



HUNGARY

INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

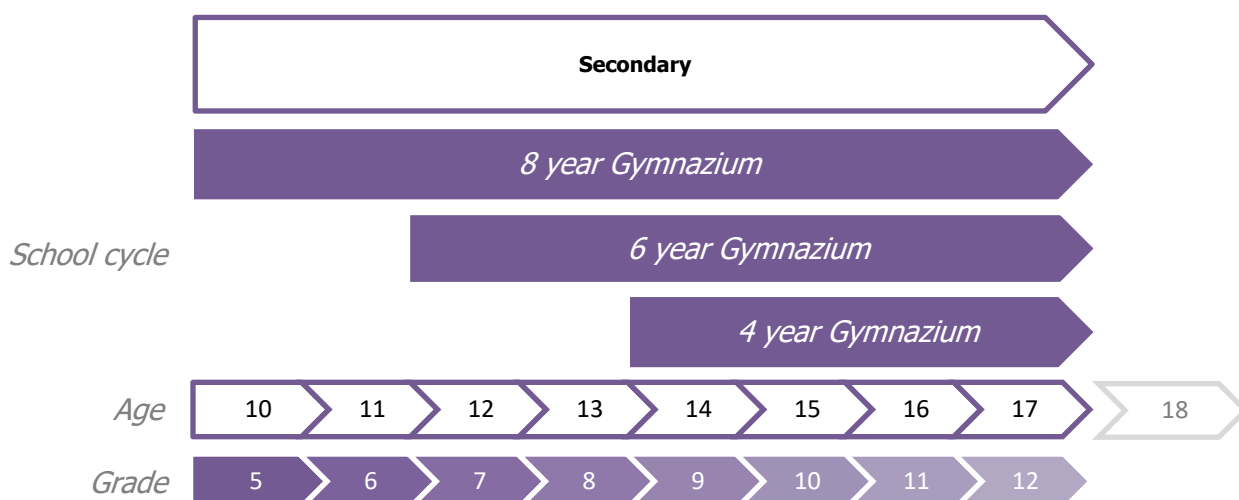
Contents

<u>GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM</u>	2
<u>INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM HUNGARY</u>	3
<u>RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD</u>	3
<u>INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN HUNGARY</u>	5
<u>TESTIMONIAL</u>	6

The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include specificities of different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Upper secondary education is compulsory until the age of 16. General upper secondary education (*Gymnazium*) is a four-year cycle, however since 1991, longer secondary school programmes have been available: an 8-year programme starting at grade 5 and a 6-year programme starting at grade 7. If education is provided in two languages, i.e. in Hungarian and in a foreign language, or in the language of a Hungarian minority, the programme lasts an additional year and finishes in grade 13².

Graduation and Certification

The end-of-school examination to receive the upper secondary school leaving certificate is based on requirements defined in the National Core Curriculum, and it is mostly focused on academic knowledge and skills. The subjects tested are both mandatory (i.e., Hungarian, History, Math, and a foreign language) and optional, and can be taken at intermediate or advanced level³.

The end-of-school examination and the 11th and 12th grade final results are taken into consideration by universities when assessing applications.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

² Hungarian education system, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/hungary_en

³ 100/1997. (VI. 13.) Government Decree, http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=30517

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM HUNGARY

Age and grade

Pupils usually go abroad in the 2nd year of upper secondary school (i.e. 10th grade), when they are 15-16 years old⁴. They usually do not go abroad in the last two years of upper secondary school (i.e. 11th and 12th grade).

Registration in the sending school

As an exchange pupil, you have two options⁵:

- 1) The legal relationship with your sending school is suspended for periods abroad of between 2 months and a full school year. In this case, your parents need to notify the school principal and the school will remove you from the register. You will therefore not be considered as a pupil of your sending school during the learning period abroad. Pupils who choose this option are usually re-admitted to their sending school upon return.
- 2) The legal relationship with your home school is not suspended and parents ask permission from the Educational authority⁶ for the *Egyéni Tanrend* (Individual Study Schedule), i.e. private pupil status⁷. This status allows you to take the end of the year exam upon return but does not provide recognition of the learning period abroad. Usually, pupils choose this option if they study abroad for a full school year, although it is possible to receive the *Egyéni Tanrend* also for shorter periods.

Funding for the sending school

The school budget is based on a "head quota" which does not foresee the exact counting of pupils present in school at a given time. Therefore, whether the relationship between the pupil and school is suspended or not this has no influence on the funding of the school⁸.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to 3 months, 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 3 months and less than 6 months, and for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

⁴ Interview with Programme coordinator, AFS Hungary, 22 September 2020.

⁵ 2011. CX. Public Education Act 91. § (3).

⁶ Educational authority, https://www.oktatas.hu/kepesitesek_elismertetese/english/contact_information?printMode=true

⁷ Statutory decree 1 September 2019, https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/egyeni_tanuloi_munkarend

⁸ Eurydice, National Education systems, Hungary, Mobility in Early Childhood and School Education https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding-35_en

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁹ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

The school has discretion to decide on the recognition of studies abroad¹⁰. Usually, they compare the curriculum abroad with the national one. Based on this, studies abroad are either accepted or you have to take exams to show you fulfil the requirements of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NCC).

