

Why Hungary? Why Kaposvár?

Foreign students' motivations, why they study in our country, at MATE
Kaposvári Campus

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Abstract

First, the study reviews the opportunities for foreign students to study in Hungarian higher education. It shows in what form and under what framework they can study in higher education institutions in our country. It also discusses which countries most people come to Hungarian universities from, and which majors are the most popular. After that, the study presents the results of a survey conducted among foreign students of MATE Kaposvári Campus. The programme has been operating successfully in our institution for several years, and every year students come to our campus from abroad. Looking back a few years, you will see why they chose our institution, and what their main motivations were for choosing it.

Key words: *foreign students, higher education, MATE Kaposvár, mobility motivations, future plans*

Miért Magyarország? Miért Kaposvár?

A külföldi hallgatók motivációi, miért tanulnak hazánkban,
a MATE kaposvári kampuszán

Összefoglalás

A tanulmány először is áttekinti a külföldi hallgatók tanulmányi lehetőségeit a magyar felsőoktatásban. Bemutatja, hogy milyen formában és milyen keretek között tanulhatnak hazánk felsőoktatási intézményeiben. Kitér arra is, hogy mely országokból érkeznek a legtöbben a magyar egyetemekre, és mely szakok a legnépszerűbbek. Ezt követően a tanulmány bemutatja a MATE Kaposvári Campusán a külföldi hallgatók körében végzett felmérés eredményeit. A program évek óta sikeresen működik intézményünkben, és minden évben érkeznek külföldről hallgatók a kampuszunkra. Néhány évre visszamenőleg cikkünkben bemutatjuk, hogy miért választották intézményünket, és mik voltak a legfőbb motivációik.

Kulcsszavak: *külföldi hallgatók, felsőoktatás, MATE Kaposvár, mobilitási motivációk, jövőbeli tervek*

Introduction

In our increasingly stronger and faster globalizing world, borders play a smaller role, whether it is about travelling, studying or employment. This can be easily observed, as nowadays a large proportion of people study, work or live outside their country. They do this in the hope of a better life, because of better training and employment opportunities. This phenomenon is present both in the movement from and to Hungary. In recent years, an increasing number of Hungarian students have continued their university studies abroad, this number has now reached 17,000. The most popular destination countries for Hungarian students are the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States. As a consequence of Brexit, Britain lost its leading position and was replaced by the Netherlands (see *Már több mint 16 ezer magyar diák tanul külföldi egyetemen, Hollandiában megháromszorozódott a számuk, Már több mint 17 ezer magyar diák tanul külföldi egyetemen*). The desire of young Hungarians to emigrate is not new, but it has reached a peak nowadays at the higher educational level (see *Már több mint 17 ezer magyar diák tanul külföldi egyetemen*).

The opportunities for learning are also almost unlimited if the student can afford to pay the tuition fees for university studies abroad. In addition, subsidized scholarship opportunities are also available, as young people can also apply for various scholarships. These can be long-term or short-term programmes, they can cover full training or only partial training.

Students coming to Hungary

Hungary has been attractive for several decades among young people who want to obtain a degree. Relatively many students from Africa and the Middle East studied at Hungarian universities. This number has been expanding recently, as people from other parts of the world come to study in Hungarian higher education. There are several programs available for higher education mobilization, such as Erasmus+, CEEPUS, interstate scholarships, Stipendium Hungaricum and the Diaspora Higher Education Scholarship Program. The program aimed at the internationalization of Hungarian higher education; the Stipendium Hungaricum from 2013 (see tka.hu), greatly contributed to this. Within the framework of the program, an agreement is made between the ministries of education of each country, where a specific quota of students is nominated for the scholarship. Foreign students can participate in partial or full training, basic, master's or doctoral training.

According to data from 2015, almost 20,000 foreign students studied at Hungarian universities, mainly in medical courses. About 40% of the students were Hungarians from across the border, the rest came from all over the world (see *Ezért kedvelik a magyar egyetemeket a külföldiek*).

In ten years (from the academic year 2010/11 to the academic year 2020/21), the number of foreign students in full-time courses increased from 15,000 to 32,000. The largest number of them study in the fields of health, technical and social sciences. Doctoral courses are also popular. (see *Megduplázódott a külföldi hallgatók száma a nappali képzéseken az elmúlt tíz évben*).

According to the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, almost 15% of Hungarian higher education students were foreigners, and foreigners study in 61 of the country's 64 institutions. In the 2021-22 academic year, the University of Debrecen, the University of Pécs and the Semmelweis University hosted the most foreign students (see *The number of foreigners studying at Hungarian universities has doubled*).

