional service providers must be supplemented by a service network for the education of disadvantaged students.

- *Asserting the rights of students and parents*  
The amendment of the Act should extend the opportunities of student self-governments and school boards to influence institutional decision-making.
- *Prohibition of discrimination*  
The amendment should declare all decisions null and void that discriminate a child or a group of children on the basis of gender, origin or any other reason. The regulation must include a clear-cut definition of discrimination and the related procedural rules.
- *Continuing studies in higher education*  
The amendment of the Act should introduce a new system of entry into higher education as of 2005, where the basis of entry is the secondary school-leaving examination.
- *Public education governance*  
The Act should require all local authorities to prepare an action plan, including those local authorities that discharge their basic duties in education by means other than maintaining institutions. In addition, the Act should require local governments maintaining institutions to develop guidelines for a quality policy and to adapt the quality improvement within the institution to those guidelines.

### Regulation of content

The objectives set in the regulation of content must reflect the changes in the requirements relating to educational content and the aim of education. The experiences accumulated since the adoption and introduction of the National Core Curriculum (NCC) in 1995 and the recent research findings revealing the effectiveness of education in Hungary provide an imperative for the Minister of Education to initiate a review of this core document of curriculum development. The review is implemented within the framework of a three-level system of the regulation of content. The levels are the following:

- *Common requirements formulated at national level*  
These are established during the NCC review. The NCC is a core curriculum emphasising common and general requirements for development and the development of key competences. It establishes the shares of the various fields of education. The new guidelines for the education of minority students and students with special educational needs are published under a specific decree. The requirements for examinations organised by the state (the new requirements of the examination of basic education and the secondary school-leaving examination) are also regulated at this level. A new standardised, two-level secondary school-leaving examination, which will conclude secondary level studies and enable entry into higher education, will be introduced in 2005. In connection with that, the requirements of the maturity examination will be regulated in

two steps, and phased in across the subsequent years. The requirements applicable in 2005 and as of 2007 will be established based on the current curricular requirements and the revised NCC, respectively. Within the system of process regulation (curricula) and output regulation (examination requirements and assessment / evaluation), the weight and role of the latter should be strengthened.

- *Educational programmes and detailed examination requirements accredited at national level*

The obligatory framework curriculum to be applied by all educational institutions will be replaced by detailed curricular programmes, which can be incorporated into the pedagogical programmes of schools as a local curriculum after limited adaptation. Accreditation requirements and the mechanism of accreditation must be regulated by a ministerial decree.

- *Local curricula*

Schools organise their education on the basis of their local curricula, which is part of the school's pedagogical programme. In this respect, the regulations currently in force do not need to be changed. When reviewing their local curricula, institutions may apply the accredited national programmes, may adapt curricula developed by other institutions or may prepare their curricula themselves, on the basis of the NCC. The extra tasks relating to developing the local curriculum must be recognised as part of the obligatory teaching hours.

### ***3.2.2. Schemes for the fulfilment of the various development objectives***

#### **3.2.2.1. Building the basis of lifelong learning through the development of key competences**

##### **1. Development of accredited educational programmes**

The review of the NCC and the secondary school-leaving examination requirements and the changes in certain framework regulations applying to the organisation of education will make the majority of institutions review their pedagogical programmes and curricula. As part of supporting the review of pedagogical programmes and pedagogical innovation in institutions in general, programme development activities must be revived in accordance with the strategic objectives. To this end:

1. In 2003, a reform and capacity building will start in the institutional system of program development, and the research and development activities of selected institutions will be reviewed;
2. requirements for content focusing on the development of key competences will be developed;
3. educational programmes relating to other priorities and schemes of the medium-term strategy will be collected, overviewed and developed;
4. a programme bank making the collected programmes available will be created.

The programmes will be operated and co-ordinated by a national programme development centre to be established in 2003.

## 2. Improving foreign language learning

Public education schemes promoting foreign language learning must be related to the other priorities and development objectives of this Strategy. Accordingly, development schemes should be launched to provide opportunities for efficient language learning to those students and institutions that are unable to cover the extra costs of language learning themselves. This may be facilitated by the establishments of foreign language libraries and resource centres with printed and electronic material helping individual language learning primarily in institutions catering for a large number of disadvantaged children. Likewise, language learning programmes organised as extracurricular activities (within the school, but outside the scheduled lessons) or learning centres should be linked to programmes for the integration of Roma students and disadvantaged students. In vocational training institutions, the expansion of the time frame for language learning and the acquisition of the language of the trade learned should be encouraged and supported. In secondary schools, technical and financial assistance should be provided for bilingual programmes and programmes for the teaching of European content in foreign languages. In teacher training, forms of support providing an opportunity for extending the period of teaching practice or for studies and teaching practice abroad should be made accessible for all. In the in-service training of language teachers, the development of assessment and evaluation skills should be promoted in the first place.