Periods of between 2 and 3 months

If you go abroad for a period of maximum 3 months, you will be re-integrated in your class. Pupils usually spend a period abroad between September and December. In this case you return just before the Christmas break and then discuss with your teacher what extra exams you need to take. In fact, as you need to have three different marks for each subject you need to get three different marks before the month of January for the winter semester. The decision on what exams to take very much depends on individual cases and differs from school to school.

Periods of 6 months

If you wish to go abroad for a semester, this will usually coincide with the spring one (i.e. January-June). In this case you either sit an exam before the period abroad or after your return. You can either study the content of the spring semester while attending the winter semester in Hungary, and take an exam on it before departure, or you take an exam on the content of the spring semester on your return. If you are away for the winter semester, you must sit an exam on the subjects of the semester you skipped when you return at the end of January¹¹.

A full school year

If you have suspended your relation with the sending school, upon return the schools can assess whether your knowledge fulfils the requirements of the national curriculum and admit you to the next grade. However, very few subjects are recognised and you are usually required to take an end-of-year exam for all subjects missed.

Pupils going abroad in the 11th and 12th year often choose to repeat the school year¹² as there is too little time to prepare for exams. Since the exams of the last two years of upper secondary school

⁹ within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

¹⁰ Act C of 2001 on the Recognition of Foreign Certificates, section 62,

Derényi, András – Milotay, Nóra – Tót, Éva – Török, Balázs (2007): *A nem formális és informális tanulás elismerése Magyarországon*. [Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Hungary]. Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium. Imre, Anna (2010): Validáció és közoktatás. [Validation in Public Education].

https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/unios_projektek/tamop318/validacio_es_kozoktatás.pdf

¹¹ E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

¹² approximately only 30 % of the exchange pupils enrolled in AFS programmes take the end of the year exam upon return (Interview with Programme coordinator, AFS Hungary, 22 September 2020)

count towards admission to university, pupils prefer to have more time to study in order to ensure obtaining good results¹³.

Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

If you have suspended your relationship with your home school, you can still take the end-of-year exam with your peers upon return, provided the school principal agrees.

If you have been granted *Egyéni Tanrend* (Individual Study Schedule), you must take the end-of-year exams organised by the school to obtain your final marks. In this case there is no recognition of the learning period abroad: therefore, you can study over the summer and take the exams before the start of the next school year, and if successful you can move up to the next grade.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN HUNGARY

Registration in the host school

The school principal and head teachers decide whether to accept exchange pupils and how to enrol them. As a hosted pupil, you are placed in classes on the basis of your age group and your school grade in your home country.

Funding for the host school

The budget of a school is based on the State "head quota", therefore there is no additional support from the State for schools who host pupils from abroad.

Certification for hosted pupils

A pupil from the host school will usually be assigned to be your mentor, and this can be considered part of their compulsory voluntary work¹⁴. The biggest obstacle you will face as a hosted pupil is the Hungarian language of instruction, as this makes it difficult to progress in certain subjects. On leaving the Hungarian school, the school principal will usually provide you with a certificate in English, including the subjects completed and the marks obtained¹⁵.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted exchange pupils can complete upper secondary education in Hungary and pass the end-of-school examination. In this case, pupils usually choose the graduation option in bilingual schools which foresee a mandatory exam on a foreign language (the language of teaching, Hungarian), and on two or more subjects in a foreign language – which is not Hungarian¹⁶. However, this is a rare practice.

¹³

¹⁴ Interview with Head of Szilády Áron Református Gimnázium. (24 August 2020).

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Hungarian as a foreign language matriculation exam

https://dload-oktatas.educatio.hu/erettsegi/nyilvanos_anyagok_2019tavasz/magyar_mint_idegen_nyelv_tajekoztato_2019maj.pdf

TESTIMONIAL

Maja from Hungary: 6 months in Italy

"I started to look at things with more mature and understanding eyes."

Being in an international environment and learning about cultural differences are the reasons why I went on exchange.

I started learning Italian on my own before leaving, and I also prepared mentally for what was coming. Finding out information about my host country was very useful too.

After my arrival I had some problems integrating in the classroom and make friends, but then I decided to focus on the positive side of my exchange, spend time with my host family and friends and travel as much as possible.

Once we went to the mountains with my host family and there were many sheep on a hill, but when I went to caress them, a shepherd started yelling from afar. I thought he was yelling at the sheep, but ten minutes later my host father came to my rescue because the shepherd was yelling at me!

An unrecognised exchange

When I came back from Italy, I had to repeat the school year, so it was easy to catch up with the programme. The major difficulty was coming back earlier because of the pandemic.

All in all, I really enjoyed this experience. I grew a lot both emotionally and mentally and being in contact with another culture allowed me to better understand my own. My advice to future exchange students: the things you will learn will make up for the difficulties you may encounter. Try not to have too many expectations about how it might be and just enjoy it.

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