

# Evaluation practices assessing the impacts of initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – HUNGARY

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**2022**

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT ‘LOST  
MILLENNIALS – TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH  
NETWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES  
TARGETING 25+ NEETS’

*Please cite as: Bördős, K. (2022) Evaluation practices assessing the impacts of initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs. Country Report – Hungary. HÉTFA Research Institute. Lost Millennials – Transnational Research Network for the Evaluation of Initiatives Targeting 25+ NEETs. Available at <https://lostmillennials.eu>*

**Project summary:**

*The project 'Lost Millennials' focuses on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 neither in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and well-being, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the successful integration of 25+ NEETs to the labour market through increasing knowledge on the effects of employment initiatives on 25+ NEETs, building capacity of stakeholders to perform impact studies and thus improving the quality of labour market interventions. This objective will be achieved through the creation of the transnational research network which will share know-how and good practices, the evaluations of governmental and community-based initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, as well as the engagement of stakeholders to increase the policy-relevance of project results.*

For more information, please visit our [website](#), contact us on [lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu](mailto:lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu) and follow our social media ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#)).

*The Lost Millennials project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment.*

**Implemented by:**



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## 1. Introduction

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In the fields of employment policy and active labour market programmes (ALMPs), evidence-based policy making is a straightforward choice. Rather than delivering random measures and programmes to the populations of interest (may it be employers, jobseekers, workers or even those outside the labour market) in an ad-hoc way, decisions on eligibility rules, the contents or the design of the programmes – as well as institutional arrangements such as the way of implementation or funding – should be made according to ‘what works for whom and how’. This means that the application of evidence-based policy making calls for rigorous evaluations of previous programmes: therefore, an appropriate employment policy must be built on the lessons of ample evaluations.

Being part of the Lost Millennials project, this country report aims attention at the evidence on the situation of 25+ NEETs in Hungary; in particular, we focus on previous evaluation studies that have been prepared on the subject. In Section 2, we summarise the evaluations found; in Section 3, we give a brief review on the characteristics of these studies, such as the methodology used, and synthesise the main findings and recommendations; finally, in Section 4, we give a rundown and conclude.

For the mapping of relevant evaluations in Hungary, we carried out an extensive desk research and relied on various Internet sources, including:

- the webpages of various research institutes in Hungary that regularly conduct research projects in the field of social sciences, including evaluations on employment programmes;
- the governmental webpage <https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/rtkelsi-tanulmnyok>, which publishes all state-commissioned evaluations regarding EU-funded development programmes; and
- a Google search using relevant keywords (e.g., ‘employment programme’ + ‘evaluation’ + ‘Hungary’ in both English and in Hungarian).

We also relied on our professional and personal network to identify relevant evaluations that are not accessible online.

In our final list of evaluations, we included all papers which were evaluations (i.e., more than just simple descriptions) of employment programmes that at least partially targeted (or not excluded) 25+ NEETs in Hungary<sup>1</sup>. We concentrated on evaluations prepared between 2007 and 2022.

## 2. General information of evaluation practices

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During our research, we have identified a total of 13 papers that could be considered as evaluations of employment programmes potentially affecting 25+ NEETs in Hungary. These are listed in Table 1. Most of them (9) were written in Hungarian, 4 were written in English. Two of these papers are not available online; the authors provided us with the drafts upon request.

Many of the papers have been prepared by research institutes specialised in evaluation of employment or social inclusion programmes, or authors associated with these institutes: 4 have been written by colleagues at HÉTFA, 3 by Budapest Institute, and 2 by Kopint-TÁRKI. Strategopolis and Századvég (two consultancy firms for public sector services) as well as BCG (donor for the initiative under evaluation) and the Central European University each prepared one evaluation paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Considering the programmes, we used the same definition as in Hungary's country report on the mapping of initiatives (Bördös et al., 2022). That is, we included evaluations of all programmes which

- were implemented between 2007 and 2020 (including ongoing programmes in 2020), and
- indicated that improving the labour market situation of participants was one of its goals, and
- targeted persons who were out of job, and
- did not specifically exclude persons in the 25-29 age category (e.g., by setting an upper age limit for participation at 25 years, or a lower age limit of, say, 50 years).