## 3. Multicultural development

In accordance with the objectives of this Strategy, the Ministry of Education intends to revive the programme for the development of multicultural education (Dialogue Programme), which was launched in 1995. This programme involves the following:

1. promoting the adaptation and application of programmes applied successfully in other countries;
2. to this end, establishing co-operation with international development agencies and non-profit organisations that are active in this field;
3. collecting and ensuring access to functioning national programmes;
4. developing the related methodology;
5. One of the most important elements of the multicultural development programme is setting up a multicultural monitoring programme to analyse curricula and textbooks from a multicultural perspective.

### Measures relating to the various schemes:

- Creating an institutional background for programme development;
- Reviewing the Act on Public Education and the related legislation in order to revise the regulation of programme development and multiculturalism.

### **Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- Maintaining the vertical and horizontal coherence of requirements when developing schemes;
- Distributing student workload proportionately, and reducing workload where necessary;
- Giving priority to the integration of curricular and subject related content when developing key competences.

### 3.2.2.2. Reducing inequalities in education

#### 4. Extending pre-school education to groups of disadvantaged children

Pre-school education can only be extended to the various groups of disadvantaged children, if the intake capacity is ensured, nursery school teachers have the appropriate grounding in methodology and are committed to work with children, social benefits relating to pre-school education are targeted, and are accessible for those in need, who are interested in receiving such benefits. To this end, this project should

1. assess the existing nursery school capacities;
2. develop the relating development scheme;
3. develop, in connection with the developments in the funding of education, elements to raise maintainer and user interest, and incorporate them into the Act on the Central Budget for 2004.
4. explore the possibility of co-operation between the health and education sectors at the local level, which should involve a study on:
  - 4.1. the development of a uniform information system to track child development;
  - 4.2. the scope of application of such information system.

#### 5. Upgrading the vocational school network

The development scheme to be implemented in the period 2003-2006 will directly involve 20-25 % of schools providing vocational education and training (approx. 90-100 schools). The participating schools will be selected by way of application. The experience from the development in the selected schools, the teaching materials and methodological resources to be developed under this scheme must be made available for all schools, so that they can be used as benchmarks by other schools. The successful implementation of this development scheme should ensure the fulfilment of the following social objectives:

1. students should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in life and to obtain a marketable vocational qualification through completing compulsory education with a reduced failure rate;
2. education and training should satisfy the labour force demand of the economy by equipping career starter skilled workers with marketable skills to reduce unemployment and the morally destructive impact of unemployment in the age group concerned;
3. the objectives can be attained through the following development paths:
  - 3.1. renewing the content the of general subjects, speciality subjects and job group training in grades 9-10, raising the standard of teaching, learning about, developing and applying up-to-date pedagogical programmes;
  - 3.2. strengthening co-operation with the economy, increasing the labour market value of career starter skilled workers, increasing the efficiency and practical value and changing the content of education and training;
  - 3.3. modular programme development for job group training;
  - 3.4. equipping vocational school teachers, instructors and persons engaged in practical training with up-to-date pedagogical, methodological and technical skills;
  - 3.5. developing special teaching materials, programmes and methods designed to help disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs to catch up;

- 3.6. coaching the management and maintainers of vocational schools to perform tasks arising from modern school development, management and methodological changes;
- 3.7, ensuring the physical conditions of institution development;
- 3.8. modifying the National Training Register.

## 6. Integration of Roma and disadvantaged children

The aim of this scheme is to create a network of educational and training institutions implementing the integration of the socially disadvantaged, especially the Roma, in education and other organisations co-operating with such institutions. Through this, the scheme intends to reduce significantly the segregation of the socially disadvantaged, especially the Roma, among and within educational institutions, to facilitate their further education in line with their individual abilities and interests and to strengthen their future labour market position by ensuring their quality education.

