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## Youth and National Defence in Hungary

## Ifjúság és honvédelem Magyarországon

**Abstract**

*Patriotic education has always had a determining role in the relations between society and defence. All historical eras used to have the specialities which determined the content of this field. The effectiveness and efficiency of patriotic education nowadays is as important if not more than in the past. The paper highlights the importance, background and aims of a strategy of patriotic education waiting for development.*

*Key words: patriotic education, strategy, conscious citizen*

**Absztrakt**

*A társadalom és a honvédelem kapcsolatrendszerében mindig meghatározó szerepe volt a hazafias és a honvédelmi nevelésnek. Minden történelmi kornak megvoltak azok a berendezkedési sajátosságai, amelyek alapvetően meghatározták ezeknek a szakterületeknek a tartalmát, ugyanakkor a nevelési tevékenység hatásossága és eredményessége talán soha nem volt annyira fontos, mint napjainkban. A tanulmány rávilágít egy kidolgozásra váró honvédelmi nevelési stratégia szükségességére, hátterére és céljaira.*

*Kulcsszavak: hazafias nevelés, honvédelmi nevelés, stratégia, tudatos állampolgár*

## INTRODUCTION

During the period of more than a quarter century since the regime change in Hungary numerous pivotal changes have happened in the field of national security and national defence. The formation of a new geopolitical and security environment after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Hungary's join to NATO and later to EU, the suspension of

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conscription from 2004 and the transformation to an all-volunteer based professional military are among the most important cornerstones of the process.

Beyond these historical events many significant changes have become part of our everyday life: the large-scale spread of computers and the expansion of cyber space, the increased possibilities of mobility, the positive and negative sides of globalization have been having an impact on the members of the society, our nation's citizens.

The father of anthropology, Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski says that the most important institutions of a society are in harmony with the primary (biological) needs of humans so their importance depends on the value from the point of view of survival.<sup>2</sup> Taking this statement into consideration it is not surprising that as a result of the transposing of emphasis among security challenges after the system change in Hungary the importance of defence affairs and military was taken to the background to the members of the society.

Compared the former classical perception of war threat and the current sense of security it is clear that the latter is also relative. The new security challenges make the existing security and defence systems be reconsidered from time to time. Beyond the re-definition of size and power of armed forces it is a huge task to provide an aftergrowth and reserves to the armed forces and to enhance the national self-defence ability in general because of the changes and consequences of the past fourteen years.

From this perspective the content of the 31<sup>st</sup> article of The Fundamental Law of Hungary' becomes specially emphatic. It says that 'all Hungarian citizens shall be obliged to defend the country'.<sup>3</sup> It means that national defence is a common affair and we all have a role and tasks in it.

When it comes to the realization of the roles and tasks in the field of national defence it is important to clear up the essential question: who, how and with what kind of means is responsible for making citizens be able to fulfill their obligations determined by the Fundamental Law of Hungary.

## LEGAL BACKGROUND

National defence and patriotic education are included in many laws so we can answer the above mentioned question with their comparison. According to the Act CXIII of 2011 on national defence and the Hungarian Defence Forces as well as on regulations that may be adopted in times of public emergency and armed conflicts "the preparation for tasks of national defence is based on a voluntary pledge in peacetime to which the state provides – especially in the framework of patriotic education – the organized conditions of acquiring the necessary preparatory knowledge". Paragraph 21 expresses even more concretely when saying that 'the Government, in order to ensure Hungary's preparation for defence,

<sup>2</sup> Cites Harai Dénes: A katona antropológiája. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2014. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The Fundamental Law of Hungary.

[www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf](http://www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf)  
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provides the implementation of patriotic educational programme in the framework of public and higher education.<sup>4</sup>

Referring to the above mentioned acts it is clear that the state organization, within that the government in power is in charge of the citizens' preparation for tasks of national defence.

Going on with that thread, according to the task sharing within the government<sup>5</sup> the minister of defence as a member of the government is responsible for the national defence and the minister of human capacities – beyond his other tasks – is in charge of education. Therefore it is clearly seen that the field of patriotic education concerns two ministries at the moment, one of them from the point of view of defence and the other one is of education. Beyond the above mentioned laws the expression 'patriotic education of the growing generation' appears in the preamble of the law on public education as well which also emphasises the role and responsibility of the minister of human capacities.

When it comes to patriotic education, there are some conceptional debates about its content and its levels. In the Hungarian language we have two expressions to differentiate the levels but sometimes they are mixed notwithstanding that their contents are clearly different from each other.