Table 1. Overview of evaluations found in Hungary

Paper	Original title	Title in English	Programme/initiative discussed	Period of evaluation	Link
<b>Adamecz, Bördős, et al. (2013)<sup>2</sup></b>	Foglalkoztathatóságot javító beavatkozások célcsoport- és hatásvizsgálata	Evaluating the impacts and targeting of labour market programmes	TÁMOP 1.1.1, TÁMOP 1.1.2, TÁMOP 1.1.3, TÁMOP 1.2.1, TÁMOP 2.1.1	2009-2013	<a href="http://www.budapestinstitute.eu/uploads/BI_TAMOP_ert_ekeles.pdf">http://www.budapestinstitute.eu/uploads/BI_TAMOP_ert_ekeles.pdf</a>
<b>Adamecz, Czafit, et al. (2013)</b>	Roma Inclusion and Impact Evaluation of Two Mainstream EU-Funded Active Labour Market Programmes		TÁMOP 1.1.2, TÁMOP 2.2.1	2007-2012	<a href="http://budapestinstitute.eu/uploads/OSI_eval_20131018.pdf">http://budapestinstitute.eu/uploads/OSI_eval_20131018.pdf</a>
<b>Adamecz-Völgyi, Csillag, and Scharle (2018)</b>	Might Training Programmes Ease Labour Shortage? The Targeting and Effectiveness of Training Programmes Organised or Financed by Local Employment Offices of the Hungarian Public Employment Service		trainings offered in various ALMPs	2010-2014	<a href="https://kti.krtk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/54.pdf">https://kti.krtk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/54.pdf</a>
<b>Strategopolis (2018)</b>	Aktív munkaerőpiaci eszközök eredményességének értékelése - Hatásosság, eredmények, javítási lehetőségek: Nemzetközi szakirodalom, hazai eszközök hatásvizsgálata és a rendszer értékelése alapján	Evaluating the effectiveness of ALMPs – Impacts, results, room for improvement: based on international evidence, the impact assessment of Hungarian measures and analysis of the employment policy	measures (trainings and wage subsidies) offered in various ALMPs	2009-2017	not accessible online
<b>Equinox and HÉTFA (2021)</b>	Társadalmi célú vállalkozásokat	Evaluation of programmes supporting social enterprises	programmes supporting social enterprises/social cooperatives (TÁMOP 2.4.3,	2007-2020	<a href="https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/a-trsadalmi-cl-vllalkozsokat-tmogat-intzkedsek-rtkelse">https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/a-trsadalmi-cl-vllalkozsokat-tmogat-intzkedsek-rtkelse</a>

<sup>2</sup> A journal article in English on the evaluation of the TÁMOP 1.1.1 – written by the same authors and using the same methodology and data – was later published in the Scandinavian Journal of Public Health (Adamecz-Völgyi et al. 2018).