1. In 2003, the network has provided support for the launching of approximately 50 complex integration programmes in three regions – in North Hungary, North Lowlands, South Transdanubia and the Budapest agglomeration. All fifty programmes are backed by programme level institutional co-operation (involving nursery schools, primary schools, secondary schools, institutions working in social welfare, maintainers and Roma minority self-governments). The first fifty institutions (primary schools in obligatory partnership with nursery schools) have been selected from a group of institutions that have a track record in working with disadvantaged children and are ready to undertake further institution development, including the local adaptation of pedagogical elements from the proposed programme list of “coaching for integration”. These institutions can apply for a base institution status.
2. As of 2004, the group of base institutions will be enlarged to include secondary level institutions. In terms of geographical coverage, this means an extension to non-priority regions. Following a professional preparatory phase in 2003, these institutions will get involved in the integration of the disabled.
3. The programme manages an integration fund providing grants available by way of application. The aim of the fund is to create an integration network and to ensure the necessary physical and human conditions.

## 7. Scheme against discrimination

This scheme is aimed at using active instruments to ensure the enforcement of the provisions on the prohibition of discrimination incorporated into the Act on Public Education following its amendment. This will include the following tasks:

1. setting up a monitoring system to reveal cases of discrimination;
2. developing training programmes facilitating the application of the new regulation;
3. training sessions to reduce prejudice;
4. implementing an awareness raising campaign;
5. In addition, the scheme intends to establish co-operation with civil advocacy groups.

## 8. Integration of children with special educational needs

The aim of this scheme is to increase the proportion of students with disabilities in mainstream public education institutions (primary schools and secondary schools) through integration. An additional aim is to provide education and training for such students at or near their home, in line with their abilities and interests, which they can participate in while living with their families. This will lay the foundations of an inclusive school system in public education, ensuring a wide offer of public education institutions effectively catering for students with special needs. In open institutions, equal opportunities can be better achieved, the chances for social integration are higher. For this reason, inclusion considers the entire system, including its components, system of links and interrelations the basis of efficient functioning. To this end:

1. it is necessary to establish co-operation between special education institutions and inclusive institutions accepting integration, where practitioners from special education institutions can assist inclusive institutions to develop their respective integration programmes, and organise, support and/or perform special tasks, provide the necessary support services and supervision.
2. building upon this and supporting this work, it is necessary to establish and develop a network / system of helpers / service providers to provide further support to satisfying special care requirements and special needs;
3. teachers working in inclusive institutions should have an opportunity to participate in in-service training where they can learn about accredited programmes preparing for integration;
4. relying on the ongoing, successful integration programmes, it is important to develop training programmes which can prepare interested practitioners and institutional communities for integration by focusing on practice;
5. the development of training programmes should be supplemented by the development of content and tools.

### Measures relating to the schemes:

- reviewing and amending, as appropriate, the existing legislation;
- setting up the required network of institutions and service providers;
- establishing and operating a system for the collection and processing of statistical data on pre-school education;
- continuous collection of data and information on institutional programmes.

### **Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- giving priority and support to transition from one level or type of institution to another and transition from education to the labour market;
- drafting and enforcing regulations and monitoring procedures against discrimination;
- reviewing the system of social benefits and analysing whether they are in line with the objectives set under the various schemes.

### 3.2.2.3. Improving the quality of education

#### 9. Further improvement of the system of assessment and evaluation

As a result of the project for the further improvement of the system of assessment and evaluation, the content of external and internal assessments and evaluations (of institutions, programmes, teachers and students) and the system of carrying out assessment and evaluation are developed based on the NCC, the requirements of state examinations and the total institution evaluation criteria in order to improve the effectiveness of education. Developing the content of assessment and education should include the following tasks, which must be accomplished by relying on those theoretical, research based and practical experiences from international (PISA) and national central assessments:

1. Developing a single system of assessment and evaluation, which can create a sector level demand for assessment and evaluation among institutions and maintainers, if an adequate supporting environment is given;  
The system of assessment and evaluation should include the following:
  - (1.1) tools needed to operate a warning system of selection mechanisms arising in public education in order to reduce inequalities in education;
  - (1.2) the system of assessment and evaluation should enable the funding of institutions and programmes based on performance
  - (1.3) and the differential remuneration of teachers.
  - (1.4) It should enable direct programme development or adaptation by institutions and technical assistance provided by the state or the maintainer.
2. Separating the roles and responsibilities of the service provider and the authority at the appropriate levels in the group of service provider and control organisations involved in the implementation of assessment and evaluation
  - (2.1) will guarantee the creation of demand for internal evaluation at the institutional level, and
  - (2.2) at the same time encourage maintainers of institutions to implement external evaluations building upon internal assessment.
3. In order to improve the effectiveness of education, the system of assessment and evaluation will integrate the various national and international assessments into the analysing and decision-making system of the educational sector at the various levels, promoting dynamic institution management, which is open to change.
4. An institutional and technical background should be developed and continuously operated for the assessment and evaluation system.