## CONCEPT OF PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

To use the conceptual framework in a right way, it is necessary to clear up the content of the concept of patriot, national defence and patriotic education and their relationships with each other.

According to The Explanatory Dictionary of the Hungarian Language a patriot is a person who loves his or her motherland and selflessly acts for it.<sup>6</sup> Patriotism therefore is an acting which is consciously formed and free-will in whose centre the homeland and love towards its values stand.

Based on the conceptual definition national defence is the defence of homeland, from another point of view it is a national organization dedicated to the defence of homeland (including armed forces, institutions, equipment, etc.) and the official activity of its management.<sup>7</sup> It is apparent that the individual, the person is not emphasized in the definition, it rather focuses on the organizational, formal framework which in the period of conscription could really overshadow the significance of citizens' commitment. With the transformation to all-volunteer defence forces the task, namely the defence of homeland did not change

<sup>4</sup> 2011. évi CXIII. törvény a honvédelemről és a Magyar Honvédségről, valamint a különleges jogrendben bevezethető intézkedésekről. [https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1100113.TV](https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100113.TV) (Download: 10. 12. 2017)

<sup>5</sup> 152/2014. (VI. 6.) Korm. rendelet a Kormány tagjainak feladat és hatásköréről.

[https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1400152.KOR](https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1400152.KOR) (Download: 12. 12. 2017)

<sup>6</sup> Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2014. 505.

<sup>7</sup> A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára. <http://mek.oszk.hu/adatbazis/magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara/kereses.php?kereses=honv%C3%A9delem> (Download: 05.10. 2017)

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but in its guarantee the citizens' attitude, their willingness of taking military service of which formation is already a question of education.

Taking into consideration the aboves it seems subservient to broaden the definition of national defence as follows: national defence is a complex, interdependent system which is formed by the national organization, dedicated to the defence of homeland, the official activity of its management and the social self-defence capability based on citizens' commitment.

The Hungarian Pedagogical Encyclopaedia (HPE), printed in 1997 gives a guidance to clean up the content of the conceptual framework of patriotic education and its levels. Education on patriotism is a pedagogical intention of which aim is the formation and stabilization of positive attitude towards homeland (motherland, native language, inhabitants of the country, belonging to the same nation, national traditions and culture), an emotional and volitional educational activity.<sup>8</sup> According to the HPE the activity performed in an immediate environment and small communities gives the base from which one can become an active patriot serving national interests. For a little child, homeland is what he or she perceives from his or her environment therefore at the very beginning phase of patriotic education the most important is the experiential observation of their ambience. The realistic knowledge and love of homeland can be nourished by learning processes in the framework of subjects, primarily such as the Hungarian history and literature, Hungary's geography, ethnography and culture.<sup>9</sup>

However, there has been a practical side of patriotic education for which in the Hungarian language there is another expression, defence education<sup>10</sup>. When it comes to this activity, according to the HPE it is the physical, emotional and intellectual preparation of youngsters for military service, rather the side of patriotic education which makes boys and girls acquire the knowledge and attitudes necessary to preserving the population of the country and national values.<sup>11</sup> We have to highlight that on one hand the definition created in 1997 in accordance with the conditions of that period focuses on the preparation for compulsory military service. On the other hand it is also emphasized that this kind of education naturally prefers soldierlike forms of life in schools, institutions and youth movement but from those the conclusion can definitely not be that the aims of this kind of education would be militarist because military discipline and formality make root attitudes important in many situations in life and educate on order among things and persons and enhance self-discipline.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Báthory Zoltán – Falus Iván (főszerk.): *Pedagógiai lexikon A–H. I. kötet.* Keraban Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1997. 649.

<sup>9</sup> Uo.

<sup>10</sup> Term 'defence education' is used in an official translation of the National Core Curriculum of Hungary but in this context it does not equivalent with military education or cadet schools but it is rather the practical side of patriotic education.

<sup>11</sup> Báthory – Falus: i. m. 677.

<sup>12</sup> Uo.

