

LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

# PERPETUAL TEMPORARINESS

Situation of migrant workers in Hungary

**Márton Bisztrai, Eszter Kovács, András Kovács, Vivien Vadasi**  
September 2020



Our research analyzes the trends of labour migration in Hungary and the situation of migrant workers coming through the entry points of employment agencies and international higher education programs



While between the 1990s and 2000s the most significant immigrant group was ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, recently the proportion of non-European third-country (especially Asian) nationals has grown



Non-EU workers in Hungary, regardless of their position, type of assignment or specific legal relationship with their employers seem to live in a legal and lifestyle 'bubble'. The lack of social integration and even isolation strengthen non-EU workers' feeling that Hungary is a temporary stop that may enhance their international labour market position

LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

# PERPETUAL TEMPORARINESS

Situation of migrant workers in Hungary



MENEDÉK

HUNGARIAN  
ASSOCIATION  
FOR MIGRANTS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- While the number of foreign-born people has increased, immigration to Hungary has been moderate in the past 20–30 years. With the intensifying labour shortage, however, the scale of immigration for the purpose of work has been increasing in the past few years. More importantly, the country has been experiencing an influx of different demographic compared with earlier immigration trends. While in the 1990s and in 2000s the most significant immigrant group was ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, recently the proportion of non-European third-country (especially Asian) nationals has grown.
- Employment and study are the most important reasons why foreigners apply for a residence permit in Hungary. The number of applications for residence permits for the purposes of employment or study, respectively has increased significantly in recent years. Permanent residents, beneficiaries of international protection and family members of EEA nationals do not need a specific permit for work in Hungary – their employment needs only to be reported to the employment authority.
- Labour shortages have been a feature of the Hungarian labour market for several years. The urgency of the problem became so pressing that the Hungarian government adopted a number of measures to help with the recruitment of foreign labour from Ukraine and Serbia. Exceptionally, in the case of employers that have concluded a strategic partnership agreement with the government or in the case of citizens of Serbia or Ukraine who would be employed in hard-to-fill vacancies or employers implementing projects of strategic importance to the national economy, applications for the employment residence permit may be submitted by the future employer as well.
- Furthermore, third-country nationals with a residence permit for the purpose of study, during the time of their studies, can engage in gainful activity or part-time employment without having to obtain a residence permit for that specific purpose.
- Immigrants in Hungary show better educational attainment than the total population: almost two-thirds of them have secondary or higher education, whereas the figure for the total population is below half. As a consequence of this, the employment structure of immigrants differs from that of the total population: the proportion of people in managerial, or highly skilled positions, as well as in commerce and services is significantly higher among immigrants.
- Based on the recent tendencies of hiring foreign workers and the state's efforts to attract labour primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, but also from Asian countries, the research team concluded that this phenomenon should be one of the entry points to be investigated in the empirical part of the research. Interviews were conducted with foreign workers who had found employment in Hungary through a recruitment agency or other equivalent institutional help. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with job intermediaries as well.
- Non-EU workers in Hungary, regardless of their position, type of assignment or specific legal relationship with their employers seem to live in a legal and lifestyle 'bubble'. Within this bubble, most of the time, they feel comfortable, but opportunities to step out from this status are very restricted. These firm boundaries – such as legal dependency on their hiring company – prevent them from pursuing their broader interests. It also prevents workers from developing career ties with the Hungarian economy in the longer term. On the contrary, the lack of social integration and even isolation strengthen non-EU workers' feeling that Hungary is a temporary stop (no longer than the two-year work permit) that may enhance their international labour market position.
- Desktop research found that, besides the recently expanding numbers of untrained workers recruited primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, there is also a large population of high-skilled workers, coming mainly from Asian countries. Our hypothesis was that the appearance of this segment of foreign workers might be partly the result of the growing internationalisation of Hungarian higher education. Based on the growing number of international students the research also focused on study migration that results in long-term labour migration. In this segment, students who study and work in Hungary were interviewed, together with coordinators of student programmes.