#### 10. Further development of the local / institutional quality improvement system

The aim of this scheme is to facilitate the creation of a network of quality improvement service providers offering multilevel and functionally diverse quality improvement activities together with services for the system of public education.

1. The network itself and the content and services offered by the network, together with the practice of association required to provide such offerings will guarantee the efficient use of the future capitation grant for the development of public education.



2. To this end, it is necessary to incorporate national and international experiences jointly to ensure the creation of a modern institution development system building upon the self-improvement and self-assessment activities of institutions.
3. One of the key objectives of quality improvement is to contribute to reducing inequalities in education by offering a supply of programmes with integration practices against discrimination mechanisms and practices based on ethnic origin and/or arising from outdated pedagogical practices.
4. It is important for the network of quality improvement service providers to create a demand for innovation in the system at large and at the institutional level by relying on the experiences from the ongoing quality improvement programme. That demand will be the basis of continuous development and achieving excellence through a tiered award system.
5. Including excellence into the system will contribute to the strengthening and spreading of self-assessment practices within the network of public education institutions.

### 11. Establishing a system for programme accreditation and support

Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public education require the development of a programme for system level support and accreditation to help the adaptation and improve the accessibility of innovative programmes originating from institutional practices, development centres and research facilities and innovations for the renewal of smaller areas. An important objective is that innovative programmes and smaller-scale innovations should not appear as a by-product in public education. Through a well-defined support system, these activities should be raised to the level of the major objectives of public education. To this end, the following tasks should be accomplished:

- (1) Developing an institutional programme bank;
- (2) Ensuring access to the content of the programme bank for all actors in public education;
- (3) Developing the rules of procedure for programme accreditation using the experiences gathered so far;
- (4) Developing the related expert competences;
- (5) Developing a system for programme developers as stakeholders;
- (6) Developing services available for users;
- (7) During the programme developing the conceptual framework and operational rules of prominent grant provision for public education institutions engaging in programme development and adaptation.

#### Measures relating to the schemes:

- Establishing an institutional background for the national evaluation system;
- Setting up professional organisations needed to join international assessment programmes;
- Reviewing or drafting, as appropriate, legislation on programme accreditation;
- Completing and publishing the evaluation closing the experimental phase of the Comenius 2000 Programme for Quality Improvement in Public Education.

#### **Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- Coherence of national and international developments;

- Linking the content of evaluation, quality improvement and educational planning.

#### 3.2.2.4. Restoring the status of the teaching profession and promoting the professional development of teachers

##### 12. Developing the teaching profession

The project for developing the teaching profession involves the following policy and governance related tasks:

1. Introducing or phasing in a single system of teacher education (phasing in would mean the introduction of a single system for secondary school teachers first, then raising primary school teacher education and nursery school teacher education to a university level to complete the full introduction of the single system).
2. Reconsidering the entire system of in-service training and developing an in-service training strategy.
3. Developing the system of teacher specialisation and, in relation to that, significantly increasing the number of teaching positions requiring a specialist qualification.
4. Strengthening the role of practical components in teacher education and rewriting qualification requirements to reflect the priority of practice.
5. Developing an admission system based on career aptitude, and introducing it in all higher education institutions providing teacher education.
6. Introducing obligatory specialist examination in higher education pedagogy for those involved teacher education.
7. Promoting lifelong learning throughout the teaching career, with particular emphasis on acquiring, refreshing and expanding knowledge by continuous, regular learning in the field of information technology, foreign languages and methodology.