	támogató intézkedések értékelése		1.4.3, GINOP 5.1.3, 5.1.7, EFOP 1.11.1, Focus Programme)		
<b>Messing and Árendás (2019)</b>	Report on the impact of Bridge to Business programme on participating Roma youth		HRom (Bridge to Business)	2017-2019	<a href="https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/project/2599/b2b-participant-report-full-final.pdf">https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/project/2599/b2b-participant-report-full-final.pdf</a>
<b>Nagy and Hárs (2021)</b>	A munkaerő-piaci integrációt támogató konstrukciók értékelése	Assessing measures aiming at supporting labour market integration	various EDIOP/GINOP and TSDOP/TOP programmes during the 2014-2020 programming period (GINOP 5.1.1, 5.1.5, 5.2.1 [Youth Guarantee], TOP 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 6.8.2	2014-2020	<a href="https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/a-munkaer-piaci-integracit-mogat-konstrukcik-rtkelse#">https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/a-munkaer-piaci-integracit-mogat-konstrukcik-rtkelse#</a>
<b>KOPINT-TÁRKI (2020)</b>	A Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia (MNTFS) érvényesülésének értékelése	Evaluating the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS)	various programmes that are backed up by the HNSIS: e.g., EFOP 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.11.1; GINOP 5.1.1, 5.2.1 etc.)	2014-2020	<a href="https://tamogatoweb.hu/letoltes2021/mntfs_ertekeles_kopint_v.pdf">https://tamogatoweb.hu/letoltes2021/mntfs_ertekeles_kopint_v.pdf</a>
<b>Koltai et al. (2018)</b>	A közfoglalkoztatás hatása a helyi gazdaságra, helyi társadalomra	Impacts of public works programmes on the local economy and society	public works programmes	2018	<a href="https://kozfoglalkoztatatas.kormany.hu/download/f/fc/42000/BM_k%C3%B6zfoglalkoztat%C3%A1s_Tanulm%C3%A1ny_20180928-merged.pdf">https://kozfoglalkoztatatas.kormany.hu/download/f/fc/42000/BM_k%C3%B6zfoglalkoztat%C3%A1s_Tanulm%C3%A1ny_20180928-merged.pdf</a>
<b>HÉTFA and Revita (2013)</b>	Foglalkoztathatóság javítását szolgáló intézkedések értékelése	Evaluating initiatives aiming at improving employability	ALMPs financed under priority axes 1 & 2 of TÁMOP/SIOP	2007-2013	<a href="https://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Foglalkoztathat%C3%B3s%C3%A1g-jav%C3%ADt%C3%A1s%C3%A1t-szolg%C3%A1l%C3%B3-int%C3%A9zked%C3%A9sek-%C3%A9rt%C3%A9kel%C3%A9se-I.pdf">https://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Foglalkoztathat%C3%B3s%C3%A1g-jav%C3%ADt%C3%A1s%C3%A1t-szolg%C3%A1l%C3%B3-int%C3%A9zked%C3%A9sek-%C3%A9rt%C3%A9kel%C3%A9se-I.pdf</a>

## Lost Millennials

<b>Szabó-Morvai (2016)</b>	Nő az esély - A TÁMOP 5.3.1-B program értékelése és hatásvizsgálat	Growing / Women's Opportunities – evaluating the SIOP 5.3.1-B programme	Growing / Women's Opportunities – TÁMOP/SIOP 5.3.1-B	2016	not accessible online
<b>Százdvég (2016)</b>	A foglalkoztathatóság javításához és a szociális gazdasághoz kapcsolódó intézkedések ex post értékelése	Ex post evaluation of interventions aiming at improving employability and the social economy	Employment programmes in the framework of the TÁMOP priority axes 1, 2 and 5 (e.g.: TÁMOP 1.1.2, 1.4.6, 5.3.1)	2007-2013	<a href="https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/trsadm-megjuls-s-infrastruktra-expost-rtkelsek#">https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/trsadm-megjuls-s-infrastruktra-expost-rtkelsek#</a>
<b>BCG (2015)</b>	Integrom Program - Breaking Barriers to The Labor Market		Integrom	2015	<a href="https://inclusive.growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/movingdevelopment/files/laszlo_juhasz_integrom_program_68.pdf">https://inclusive.growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/movingdevelopment/files/laszlo_juhasz_integrom_program_68.pdf</a>

Source: authors.



Most active labour market programmes in Hungary are delivered within the EU cohesion policy framework; i.e., they are parts of the operational programmes (OP) prepared for the 7-year programming periods (see Bördős et al., 2022). For this reason, most evaluations address EU-funded programmes, and many of them have been prepared according to the Evaluation Plan set up by the managing authority; these evaluations were commissioned by the Ministries responsible for a given OP. For the **2007-2013 programming period**, *HÉTFA and Revita (2013)* did a qualitative evaluation of active labour market programmes that have been implemented under priority axes 1 and 2 of the Social Infrastructure Operational Programme (SIOP/TÁMOP), while *Adamecz, Bördős, et al. (2013)* carried out a quantitative (counterfactual) impact evaluation of five ALMPs out of these programmes. Both of these evaluations were commissioned by the National Development Agency (body responsible for the allocation of EU funds at that time) during 2012-2013. Another ex-post evaluation was conducted later in 2016 by *Századvég (2016)* on the same topic, commissioned by the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office (current body responsible for the coordination of EU funds). In all three evaluations, the ALMPs under assessment targeted various groups (for example, some of them targeted the disabled, others those with a low level of educational attainment, and some targeted disadvantaged jobseekers in general). Although neither of these programmes targeted (25+) NEETs exclusively, youth aged 25-29 participated in them in vast numbers.