- As a national strategy, the immigration of students from non-EU countries is motivated by the growing number of scholarships and English-language educational programmes. Many see this offer as a stepping stone, an entry point to the labour market. The intentions of the authorities, as discernible in current migration policies, are not necessarily in line with the career plans of graduating students. The current legal and administrative context does not support the integration of these highly educated young knowledge workers into the Hungarian labour market.
- The research has identified another significant gap that causes tension in the system. The monthly living allowances are not enough to cover basic needs. This means that students have to mobilise other financial resources. Previous savings and/or support from the family are necessary, but many of the non-EU students do not have such a background or ongoing support during their studies. Thus they have to work. But access to the Hungarian labour market is limited for these students. Generally speaking, they have little work experience, do not speak Hungarian and their schedules are hectic.
- There are policy recommendations that were formulated on the basis of the research findings. Most of these aim at tackling the unfavourable legal and institutional environment that is partially a result of the rapidly changing labour market situation; laws and institutional procedures often do not meet the needs of employees and employers. The newly developed system of recruitment companies and temporary work agencies is still under-regulated. Setting up operational protocols and quality assurance systems is essential in order to minimise the risk of exploitation, and enhance the protection of the workers they are dealing with.

# CONTENTS

	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>MIGRATION POLICY, IMMIGRANTS AND FOREIGN LABOUR FORCE IN HUNGARY – AN OVERVIEW</b>	<b>7</b>
	Administrative and legal context .....	7
	Recent migration trends and the profile of the immigrant population .....	9
	Recent trends in the number of foreign workers with employment residence permits in Hungary ...	10
	Recent trends in the number of foreign workers not requiring a work permit in Hungary .....	11
	Study migration .....	13
	Public attitudes to migrants and immigration .....	14
<b>2.</b>	<b>ENTRY POINTS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND CASE STUDY SELECTION</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Case 1:</b>	Higher education – an opportunity or a setback? .....	15
	Motivations and resources – a career anywhere .....	16
	Circumstances of arrival – swimming in deep and unknown water .....	17
	Career – plenty of jobs, but plenty of obstacles .....	17
	Working conditions .....	18
	Administrative processes – in the labyrinth of the Immigration Office .....	19
	Social life – missed opportunities .....	20
	Living in Hungary – staying or moving on .....	20
	Conclusion .....	21
<b>Case 2:</b>	Intermediary and temporary employment agency .....	21
	Motivations and resources – starting a career anywhere .....	22
	The role of intermediary and employer .....	23
	Working in Hungary .....	23
	Administrative processes – dependency factor .....	25
	Life in Hungary – ‘singles’ with dependents at home .....	25
	Plans .....	26
	Conclusion .....	26
<b>3.</b>	<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>27</b>
	References .....	28
	About the authors .....	29
	Impressum .....	29

# INTRODUCTION

While the number of foreign-born people has increased, immigration to Hungary has been moderate in the past 20–30 years. With the intensifying labour shortage, however, the scale of immigration for the purpose of work has been increasing in the past few years. More importantly, the country has been experiencing an influx of different demographic compared with earlier immigration trends. While in the 1990s and in 2000s the most significant immigrant group was ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, recently the proportion of non-European third-country (especially Asian) nationals has grown. One reason for this change was the increase of non-European third-country nationals entering and residing in Hungary: the number of third-country nationals from Asian countries doubled between 2010 and 2019.<sup>1</sup> Another reason for the growth in the proportion of non-European nationals lies in Hungary's citizenship policies, especially the simplified naturalization for ethnic Hungarians in 2011. After the introduction of simplified naturalization, the number of Serbian nationals living in Hungary decreased dramatically (from 17,197 in 2010 to 5,000 in 2020).<sup>2</sup>

In order to obtain a better understanding of the recent changes in the dynamics and patterns of immigration in Hungary, some small-scale qualitative research was conducted in 2019. Its aim was to identify and describe the main characteristics of the recently increased labour migration. This present report summarizes its main findings.