##### 13. Creating a single system of teacher education

Creating a single system of teacher education involves the following policy and governance related tasks:

1. Formulating the requirements of policy-makers and administration concerning the single system of teacher education in a professional manner, and setting up a consultation body for that purpose.
2. Developing the vision of the single system of teacher education in terms of theory and practice.
3. Offering the developed vision for professional and public debate and ensuring the co-ordination of the debate.
4. Providing expedient forms of support for the vision deemed acceptable by policy-makers, administration and practitioners, so that the viability of the vision can be justified by the findings of practice-oriented (action-based) research conducted in higher education pedagogy.
5. Launching pilot groups and/or years in volunteering higher education institutions (universities) based on the research findings of the developed vision.
6. Engaging public education institutions as “clients” and fields of practice and taking into consideration their opinion on the performance of graduates and student teachers participating in teacher education.

7. Scheduling the roll-out of the single system and implementing its introduction in view of policy and professional considerations based on the research findings and the professional experiences.

Measures relating to the schemes::

- Reviewing the Act on Higher Education and other legislation on teacher education, preparing a conceptual framework for amendment;
- Reviewing the Act on Public Education, in particular the requirements for qualification, and comparing them with the legislation on teacher education;
- Collecting the characteristics of content in the current system of teacher education with the involvement of the Hungarian Accreditation Board (MAB);
- Continuing research on the living conditions of teachers and an overview of research findings produced so far.

**Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- Improving the professional and social recognition of teachers raising the status of the teaching profession;
- Harmonising qualification requirements with educational content, methodology and the phases used in the regulation of content.

3.2.2.5. Using information and communication technologies

14. Broadening the scope of educational content development and services

The aim of this scheme is to implement educational content and methodology developments which

1. enable the provision of content differentiated by target groups and designed specifically for schools;
2. this should involve increasing the share of interactive and multimedia content, as well as the development and dissemination of e-learning material.
3. It is important to increase the IT skills of teachers, in particular the development of pedagogical processes based on the use of information technology.
4. The development of distance learning is a key priority, and it should include the development of programmes that can be used outside the school system, in adult education.
5. In connection to this development, it is practical to develop a monitoring system for e-learning material,
6. and services providing e-learning material via the Internet, which will make it necessary to set up and operate a suitable portal.

15. Broadening the application of information and communication technologies

The aim of this scheme is to provide schools working in highly disadvantaged small communities technical and methodological support for integrating information and communication technologies, the development of programmes improving students' creativity and preparing them for active participation in the information society, and incorporating them into their daily teaching activities. The professional and methodological toolkit of most teachers do not include the use of ICT, digital teaching material and teaching aids, therefore education based on ICT will require, in particular:

1. The provision of training and in-service training for teachers;
2. Ensuring the dissemination of and access to good practice and noteworthy results.
3. The rationalisation and harmonisation of primary school services at the level of small regions and settlements may lead to more efficient, concerted and better organised provision of educational services.
4. Currently, teachers do not have access to a sufficient amount of quality teaching materials, therefore up-to-date and modern digital teaching materials intended for academic use must be prepared (linked to the curricula of the various fields of education), to enable the development of quality teaching methods and teaching aids.
5. As an important development criterion, the developed methodological aids are required to enable a growing number of teachers to implement their own ideas and to develop their own teaching material.

Measures relating to the schemes:

- Overall analysis of the current system of services providing content to explore strengths and weaknesses;
- Considering the practicability of using distance learning in adult education.

**Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- Applicability in the entire system of public education;
- Ensuring compliance with the instruments regulating content.

3.2.2.6. Improving the physical conditions of education

16. Construction and reconstruction in the network of public education institutions

The aim of the envisaged scheme is to improve the condition of buildings and related facilities (student dormitories, library, research facility) used by public education institutions. In order to ensure the necessary conditions for the application of efficient teaching techniques and methods and for the development of skills and abilities at the appropriate level, major investments into institutions are inevitable. Special attention should be given to improving the educational infrastructure of small settlements and scarcely populated, disadvantaged areas. The technical condition of most buildings housing public education institutions does not reflect the changed social and environmental conditions. The technical standards and level of comfort in the buildings are low, and the buildings cannot comply with the requirements of safe and convenient use, or are not free of obstacles. Therefore it is essential to

1. improve the condition of buildings
2. and tools and equipment used in education to such level that is in line with the educational and training principles of the 21st century; and
3. to create a background infrastructure suitable for integrating new technologies.
4. Due to their crucial role in social policy, student dormitories can support successful social integration in a special way. The existing dormitories, most of which has a regional level catchment area, are far too crowded and neglected, technically and functionally run down to fulfil this function. Therefore, the existing dormitories need to be refurbished to create a dormitory model that is capable of responding to social-economic changes and continuous self-improvement.