Concerning the **2014-2020 planning period**, *Nagy and Hárs (2021)* evaluated the interventions that aimed to support the EU's Thematic Objectives concerning employment: these labour market programmes have been delivered under priority axes 5 and 6 of the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme (EDIOP/GINOP). This evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Technology and Innovation (managing authority for the GINOP programmes). Another evaluation was made by *KOPINT-TÁRKI (2020)* on the effectiveness of programmes that were implemented based on the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS)<sup>3</sup> during 2014-2020. Among the interventions evaluated, some of them (e.g., the HRDOP/EFOP 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.11.1 or the EDIOP/GINOP 5.1.1 and 5.2.1 programmes) were ALMPs that targeted disadvantaged jobseekers and inactive people, and the target groups of these programmes had significantly overlapped with 25+ NEETs.

There have been **other government-mandated evaluations** of EU-funded programmes: *Equinox and HÉTFA (2021)* evaluated programmes supporting social enterprises and cooperatives between 2007 and 2020 (including the SIOP/TÁMOP 2.4.3, 1.4.3, EDIOP/GINOP 5.1.3, 5.1.7, HRDOP/EFOP 1.11.1 or the Focus Programme), contracted by the Ministry for Innovation and Technology; *Koltai and colleagues*

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<sup>3</sup> The HNSIS is the official Roma strategy of Hungary; it also fits into the EU Roma framework strategy for 2020-2030. The main goals of the HNSIS are to alleviate poverty and to promote social inclusion of Roma people. The HNSIS stresses that a special attention should be paid to NEETs, and an explicit goal of the strategy is to decrease the outstandingly high NEET rates among Roma.

(2018) investigated public works schemes<sup>4</sup> in 2018 at the request of the Ministry of Interior (responsible for public works schemes). Szabó-Morvai (2016) did an assessment on the first phase of the Growing / Women's Chances programme (SIOP/TÁMOP 5.3.1-B) in 2016, commissioned by the Türr István Institute for Training and Research (a governmental background institution responsible for the implementation of the programme). Finally, *Strategopolis* (2018) carried out an evaluation of various training and wage subsidy measures between 2009 and 2017: these measures have been implemented under different programmes (mostly TÁMOP/SIOP or GINOP/EDIOP programmes). The client was the Ministry of National Economy.

The rest of the evaluation studies identified were **not commissioned by public bodies**. The evaluation made by *Adamecz, Czafit, et al. (2013)* was very similar to that of *Adamecz, Bördős, et al. (2013)* in terms of methodology, data used and period observed; however, the former study was funded by an NGO and focused especially on Roma participants in the SIOP/TÁMOP 1.1.2 and 2.2.1 programmes. *Adamecz-Völgyi, Csillag, and Scharle (2018)* – similarly to *Strategopolis (2018)* but covering a somewhat shorter time period between 2010 and 2014 – had a look at various trainings regardless of the programme under which they were delivered; considering the time period, the majority of these programmes must have been delivered under the SIOP/TÁMOP. Finally, we have found two studies that evaluated programmes not financed via EU-funds: both of these programmes were implemented by an NGO called *Autonomia Foundation*. The report prepared by *BCG (2015)* was an internal evaluation of the *Integrom* initiative (the *Boston Consulting Group* took part in the implementation of the initiative), and the paper written by *Messing and Árendás (2019)* (affiliated with the *Central European University*, which took part in the implementation of the programme) was about the *HRom / Bridge to Business* initiative.