As a consequence, patriotism means primarily the emotional bonding to the homeland and its values. Patriotic education therefore serves the formation and stabilization of this emotional bonding so that with the familiarization and maintenance of common language, culture and traditions it contributes to the maturation of national consciousness. Although the National Core Curriculum has been under revision, the statements regarding patriotic education are right when it says that ' the goal is to introduce students into the values and traditions of Hungary's national and folk culture. Students must study the activity of remarkable Hungarian historical personalities, scientists, inventors, artists, writers, poets and sportsmen. They must acquire a body of knowledge and practice those individual and community activities that serve as a basis for understanding and appreciating their home, homeland and its peoples. They must develop a sense of belonging to a community and a patriotic feeling, and understand that, if required, each citizen is obliged to participate in the protection of Hungary.'<sup>13</sup>

From this wording it can be seen that the feeling of love of homeland is formed as a result of patriotic education from which the need of defending homeland emerges. Otherwise, the defence of homeland is an obligation of citizenship. The practical patriotic education offers means and provides knowledge and capabilities to satisfy this need and to fulfill the obligation of citizenship.

Interdependency is obviously outlined, patriotic education makes up the bed to need by which a person becomes open and capable to take in defence knowledge.

It is also clear that practical elements in patriotic education are very important, they give physical, mental and emotional knowledge. All those are necessary for a young person to become a conscious citizen able to defend his or her homeland.

It must be highlighted that practical patriotic education is not identical with military education. Although practical patriotic education can orient a person towards military service but its primary aim is not that. The creation of consciousness, the feeling of responsibility for the society and homeland and the necessary practical knowledge and physical capability are the most important outcomes of this educational activity.

#### PATRIOTIC EDUCATION – AGE GROUPS AND DIRECTIONS OF ACTIONS

The suspension of conscription in Hungary in 2004 had a significant impact on the relationship of the defence sector and society. With the creation of an all-volunteer, professional military the channel by which young men had received knowledge useful from the point of view of defence. Because of military transformation many military bases were closed therefore the Hungarian Defence Forces as an employer was taken into background.

<sup>13</sup> Melléklet a 110/2012 (VI. 4.) Korm. rendelethez. Nemzeti alaptanterv. In: Magyar Közlöny, 2012. évi 66. szám. 10641. [regi.ofi.hu/download.php?docID=5846](http://regi.ofi.hu/download.php?docID=5846) (Download: 10. 12. 2017)

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In the meantime new possibilities have been opened which let citizens get involved in defence as volunteers. A voluntary reserves system, school programmes and summer camps have been initiated but when it comes to summarize the experiences, it is not an exaggeration to say that between the Hungarian society and defence sector the distance has grown compared to the level of the millenium years. The relatively peaceful state of the past decades, the embossing of advantages of NATO membership and bringing to the fore the public belief that 'the Alliance will defend us' let citizens rise a wrong perception of security. The generation of the present-day parents has already grown up in a way where they haven't had any relationship with the defence sector. only by the patriotic education in schools. It brings a serious challenge because the primary socialization base for youngsters is still the family. However, the Hungarian Defence Forces have disappeared from most of the Hungarian families since 2004.

At the same time the success of patriotic education is measurable. The results of the Hungarian Youth Research of 2016 show that the generation at the age between 15 and 29 is basically fond of Hungary and imagine the future inland. 67% of the interviewed young people do not plan to work, study or move abroad. As a reason, namely as a retention power they mark primarily three factors: the family (71%), the friends (51%) and the patriotism (45%). It is also positive that in the course of examination of institutional and interpersonal trust after the family (70%), the acquaintances (28%) and the neighbours (25%) they mostly trust in Hungarian Defence Forces (22%). They trust less in workmates, police, courts, civilian organizations, churches, banks and politicians.

The results of the survey demonstrate that the present-day young generation are patriotic which fact gives a good soil for successful practical patriotic education. Naturally, there are significant differences among age groups and the directions of actions have to be formed regarding their needs and capabilities.

For elementary schoolchildren a general patriotic education has the primary role. It is very important for them to put in highlight elements related to the strengthening of national consciousness, role models and patterns. The improvement of children's physical condition to an appropriate level has a basic importance as well so it is desirable to fill up the everyday PE with knowledge useful from the point of view of defence focusing mainly on fitness and stamina.

In the centre of practical patriotic education the age group of highschoools stands which can be named as cadet age group. It means the youngsters at the age of 14-19 although regarding some activities and pieces of knowledge the lower age limit can be reduced to 12-13. In the framework of general subjects general patriotic education is also presented but beyond it a more concrete programme related to the defence sector provigding theoretical and practical knowledge can be realized.