The report starts with a general introduction to immigration trends to Hungary; it then discusses the statistical data available on the immigrant population, and also briefly describes Hungarian public opinion about immigration.

The second part of the report starts with a description of the legal and administrative environment of immigration to Hungary, then outlines recent changes in immigration trends. These changes include the organic transformation of the immigrant population's character in terms of region of origin, but they also include the Hungarian government's efforts to shape work immigration patterns to Hungary. The report discusses the recent work visa waiver programme that Hungary offers Ukrainian and Serbian workers, and its drastic effects on the size of the immigrant population. As this phenomenon is similar to the situation in the other three countries investigated in the research, one of the entry points to be explored in the empirical part of the research needs to be job intermediaries and immigrant workers who arrived in the country through agencies. As a last point, the report discusses the increasing internationalization of Hungarian higher education. As the other entry point, the report recommends exploring how the international programmes of Hungarian higher education serve as stepping stones for more permanent work migration. In this fashion, managers of international programmes offered by colleges, as well as workers who are currently (or who used to be) students in one of these programmes, were interviewed.

---

<sup>1</sup> The number of third-country nationals from Asian countries was 25,127 on 1 January 2010 and 5,700 on 1 January 2020. Source: Central Statistical Office, *Magyarországon tartózkodó külföldi állampolgárok földrészek, országok és nemek szerint, január 1.* (Number of foreign nationals residing in Hungary by continents, countries of origin and sex, 1 January), retrieved on 10 June 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Central Statistical Office, *Magyarországon tartózkodó külföldi állampolgárok földrészek, országok és nemek szerint, január 1.* (Number of foreign nationals residing in Hungary by continents, countries of origin and sex, 1 January), retrieved on 10 June 2020.

## 1.

# MIGRATION POLICY, IMMIGRANTS AND FOREIGN LABOUR FORCE IN HUNGARY – AN OVERVIEW

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The principles of Hungarian migration policy are defined in Hungary's first ever Migration Strategy, adopted by the government in 2013.<sup>3</sup> The Migration Strategy states that, based on Hungary's economic and labour market needs, labour immigration is a necessity for the country. In addition, the Migration Strategy attaches importance to the immigration of foreigners for the purpose of studying in Hungary.

Employment and study are the most important reasons why foreigners apply for a residence permit in Hungary.

According to the statistics of the immigration authority,<sup>4</sup> in 2010, 73.56 per cent of all applications for residence permits were submitted for the purposes of 'gainful activities' (until 2017, this category included both employment and self-employment) or study. In 2018,<sup>5</sup> 80.84 per cent of applications were submitted for employment or for study purposes.

The number of applications for residence permits for the purposes of employment or study, respectively has increased significantly in recent years. While in 2010, there were 16,060 applications for residence permits for 'gainful activities' and 11,179 for study purposes, in 2018, the number of applications for employment residence permits was 60,931 and the number of applications for study residence permits was 29,039.

Within the government, immigration (policy and legislation) falls under the competence of the Ministry of the Interior, but a number of other ministries and offices are responsible for some – sometimes very important –

aspects of migration policy. Employment policy currently falls under the competence of the Ministry of Finance (previously, it was the Ministry for the National Economy), education policy falls under the competence of the Ministry for Human Capacities (primary, secondary education) and the Ministry for Innovation and Technology (tertiary education and vocational training), while foreign policy falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Currently, the Prime Minister's Office plays the most important role in shaping migration policy. The number of ministries involved reflects the existence of fragmented special interests, which in many instances leads to ad hoc decisions and results in an incoherent migration policy.

