Empowering individuals and communities for long-term social and economic resilience

Adult participation in learning in Hungary exceeds the EU average, with 62.2% of the adult population participating in the previous 12 months. While results are positive, high disparities are observed between different groups. Marginalised groups, such as people with a low level of education, those unemployed or outside the labour force, NEET youth, and ethnic minorities, show significantly lower rates of participation and perform below the EU average on basic skills, according to the PIAAC results. Adult education in Hungary has struggled in recent years to effectively address the needs of those living on the social and economic periphery. And while government programs often set concentrated objectives, their impact on marginalised groups remains limited. The withholding of EU funds exacerbates the situation, as these resources are critical for improving training and employment opportunities.

Initiatives have been launched or will soon be implemented, such as micro-credential training, individual learning accounts piloting and an adult training fund, but more needs to be done to reach those further from learning. Targeted initiatives are necessary, as reaching these groups is often not possible because training programs and support mechanisms fail to consider the cultural and social aspects of local communities, do not address the lack of trust, and often prioritise improving employment statistics.

To address these systemic issues, Mindfluencer considers the need for long-term, locally tailored programs that consider the unique characteristics of communities and actively involve them in decision-making processes.

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Skills dimension

The growing emphasis on skills in European adult learning and education policy reflects a clear aim to address current labour market needs. Upskilling adults for certain key sectors is crucial, but prioritising employability alone overlooks the broader purpose of lifelong learning, which also encompasses social inclusion and personal development.

In Hungary, adults from marginalised groups still face systemic barriers which require more support and outreach. Many disadvantaged groups in Hungary, including NEET youth and ethnic minorities, face deep-rooted structural barriers that cannot be solved through skills-based programs alone, but also require addressing foundational issues. Upskilling initiatives are understandable for IT and engineering, but an overly narrow focus risks excluding marginalised groups and creating disparities between urban and peripheral regions.

As the organisation stated: *A balanced approach is needed, combining skills development with investments in inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities. This would not only meet immediate labour market demands but also empower individuals and communities for long-term social and economic resilience.*

AI in adult learning

The organisation is not using artificial Intelligence (AI) in its internal work or education programmes.

Participation in decision-making

The association actively contributed to supporting political decision-making, particularly in the fields of adult education and employment. Mindfluencer involvement included the following key activities:

- Presentations and Professional Participation at Conferences: Representatives of the Association participated in both national and international conferences, contributing to the professional discourse through presentations and discussions. These presentations highlighted achievements in adult education and shared insights into supporting disadvantaged groups.
- Engagement in the ESREA-ADCAL Process: The Association joined the efforts of ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) and ADCAL (Adult Education and Communities in a Learning Perspective), providing a platform to exchange expertise and collaboratively address challenges. Through ESREA, Mindfluencer supported initiatives aimed at enhancing community learning and fostering social cohesion.
- Grant Applications: The Association submitted multiple grant applications to facilitate decision-making support and implement social interventions. While its proposals received positive recognition internationally, unfortunately, applications for funding in Hungary were rejected, posing significant challenges to financing local projects.

Hungarian member's view on the PIAAC results

The organisation agrees that the PIAAC results accurately reflect the situation in their country. While certain groups excel, significant disparities limit the effectiveness and reach of ALE programs. Hungarian adults with tertiary education consistently demonstrate literacy and numeracy proficiency above the OECD average, showcasing

the strength of higher education in equipping individuals with essential skills. Moreover, proficiency differences across age groups are relatively small, indicating that skill levels are maintained consistently over time.

While some groups perform above the OECD average, adults from marginalised communities, low socio-economic backgrounds, or less educated families continue to face substantial barriers. Limited outreach and insufficient infrastructural support further entrench these inequalities. The organisation stresses that addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring that those furthest from learning can meaningfully participate in adult learning and education (ALE) are essential to building an inclusive and resilient learning system. Although the government has initiated reforms through the VET 4.0 strategy and OECD-supported policies, considerable work remains to be done.

Funding of adult education

According to Mindfluencer, the funding situation of adult education in Hungary has significantly deteriorated in 2024-2025.

Adult education in Hungary is mainly financed via project funding and fees paid by individuals.

Recommendation to the European Commission

In the field of adult learning and education (ALE), Mindfluencer believes the European Union should prioritise inclusivity and sustainability by ensuring direct financial support for grassroots initiatives. A key step would be the establishment of normative or grant-

based funding streams specifically dedicated to adult education and inclusion-focused civil society organisations. Such funding would empower these actors to design and implement programmes tailored to the needs of marginalised groups, including NEET young adults, ethnic minorities, and individuals living in peripheral regions.

The EU should also promote stronger local partnerships between civil society organisations, local authorities, and educational institutions to foster holistic ALE programmes that effectively address socio-economic disparities.

Simplifying access to EU resources is equally essential. Reducing bureaucratic barriers in funding applications would ensure that smaller organisations working directly with undeserved populations can benefit more effectively from available instruments.

Finally, the EU should encourage Member States to embed its priorities within national policies, emphasising long-term strategies that connect ALE with sustainable development, digital transitions, and the green economy. Through these measures, the EU can ensure that ALE becomes a truly transformative force for individuals and communities across Europe.

Disclaimer on the participation in education and training data: the data focuses on formal and non-formal education and training, excluding guided on-the-job training. Participation is higher when on-the-job training is included. Data coming from sources such as OECD and the monitoring framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights may differ from the presented data.