### 3. Characteristics of evaluation practices

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The evaluations identified can be characterised based on their type (ex-ante/mid-term/ex-post), the methodology used, the form of evaluation (internal/external/combined), and the final assessment on their success. Generally, it can be said that evaluations of ALMPs in Hungary are mostly carried out after a programme has completed (ex post) – 10 of the 13 evaluations identified –, and the rest were mid-term evaluations (3 in total). Out of the 13 evaluations, 6 were counterfactual impact evaluations using either only quantitative or mixed methods, while among the others, 2 applied mixed methods and 5 were qualitative evaluations. As described above, most evaluations were prepared by external research

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<sup>4</sup> Public works schemes are basically the only large-scale programmes that are not funded by EU grants; they are financed from the national budget.

institutes, with the exception of the two NGO-implemented initiatives where partners involved in the implementation of the programmes were also responsible for the evaluation.

The sub-chapters below provide details on these characteristics of the evaluations.

### 3.1 Methodology of evaluation practices

**Counterfactual impact evaluations** (CIEs) – studies that try to identify causal impacts of a programme by comparing the outcomes of programme participants (‘treatment group’) to a hypothetical state which would have occurred had the intervention not taken place (represented by a suitable ‘control group’) – are gaining more and more ground in the literature on ALMPs. Contrary to this, there have been few studies in Hungary that used this kind of approach: out of the 13 studies identified, only 6 were CIEs (see Table 2); in 2 out of these papers, CIE was only part of the evaluation and the counterfactual approach was complemented by other methods, such as interviews or other forms of data analysis. All of these CIEs used quasi-experimental methods (mainly matching techniques); none of the studies were randomised-controlled trials (RCTs). The control group consisted of jobseekers (or social enterprises in the case of Equinox and HÉTFA, 2021) who did not participate in the given programme but were similar to participants in terms of observable characteristics. With the exception of Messing and Árendás (2019) – which relied on survey data from primary research – , all of these studies used microdata derived from administrative sources: mainly, the unemployment registry of the National Employment Services, linked with official employment records of the tax authority; in the case of social entrepreneurship programmes, the database used was from firm-level balance sheets and profit-and-loss accounts. In all evaluation papers, the administrative data covered 100% of the treated (participant) units.

The papers that were not CIEs relied mostly on qualitative research techniques: mainly, **interviews with experts and/or implementors**, and **questionnaires conducted among programme participants or employers**. The number of interviews or the sample size of the surveys were usually not reported in the studies. The interviews and surveys were usually augmented by **basic descriptive analysis of monitoring data** (to assess financial progress of the programmes), and/or regional or aggregated programme **data**. One study also used focus groups (Koltai et al. 2018) and another conducted mystery shopping<sup>5</sup> (HÉTFA and Revita 2013). Overall, interviews and basic analysis of aggregated data seem to be the most popular methods of evaluation.

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<sup>5</sup> The method of mystery shopping was applied by searching specific keywords online to assess the level of visibility of NGOs offering employment services for vulnerable jobseekers.