Most of the students in our country are serious about their studies and want to get their degree here. On the other hand, 10–20% of them interrupt their studies and disappear from the Hungarian higher education system. This is called “smart migration” and is usually typical of children from financially well-off African and Asian families. (see *A külföldi egyetemisták 10-20%-a csak azért jelentkezik magyar egyetemre, hogy fél év után Nyugat-Európába költözessen*).

According to the data of the National Statistics Office from 2021, a total of 40,292 foreign students studied in Hungary. In total, they came from 166 countries, most of them from Germany, Romania, China, Serbia, Iran and Slovakia (KSH Külföldi hallgatók száma országok szerint).

Since it is a large number overall, students from abroad are represented in a significant number at individual universities in Hungary, and studies have already been conducted examining them, their motivations, satisfaction, and intentions, among others Rédei (2007), Hetesi-Kéri (2018).

Students coming to Kaposvár

In recent decades, students from abroad have also arrived at the MATE Kaposvári Campus (formerly Kaposvár University). They typically took part in agricultural courses, and later, as a result of Hungary’s accession to the European Union and thus to the Erasmus Program, the range of students expanded to include all disciplines taught at universities, such as art and economics and the number of students from Turkey has increased significantly, their overrepresentation has persisted for years.

Thanks to the other previously mentioned scholarship programs aimed at internationalization it can be observed among international students in recent years that students from Africa study in agricultural courses, while other students, mainly from the Middle East and South America, study in arts courses.

Goals and methods

To present the main characteristics and trends of student mobility to Hungary, I used statistics from the Central Statistical Office (KSH) as well as articles from HVG and Eduline.

My goal with this article was to present from which countries and in which majors students typically come to MATE Kaposvári Campus. I also wanted to examine why they chose Hungary and Kaposvár, what were their motivations for choosing them. I also thought it was important to see what their goals are with their studies here, and what they plan to do after graduating.

For this purpose, I conducted a Google questionnaire survey for the foreign students of our university who started their studies this year, last year, and the year before. I know them from the Hungarian language classes, I sent the questionnaire by email to a total of 27 students; I got 26 answers.

The questionnaire was of course filled out anonymously, I asked about age and country of origin. The questions were multiple-choice questions, but in each case, I included the “other” option for the answers, where the respondent could enter and explain their individual answer.

The questionnaire included the following questions: where did you get information about the study opportunities in Hungary, why did you choose Hungary, why did you choose MATE Kaposvári Campus, how satisfied are you with the university and the training, and what are your plans after completing your studies.

Results

During the examined period, MATE Kaposvári Campus had students from Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Vietnam, Morocco, Jordan, Syria, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Panama, Chile, Iran, Pakistan, Australia and Ukraine. All of them take part in full training.

As you can see in the following table (Table 1), the vast majority of our foreign students are 25 years old or older, which means that they already have some kind of professional qualification. And at our university, they either take part in a master's program corresponding to their profession or study in another major.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age

19 years	20 years	23 years	25 years	26 years	27 years
8%	15%	8%	15%	39%	15%

Source: Own

Table 2 shows the distribution of students according to their majors. According to this, the proportion of Film and Media (as well as Photography) students at the Institute of Arts is almost the same as that of the agricultural science field of fodder, while foreign students of Commerce and Marketing are represented in a significantly smaller proportion. The reason for this is certainly that our institution specializes mostly in agricultural and art courses, economic courses are also available at several other universities. In addition, due to the limited number of courses in English, only certain courses are displayed.

There is also a correlation between the students' country of origin and their chosen major. While those from black African countries choose predominantly agriculture, students from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East choose rather arts or economics.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by majors

Film and Media	Animal Nutrition	Commerce and Marketing	Photography
39%	38%	15%	8%

Source: Own

As the answers to the following question show (see diagram 1), nearly half of our students from abroad found out about Hungarian higher education opportunities on the Internet (46%), followed by students who received information from acquaintances or friends (39%) and there are also those who received information from their home school or university (15%). It is not surprising that the Internet is the most important source of information in this area as well.

How did you find out about the study opportunities in Hungary?

