

7 Education and employment in the Carpathian region

For several decades the ratio of young people with secondary education (ISCED 3 by the nomenclature of International Standard Classification of Education) has been showing an increasing trend in Europe. In the macroregion of our research the ratio of people with ISCED 3 qualification is slightly above the EU15 average. On the employment side there is an obvious correlation between unemployment and education. According to Eurostat data 4% of people with higher education (ISCED 5–6), 7% of people with secondary education and high-level professional qualification (ISCED 3–4), and 11% of people with primary education were unemployed in the EU15 countries. In the newly joined EU member states, including the Carpathian region, these percentage values were higher, particularly in the case of low educated people (CEDEFOP, 2003). To all these we must add that young people and women have lower opportunities for entering the labour market.

Young people are educated in different education and training systems in a diverse institutional framework, therefore their common problems are emerging in various forms. Consequently the management of the same problem may bring different outcomes in different countries.

Rising unemployment is a serious problem especially for young people: in some countries youth unemployment rate may go as high as 40%. However, the Czech Republic and Austria has low rate of youth unemployment (although it is showing a growing tendency in these countries as well). It is low-educated or professionally unskilled people who are the most badly hit by unemployment. East Central Europe including the Carpathian region has a growing tendency of youth unemployment but there are significant differences in this aspect among the member regions of the macro-region.

There are significant differences among the countries as well. In some countries the ratio of students of higher education dropped right after the regime change but it was followed by an increasing tendency. Today it occurs very rarely that a graduate training period is followed by lifelong employment. Actually graduate training is followed by retraining and frequent changes of employment. The countries of East Central Europe are very seriously hit by the problems described here (*Table 16*).

The majority of the unemployed have primary school or vocational school certificate only (in several regions this ratio is about 70%). In general, the education level of females is lower than of males. About two-thirds of rural population have primary school certificate only and this is in sharp contrast with the similar indicators of urban population. A dichotomy between the capital city and the provincial areas can be experienced in all the countries involved in our research. Although the general level of education has increased in long-term perspective the

Table 16

Education level in the Carpathian area (2004)

	Students at ISCED level 3 (GPV) – as % of all students at ISCED level 3 at regional level (approximately equivalent with GCE)	Students at ISCED levels 5–6 – as % of all pupils and students at regional level (approximately equivalent with BSc, MSc and PhD)
<i>Czech Republic</i>	22.41	14.3
Jihovýchod	21.75	17.5
Strední Morava	24.16	10.0
Moravskoslezsko	22.60	12.2
<i>Hungary</i>	23.58	18.2
Central-Hungary	20.97	27.1
Central-Transdanubia	25.08	12.7
West-Transdanubia	25.50	14.9
North-Hungary	23.18	14.9
Northern Great Plain	24.63	12.6
Southern Great Plain	25.59	15.7
<i>Austria</i>	22.76	14.3
Burgenland	25.45	2.9
Niederösterreich	23.39	2.4
Wien	18.12	33.0
<i>Poland</i>	21.74	20.8
Małopolskie	20.83	22.1
Śląskie	22.56	19.0
Podkarpackie	23.21	14.5
Świętokrzyskie	23.59	20.5
<i>Romania</i>	23.67	15.1
Nord-Est (SRE 2002)	22.81	10.7
Sud-Est (SRE 2002)	25.53	9.1
Sud (SRE 2002)	25.44	6.9
Sud-Vest (SRE 2002)	24.94	9.3
Vest (SRE 2002)	23.08	19.2
Nord-Vest (SRE 2002)	22.66	16.5
Centru (SRE 2002)	23.72	13.3
Bucureşti (SRE 2002)	21.69	38.7
<i>Slovakia</i>	24.93	13.1
Bratislavský kraj	22.30	31.8
Západné Slovensko	26.11	10.4
Stredné Slovensko	25.61	11.4
Východné Slovensko	22.41	8.8

Source: Eurostat.

difference between urban and rural areas has decreased only slightly and the differences within rural areas have remained significant. In areas with low education level there is an increasing threat of segregation. There are some microregions with very poor knowledge base in North-Hungary, in the peripheral areas of Romania, especially in the southern regions and in the border zones between Romania–Ukraine and Romania–Serbia.

For evaluating the macroregion's overall qualification level even using ISCED indices it is very difficult to carry out a comparative analysis by countries: they are very strongly determined by the overall level of the education system and some of its elements: the training demand and supply in a country and the customs and habits associated with them.

The ratio of people with secondary education (ISCED 3) (GCE) is by far exceeding the macroregion's average in Hungary. In Hungary GCE certificate is not recognised as professional certificate: it is nothing more than a prerequisite of higher education. It should also be mentioned here that in the EU the ratio of pupils visiting secondary vocational schools is higher than of grammar school students (54% and 46%). This shift between the types of secondary-level education may even be higher in certain countries of the macroregion – Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – with 1/3–2/3 in favour of professional training, which is quite contrary to the practice of the southern EU states where 2/3 of the total pupils are visiting grammar schools and only 1/3 are studying at vocational schools.