The widest spectrum of activities related to patriotic education appears for the cadet age group in Hungary:

- the highest level of patriotic education is realized in a closed pedagogical environment at Kratochvil Károly Military Secondary School and Student Hostel;

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- practical patriotic education in sectoral vocational training;
- Cadet Programme in high schools which means the possibility to learn the facultative maturity subject called Basic Patriotic Studies;
- participation in practical patriotic educational programme, camps and sport competitions in free time organized by the Hungarian Defence Sports Association;
- participation in programmes, camps and competitions organized by defence related civilian organizations and the Hungarian Defence Forces.

Based on the results of patriotic education in elementary schools, the aim of further patriotic education of cadet age group is to help young people to get more acquainted with defence affairs, the system of national defence, to foster their willingness to participate in defence related activities and with the creation of the possibility of getting the experience of togetherness to provide them with real capabilities and knowledge useful from the point of view of defence as well. Sports are especially emphasized for this age group, their physical development, their stamina and their education on a healthy way of life is determinant.

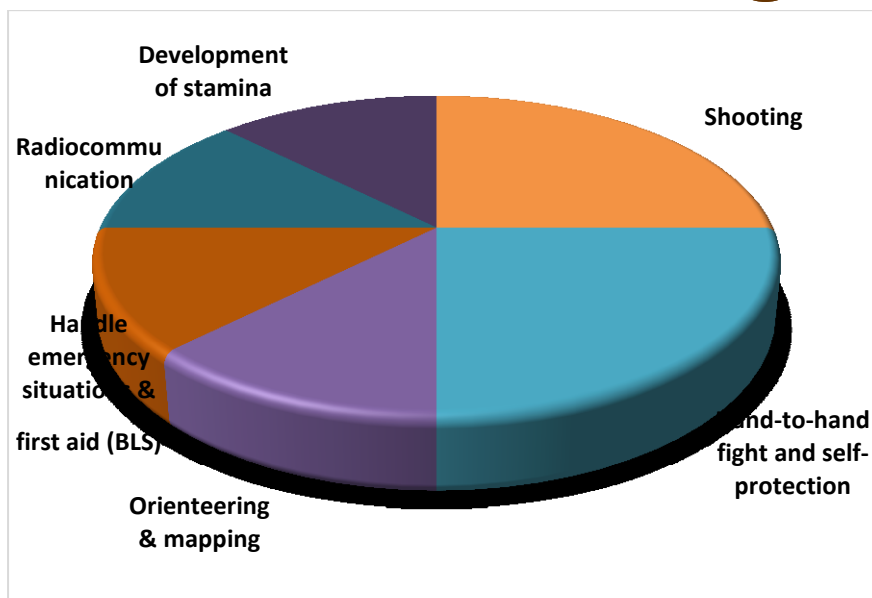
A special level of patriotic education appears in higher education as well. The facultative subject Basic Defence Studies is available for students in numerous universities and colleges in Hungary. It is very important also to provide them with experience focusing programmes completing them with practical and free time activities in order to make it attractive and in the same time useful for them.

It is important to think about the involvement of young people older than 18 but not students in higher education. The primary platform for their patriotic education is provided by the Hungarian Defence Sports Association which gives them opportunities by organized free time sport activities to gain and practice knowledge important from the point of view of defence. For them and also for students participating in higher education the recruitment system of the Hungarian Defence Forces gets an emphasized role as they form the potential recruitmental base. They can take part in military preparational courses organized by the HDF and they can join the operational or territorial reserve force as well as to the HDF itself. Obviously, this kind of training is far beyond patriotic education regarding its content.

When it comes to the realization of practical patriotic education, system-level approach is highly recommended. Looking at the practical activities related to patriotic education as a kind of cake the aim is to give more and more slices of it to the participants of patriotic educational programme.

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*Practical elements of patriotic education (own editing)*

The most ideal is when a young person can get all slices of the cake. Its elements are shooting, hand-to-hand fight and self-protection, orientation and mapping, recognition and handling of emergency situations, first aid included the basic life support protocol, nursing and care of elders, radiocommunication and the development of stamina. With these knowledge and capabilities they can be more effective not only in everyday life but also when they have to fulfill their obligations of citizenship, all in all they become more conscious and successful adults.

### CONCLUSION

It can be seen that numerous elements of patriotic education work now as well but considering the fact that until now there has not been created a comprehensive strategical concept of patriotic education, the field is not handled in a system level so the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes can be measured only on a case-by-case basis.

The creation and acceptance of a national strategy of patriotic education could make possible the clear definition of the goals and the creation and operation of a system which helps to reach the goals. In that way it would be possible to change the public approach in long term and to raise the public awareness which can effectively support the affair of national defence.



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