5. The co-operation of entities maintaining schools may contribute to the maintaining and running of schools in a cost-efficient manner, which is conducive to better access to quality education and ensures the sustainability of the successes of the scheme.
6. The implementation of this project will require large-scale construction activities which can make institutions technically and technologically suitable for integrating ICT and ensure compliance with the educational objectives of the project and the applicable construction regulations.

#### 17. Reviewing currently available tools and equipment, creating better equipped schools

At present, there are considerable differences among educational institutions in terms of the availability of tools and equipment. The inequalities are partly linked to location (institutions in towns vs. villages) and partly to the level of provision or type of institution. Nursery and primary schools in villages are in the worst situation, while the best equipped institutions are secondary vocational schools and secondary grammar schools providing vocational education in towns. This is mainly due to the Vocational Training Fund. Currently, very few institutions can comply with the requirements laid down in the list of tools and equipment in terms of quantity. In terms of quality, the gap between the ideal situation and reality is even wider. Therefore,

1. the list of tools and equipment should be reviewed and amended to establish whether its requirements meet the fivefold requirement of adequacy, up-to-dateness, functionality, feasibility and health protection.
2. A cost estimate should be drawn up for the revised list of equipment.
3. An implementation schedule should be developed.

#### 18. Providing more hardware and software for schools

In the framework of the renewal, reconstruction and extension of buildings used by educational institutions, it is practical to ensure that institutions and teachers are equipped with the appropriate software and hardware.

This project should ensure the following:

1. full installation of structured cabling;
2. upgrading or replacing the existing network;
3. construction of complex low-current systems and the protection of infrastructure;
4. installation of active devices, servers, multimedia-workstations, special devices used as teaching aids, procurement of applications, software and devices needed for implementing developments.
5. installation of a network with at least 12 workstations and users' software
6. procurement of e-learning materials and other electronic dictionaries, the application rights and data carrier of encyclopaedias.

#### Measures relating to the schemes:

- review of regulations and standards currently in force;
- developing a public education cadastre.

#### **Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- compliance with the requirements of technical adequacy, up-to-dateness, functionality, feasibility and health protection.

### 3.2.2.7. Improving cost-efficiency and effectiveness in public education governance

#### 19. Developing the system of financing education

In Hungary, like in many other countries in the region, public education suffers from a serious lack of cost-efficiency. This is indicated by the noteworthy fact that the teacher salaries the public education system can provide represent a much lower percentage of the per capita GDP in Hungary than in other countries spending a similar proportion of their GDP on education. The aim of this project is

1. to explore in a complex manner the various reasons for the low level of cost-efficiency, using existing international comparisons and national data;
2. to make concrete proposals for measures to be taken by the state to improve cost-efficiency, for regulatory solutions and the use of other policy instruments;
3. explore the technical, social and political feasibility of the proposed measures;
4. organise forums with the involvement of practitioners and the society on the cost-efficiency of public education and the possible political solutions for improving cost-efficiency in order to raise awareness of this issue and to promote the acceptance of necessary measures by the public;
5. implement concrete local model programmes for improving cost-efficiency in a few places (school organisation, teacher employment, etc.)

#### 20. Developing local / regional planning systems

Local and regional planning have a key role in tackling the problem of cost efficiency in public education. In accordance with the Act on Public Education, the Minister of Education is responsible for providing technical assistance to local and regional planning. The aim of this project is to improve local and regional planning activities, with particular emphasis on improving cost-efficiency and strengthening the link between public education planning and regional development. To this end, the project includes the following tasks:

1. Analysing local and regional (county level) plans for the development of public education in terms of their relation to regional development;
2. developing and improving national guidelines and technical documents in support of the development of local and regional (county level) plans for the development of public education;
3. developing and applying a training programme (or modules for existing training programmes) to improve the competences of those who participate in local and regional (county level) educational planning;
4. implementation of a concrete model of planning covering at least some settlements within one county at least; the model should
  - 4.1. be a significant contribution to improving cost-efficiency;
  - 4.2. improve links between public education planning and regional development to improve the position of the sector in the competition for obtaining infrastructure development funds;
  - 4.3. improve the sharing of responsibilities by education and the economy in the development of vocational education and training;
5. organising programmes for demonstrating and disseminating best practice.