Table 2. Methods used in the evaluation studies

Paper	Programme/initiative discussed	Type of evaluation	Main methods used
(Adamecz, Bördős, et al. 2013)	TÁMOP 1.1.1, TÁMOP 1.1.2, TÁMOP 1.1.3, TÁMOP 1.2.1, TÁMOP 2.1.1	counterfactual impact evaluation	propensity score matching
(Adamecz, Czafit, et al. 2013)	TÁMOP 1.1.2, TÁMOP 2.2.1	counterfactual impact evaluation	propensity score matching
(Adamecz-Völgyi, Csillag, and Scharle 2018)	trainings offered in various ALMPs	counterfactual impact evaluation	propensity score matching
(Strategopolis 2018)	measures (trainings and wage subsidies) offered in various ALMPs	counterfactual impact evaluation + qualitative analysis	propensity score matching, interviews
(Equinox and HÉTFA 2021)	programmes supporting social enterprises/social cooperatives (TÁMOP 2.4.3, 1.4.3, GINOP 5.1.3, 5.1.7, EFOP 1.11.1, Focus Programme)	counterfactual impact evaluation + qualitative analysis	propensity score matching & difference-in-differences; online survey among firms, interviews, descriptive analysis of administrative data
(Messing and Árendás 2019)	HRom (Bridge to Business)	counterfactual impact evaluation	matching
(Nagy and Hárs 2021)	various EDIOP/GINOP and TSDOP/TOP programmes during the 2014-2020 programming period (GINOP 5.1.1, 5.1.5, 5.2.1 [Youth Guarantee], TOP 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 6.8.2)	qualitative & quantitative	interviews, online survey among employers, descriptive analysis of monitoring data
(KOPINT-TÁRKI 2020)	various programmes that are backed up by the HNSIS: e.g., EFOP 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.11.1; GINOP 5.1.1, 5.2.1 etc.)	qualitative & quantitative	interviews, online survey among beneficiaries, descriptive analysis of monitoring data
(Koltai et al. 2018)	public works programmes	qualitative & quantitative	interviews, focus groups, survey among citizens, descriptive analysis of regional data
(HÉTFA and Revita 2013)	ALMPs financed under priority axes 1 & 2 of TÁMOP/SIOP	qualitative	online survey among beneficiaries, interviews, mystery shopping
(Szabó-Morvai 2016)	Growing / Women's Opportunities – TÁMOP/SIOP 5.3.1-B	qualitative & quantitative	case studies, survey among participants, descriptive analysis of regional data

<b>(Századvég 2016)</b>	Employment programmes in the framework of the TÁMOP priority axes 1, 2 and 5 (e.g., TÁMOP 1.1.2, 1.4.6, 5.3.1)	qualitative	interviews, basic descriptive analysis of aggregated data
<b>(BCG 2015)</b>	Integrom	qualitative	case studies, basic descriptive analysis of programme data

Source: authors.

### 3.2 Types of evaluations and their results

With the exceptions of BCG (2015) and Messing and Árendás (2019), all the evaluations we have collected were external ones (that is, the evaluations had been prepared by independent institutions specialised in research and evaluation). This does not necessarily mean that no internal evaluations are done in Hungary by programme implementors; it implies that **internal evaluations are not publicly available online**.

Most evaluations that addressed the EU-funded, large-scale ALMPs implemented by the National Employment Service have come to similar conclusions. Those that applied a counterfactual impact evaluation approach have estimated **relatively large impacts of training and wage subsidy measures**, although all of these studies underlined that **selection** caused by cream-skimming made it difficult to identify unbiased impacts. The problem of **cream-skimming** is not only relevant when making causal estimates: it also makes the targeting of employment programmes less efficient and less equitable. Almost all evaluations highlight the fact that jobseekers with a relatively less disadvantaged background – e.g., having been unemployed for a shorter period, having more work experience, having a higher level of educational attainment, living in less disadvantaged settlements, those with a better health condition, being more motivated or having a higher level of skills – are more likely to participate in ALMPs; on the other hand, the most vulnerable jobseekers who would need help the most are often left out of such programmes. This occurs despite the fact that most ALMPs in Hungary are explicitly labelled as targeting ‘disadvantaged’ jobseekers. Related to the problem of creaming, in the case of wage subsidies, most evaluations agree that there is a very high level of **deadweight** present: this means that the majority of those who receive wage subsidies would have been most likely hired without the subsidy anyway. **In spite of these drawbacks, most trainings and wage subsidies seem to be beneficial for participants**, according to the evaluations.

Further general findings and recommendations underlined in more than one evaluations were the following:

- Targeting of the programmes should be limited to those actually in need.