The employment of third-country nationals in Hungary is regulated by *Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Residence of Third-Country Nationals* and *Government Decree 114/2007 (V. 24.) on the Implementation of Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Residence of Third-Country Nationals* (these two pieces of legislation were drafted by the Ministry of the Interior and implemented by the immigration authority) and in *Government Decree 445/2013. (XI. 28) on permitting the employment of third-country nationals outside the single procedure; the waiver of employment permits; the participation of the employment centres of government offices in the single permit procedure; and reporting third-country nationals who can be employed without a permit in Hungary and on reimbursement of remuneration* (falling under the competence of the Ministry of Finance and implemented by the employment authorities).

The law specifies that immigration proceedings are to be conducted by the following authorities: the minister in charge of immigration; the minister in charge of foreign policy; the Office of Immigration and Nationality (currently known as the Directorate-General for Policing of Aliens, Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság in Hungarian) and its local branches; the consulate officer of Hungary authorized to issue visas; and the police. Among these authorities, the National Directorate-General for Policing of Aliens has the most important role in handling the entry, stay and settlement of foreign citizens (as well as asylum applications). Immigration (policy and legislation) falls under the competence of the Ministry of the Interior, under whose supervision the immigration authority

<sup>3</sup> The Migration Strategy and the seven-year strategic document related to the Asylum and Migration Fund established by the European Union for the years 2014–20, <http://belugyialapok.hu/alapok/sites/default/files/Migration%20Strategy%20Hungary.pdf>, retrieved on 10 June 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Source: statistics of the Directorate General for Aliens Policing, [http://bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu](http://bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu), retrieved on 10 June 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the immigration authority, the General Directorate for Policing of Aliens, has not yet published statistical data on 2019.

was established in 2000. Before 2000, asylum and immigration issues were processed by two separate authorities, the latter by the police. Between 2000 and 2019, the Office of Immigration and Nationality (later, the Immigration and Asylum Office) was the authority that processed visa applications, applications for residence permits, and asylum applications. In 2019, as a step in the securitisation of migration policies, the government 're-transformed' the immigration authority into a police authority<sup>6</sup> and its name was changed. It has seven regional directorates and 24 offices around the country. According to the website, the Directorate closely cooperates with international organizations, with other authorities of the police (mainly the border policing organs), with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as with educational institutions and employment centres.

The aforementioned acts contain the provisions for residence permit issuance for third-country nationals. The residence permit may be issued for the purpose of employment to third-country nationals:

- whose purpose of residence is to perform work for or under the direction and/or supervision of others, for remuneration, under employment relationship; or
- who performs work as the owner or executive officer of a for-profit business association, co-operative society or some other legal entity, in addition to the work actually performed in that capacity.

Following the transposition of the EU Single Permit Directive,<sup>7</sup> third-country nationals are required to obtain a single permit, which is a combined work and residence permit allowing a third-country national to enter into a contract for employment with an employer and to reside legally in the territory of Hungary for the purpose of work. The single permit can be obtained in a single application procedure: as a general rule, the third-country national has to submit the application (accompanied with a 'preliminary employment contract') to the immigration authority that consults the employment authority. The employment authority (the government office) conducts the labour market test (checks if there is a Hungarian/EEA national who could fill the position) and checks the employer and signals its consent to the immigration authority that issues the permit.

Exceptionally, in the case of employers that have concluded a strategic partnership agreement with the govern-

ment<sup>8</sup> or in the case of citizens of Serbia or Ukraine who would be employed in hard-to-fill vacancies or employers implementing projects of strategic importance to the national economy, applications for the employment residence permit may be submitted by the future employer as well.

As a general rule, applications for residence permits may be submitted outside Hungary. The application includes the application for the entry visa as well, when the application is granted, the third-country national can enter Hungary with the visa and pick up the residence permit at the immigration authority.

Hungarian law also provides for the possibility of submitting applications for residence permits in Hungary as well for those who can enter Hungary without a visa or, in duly substantiated exceptional circumstances, for those who are already residing in Hungary.