## 21. Encouraging associations and the co-operation between communities and institutions

The co-operation between institutions and communities has a key role in tackling the problem of cost efficiency in public education. The aim of this project is to create an environment where the regulations and the network of interests are favourable for co-operation and association, to establish concrete forms of association and to disseminate the best practice of forming associations.

The eligible activities under this project are:

1. an overall analysis of the legal environment and the opportunities to obtain financial assistance to establish whether the ability and willingness to form associations are promoted in the existing environment;
2. formulating concrete proposals for changing the legal environment and the opportunities to obtain financial assistance;
3. exploring and analysing the existing forms of association
4. analysing the impact of the existing forms of association on cost-efficiency, professional administration, and the quality and success of education;
5. collecting and making accessible examples of best practice in the field of institutional co-operation and associations;
6. developing models of complex associations and implementing them in a few locations.

## 22. Developing the information and statistical system of public education

Efficient and democratic public education governance presupposes the existence of an effective and functioning information and statistical system. The aim of this scheme is to further develop the information and statistical system of public education, by increasing the reliability of the system and by adding new elements to it to assist central and local decision-making and information.

The development scheme to be launched in this field contains the following components:

1. developing tools and techniques for statistical data collection in public education;
2. programme components improving the security and predictability of the provision of information and data by institutions (e.g. developing competences required for using the system at school level, developing technical means for integrating electronic information and data provision into the regular administration processes of schools);
3. improving the storage and processing of statistical data on public education in such manner that allows local decision-makers to access the required data in the required form;
4. supporting the technical and technological conditions of providing information on public education to international organisations (EU, OECD, UNESCO);
5. supporting the analysis and processing of national and domestic public education statistics for strategic purposes;
6. Supplementing of information on the various public education institutions with data and information which is of interest for users (mainly parents) (e.g. elements of pedagogical programmes, data demonstrating the effectiveness of schools) and ensuring easier access to such data and information.

## 23. Improving management at the institutional level

The fulfilment of nearly all objectives for the development of public education presupposes the improvement of the quality of institutional (school) and local management. The aim of this project is to promote through the synergy of different tools the strengthening of the effectiveness of management at local and institutional level.

To this end, this project will provide support for the following activities:

1. identifying competences required to perform school governing tasks and management tasks and, based on that, further development of regulatory instruments defining the requirements and procedures of coaching and selecting staff for senior positions (e.g. clarifying the national training requirements of tertiary level management training, amendment of legal procedures relating to the selection of governors and managers);
2. developing and disseminating tools for evaluating governance at the level of schools and the local administration;
3. promoting developments directly serving the purpose of developing the management skills of school governors and senior officials in local administration (e.g. developing new training programmes or programme components in the priority areas of educational policy);
4. promoting the organisation of short, non-degree training programmes (1-3 day programmes) for the management of public education institutions in the priority areas of educational policy (e.g. grant applications, managing local conflict with the Roma minority, dissemination of techniques for the local rationalisation of provision);
5. publishing national expertise accumulated in the field of management development and management training in public education and the continuous dissemination of international knowledge from the same field.

#### Measures relating to the schemes:

- Proposals for new legislation and the amendment of existing legislation (Act on Association, Act on Public Education, Act on Regional Development, the implementing decrees thereof and minor sectoral regulations), in particular the review of the Act on Public Education from the perspective of cost-efficiency;
- Technical proposals for the Act on the Central Budget for 2004;
- Initiating an enquiry to be carried out by the State Audit Office to explore the issue of cost-efficiency, participation in the preparatory work and the evaluation of findings;
- Improving the means of collecting and processing statistical data on teacher employment, active participation in events organised by the OECD and the EU on the subject of teacher employment;
- Incorporating a component promoting associations and institutional co-operation into existing programmes (PHARE, KOMA, NFT HER measures, European educational programmes)
- Ensuring the active contribution of the educational sector to the preparation of the reform of public administration and the reform of state finances, if any;
- Accelerating the loading of data into the KIRSTAT database of institutions.

#### **Some important considerations for designing schemes and measure packages:**

- The issue of cost-efficiency should be linked at all times to the improvement of the professional and pedagogical quality and effectiveness of education and the strengthening of a quality and customer-oriented approach to public administration;
- Progress in the fields of cost-efficiency, professional administration and quality of education should be measured with the help of indicators;
- Ensuring an intersectoral approach (education and state finances, public administration/public service, economic development, employment, etc.),
- international comparisons, with the EU in particular, and alignment with indicators characteristic to EU Member States.