- The synergy and complexity (the combination of different services and measures) of the so-called ‘complex programmes’ are not always ensured. The combination of measures and service delivery should be tailor-made to the needs of the given jobseeker.
- Training programmes targeting disadvantaged jobseekers – especially those with the lowest level of educational attainment (at most elementary level) – generally yield larger positive results, and should be continued in the future. However, evaluations also emphasise the importance of a rigorous quality control in case of trainings.
- The choice on the palette of trainings is not always driven by the demand of the local labour market; instead, they are often selected based on the interests and capacities of local training providers. The institutional arrangements and the incentive system of training providers and the public employment services should be reconsidered.
- Employment services should be given more emphasis in complex ALMPs. More services should be provided for jobseekers in-house (within the public employment services).
- ALMP-funding from the national budget had become basically non-existent, as all programmes and initiatives are now funded by the EU (ESF/YEI/ERDF). This can be a threat to the sustainability of the programmes in the long run.
- Coordination and cooperation between employment policy and other related fields of policy (e.g., education, health, housing, social policy) would be crucial. However, with different ministries, departments or institutions being responsible for these different fields (and often the lack of clarity on the responsibilities), this coordination is hindered. Coordination with social policy and service integration would be most pivotal in the case of vulnerable jobseekers with multiple sources of disadvantage.
- Conducting RCTs for pilot programmes would help the counterfactual evaluation of measures and would give the policymakers a clear picture on ‘what works for whom’. During the extension of pilot programmes to large-scale interventions, the results of previous evaluations should be considered.

## 4. Conclusions

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During our research on existing evaluations of Hungarian employment programmes potentially affecting 25+ NEETs, we have identified a total of 13 papers prepared between 2007 and 2022. As neither of the ALMPs under assessment directly focused on 25+ NEETs (or NEETs in general), the evaluations in question also considered larger populations. It is also important to consider however, that the category of NEETs (and youth in general) has just started to be broadened to include those above 25 years in

Hungary, which means that programmes and evaluations are expected to cover this group more in the coming years.

With the exception of three papers, all of the evaluations examined large-scale, EU-funded programmes. This reflects that almost all active labour market programmes in Hungary are financed by EU funds (most notably the ESF), and – excluding public works schemes – there have been basically no ALMPs funded by the national budget in Hungary in the examined period. As it is mandatory to do an evaluation of ESF-funded programmes, it explains the abundance of evaluations on such programmes; we have to note, though, that there are more evaluations commissioned by the managing authorities than the absolute minimum number needed for fulfilling this requirement.

Small-scale initiatives implemented by non-governmental actors were hard to identify during our previous research (see Bördős et al, 2022), and we could only find two examples for evaluations of such programmes. Both initiatives were implemented by the same NGO, and the evaluations have been conducted by partner institutions.

All evaluations of publicly implemented programmes were done by external evaluators. This does not necessarily mean that no internal evaluations are done in Hungary by programme implementors; it implies that internal evaluations are not publicly available online.

Considering the methodology, most evaluations relied on qualitative techniques: expert interviews, interviews with implementors, basic analysis of aggregated programme data (mainly two-way tables and simple graphic analysis, such as pie or column charts), and surveys among participants or employers were the most commonly applied methods. Counterfactual impact evaluations took up less than half of the evaluations, and most of these studies applied matching techniques (mainly, a combination of propensity score matching and direct matching). These evaluations capitalised on a rich set of microdata derived from administrative sources: data from the unemployment registry (maintained by the public employment services) were linked with data from official employment records, using the (anonymised) social security number of the jobseekers. This possibility for linking microdata from multiple administrative sources creates an excellent opportunity for evaluation research; however, this opportunity seems to be underutilised, judging from the low number of CIEs (or other studies analysing microdata) relative to the number of ALMPs for which this high-quality data would be available.

Even though randomised-controlled trials are considered to provide the most reliable source of evidence for policy-making, no programmes designed as RCTs were identified in Bördős et al 2022. Therefore, evaluations could not exploit the advantages that well-designed RCTs could potentially bear (namely, unbiased estimates on the programme effects).

It is not clear how much policy-making has relied and built on the results and recommendations of existing evaluations, or how much the designing of new programmes has taken into considerations the experiences with similar previous programmes. It is to be noted, however, that some of the criticism and recommendations have been echoed in multiple evaluation studies over the last 15 years of research.



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