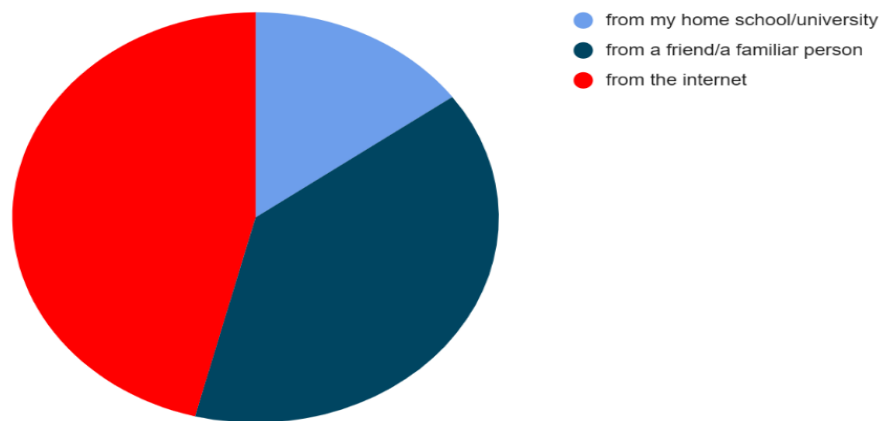


Diagram 1. How did you find out about the opportunities in Hungary?

Source: Own

In the questionnaire, I also asked why they chose Hungary to continue their studies. Many and various answers were received to this question, these are included in the following diagram. The two leading reasons were the better job opportunities and employment opportunities due to their studies in Hungary and their sympathy with the country, the former naturally significantly ahead of the latter. It is positive that Hungarian higher education is considered to be of high quality, which can help with professional development and a good job later on.

Why did you choose Hungary?

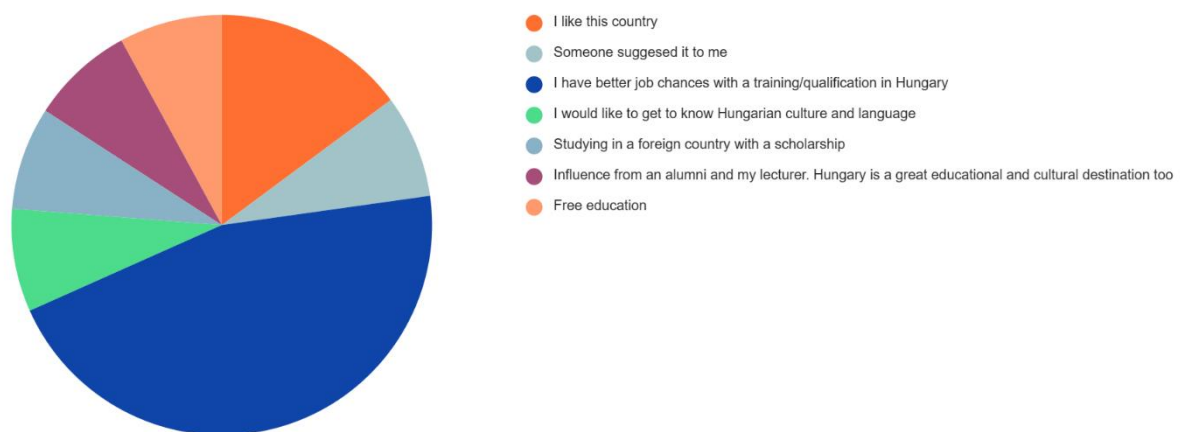


Diagram 2. Why did you choose Hungary?

Source: Own

The next question focused on why the Kaposvári Campus of MATE was chosen. Here I received two obvious answers: 77% said that this institution offered the training they were looking for, and

23% believed that this training would provide them with better job opportunities (see diagram 3). This resonates with the positive assessment of Hungarian higher education as a whole.

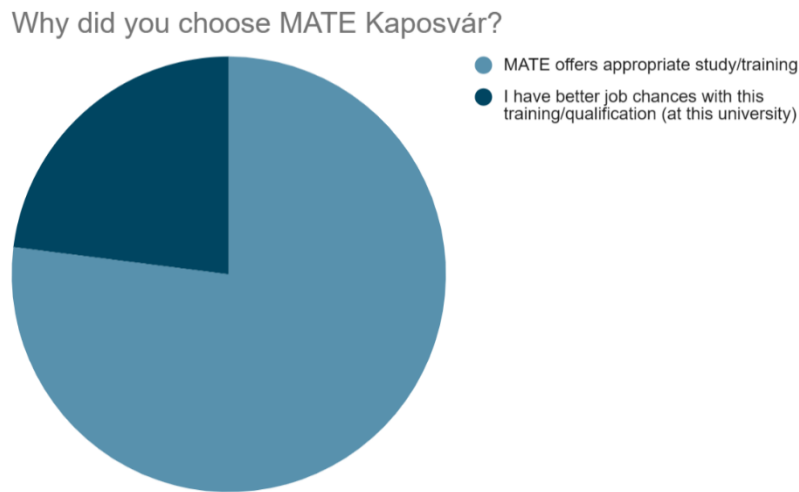


Diagram 3. Why did you choose MATE Kaposvár?

Source: Own

I also thought it was important to ask to what extent they were satisfied with the university and the training. Satisfaction could be rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was the worst opinion and 5 was the best opinion. 54% of the participants rated it with 3, 23-23% of them are satisfied or very satisfied. The results are shown in Diagram 4. Their opinion about the institution and the education provided here is also very important in order to create a good reputation for our university in the world and to attract more students to study here.

As a next step, during the expansion and deepening of the investigation, at this point it is worth asking more specifically what they are satisfied with and what they are not. This can greatly contribute to the improvement of the quality of education.

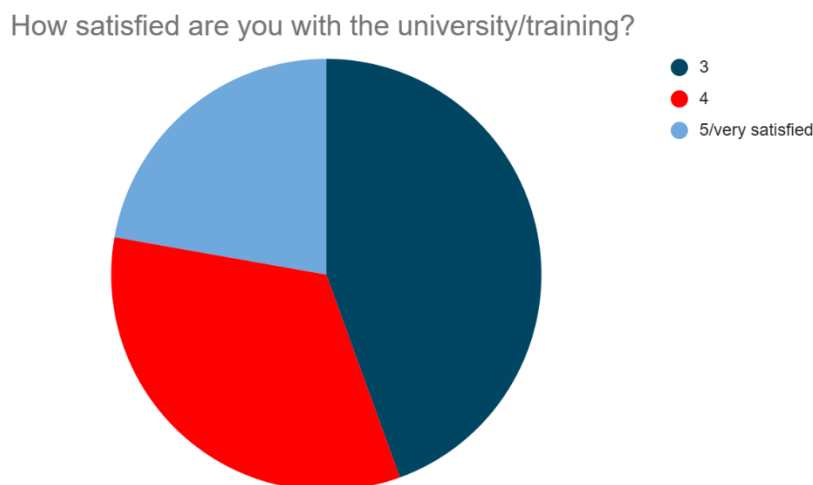


Diagram 4. How satisfied are you with the university/training?

Source: Own

The last and, in my opinion, perhaps the most important question concerned what the foreign students studying at our institution intend to do after completing their studies. The largest proportion of them want to stay in Europe and take up work (38%), the next largest group plans to look for work outside Hungary and outside their country (23%), 15% want to travel home and prosper there. The same proportion (8%) want to stay in Hungary after university and/or take part in a PhD program or study a master's degree. The results are in Diagram 5.



Diagram 5. What do you plan to do after you finish your studies?

Source: Own

Summary

As national statistics show, the number of students coming from abroad has increased in recent years, at our institution too. On our campus, they mainly come from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. While Turkish students predominated in the past, in the last three years we have had no students of Turkish origin. Unfortunately, it is also typical that no students come from Europe to study at our campus. However, we have two Ukrainian students this year; they probably came because of the war. Last year, a diaspora student of Hungarian origin from Australia started her studies with us.

Foreign students who find our university are primarily informed about their university study opportunities via the Internet. Typically, they chose two special majors offered by our institution, Film and Media and Nutrition studies.

The strongest motivation for them was that with the knowledge and degree acquired in Hungary, at our university, better job opportunities will open up for them, and their chance to assert themselves will be more favorable. It is encouraging that Hungarian higher education has a good reputation. It is also decisive for the choice of institution that the students study in courses that have a long tradition on our campus. Our foreign students are not dissatisfied with our university and the training, they gave a minimum rating of 3 on a scale of 5. However, the fact that more than

half of the respondents are only moderately satisfied is thought-provoking and calls for action to improve the assessment.

Almost three-quarters of the surveyed foreign students do not want to return to their country after completing their studies here, or they imagine their future in Europe, Hungary or outside Hungary, but not in their home country. Considering that almost all of the students are from Africa, Asia, the Middle East or Latin America, we can say that they are choosing a form of intelligent migration.

My survey was the first step for a planned larger-scale research, in which I will ask the foreign students attending our institution even earlier, in order to get a larger sample and to better understand the changes that have occurred over the years. I would also expand the questions so that we can look deeper into the motivations, satisfaction and future plans of the students. I intend to expand the survey with interviews to better understand their decision. Inquiring and interviewing foreign students from other campuses of MATE will also provide an opportunity for further extended investigation.

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