While most third-country nationals need an employment residence permit to work in Hungary, there are some exceptions. Permanent residents, beneficiaries of international protection and family members of EEA nationals do not need a specific permit for work in Hungary – their employment needs only to be reported to the employment authority.

In accordance with Article 24 of EU Directive 2016/801,<sup>9</sup> third-country nationals with a residence permit for the purpose of study, during the time of their studies, can engage in gainful activity or employment without having to obtain a residence permit for that specific purpose. Third-country students may engage in occupational activity during the semester for a maximum of twenty-four hours weekly, and in any full-time employment outside the semester (for example, summer months) for a maximum period of 90 days or 66 working days in a year.

In addition to the single permit, certain third-country nationals may be employed with a work permit issued by the employment authority (the employment units of the government office). These third-country nationals include asylum applicants (who should be granted access to the labour market 9 months after lodging an asylum application) and 'persons authorised to stay' (this category of foreigners are permitted to remain in Hungary because there is a risk that they would be subject to the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment if they were repatriated). In this case, the employer needs to initiate the process.

<sup>6</sup> Under the Police Act, there are four police authorities: the authority fulfilling general police tasks ('the Police'), the aliens policing authority, the National Protection Service (responsible for internal control, integrity and anticorruption tasks within the police) and the Counter-Terrorist Centre.

<sup>7</sup> Directive 2011/98/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State

<sup>8</sup> The government concluded strategic partnership agreements with 84 companies, see: <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulgazdasagi-es-kulugyminiszterium/strategiai-partnersegi-megallapodasok> (in Hungarian), retrieved on 10 June 2020. These agreements are not public but one of the benefits of such agreements is that employers may apply for the employment residence permits of their future employees.

<sup>9</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing



## RECENT MIGRATION TRENDS AND THE PROFILE OF THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION

After the democratic transition of 1989/1990, Hungary's position in terms of global migration trends changed, but it did not result in radical in- or outmigration. The opening up of the borders was not followed by a new mass emigration wave from Hungary. Instead of great economic migration, the Central European region rather experienced new forms of moderate migration, among them the migration of national and ethnic minorities. Within that, Hungary has been the destination country for ethnic Hungarians from Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Slovakia and Ukraine since 1989 (Gödri & Tóth, 2005). In the 1990s, according to statistical estimates, the balance of immigration to Hungary was positive (there were more immigrants entering than emigrants leaving Hungary) at the level of 13,000–15,000 persons annually. After the country's EU accession, this number increased to 24,000 persons annually (KSH, 2008). In 2010, the number of foreign citizens living in Hungary with a valid residence permit was 198,000, which was 2 per cent of the population at that time (KSH 2011).

In the 1990s and 2000s the overwhelming majority (70–80 per cent) of immigrants arrived from other European countries (both EU and non-EU). The second largest proportion was made up of Asian immigrants: their ratio was the highest in the early 1990s (18 per cent), falling to 10 per cent in the late 1990s and rising again to 16 per cent after the country's EU accession (KSH, 2008). Most of the European immigrants arrived from neighbouring countries, primarily Romania, then Ukraine, Serbia and Slovakia. The overwhelming majority of these immigrants were ethnic Hungarians (Gödri & Tóth 2005).

Ethnic Hungarians from the neighbouring countries have always been a welcome immigrant group in Hungary, although political communications on the topic have been rather controversial. Fidesz, the right-wing, conservative party that has governed Hungary since 2010, introduced a preferential and simplified naturalization process for Hungarians living abroad. The law on citizenship was modified in 2011 so that people who have Hungarian ancestors (more specifically at least one ancestor that at some point was a Hungarian citizen) can become Hungarian citizens even without permanent residency in the country. Since the amendment was introduced, there have been more than 1,000,000 newly naturalized Hungarian citizens. Studies show that preferential naturalization has contributed to an increased volume of migration to Hungary by ethnic Hungarians. At the same time, the Hungarian government claims that the idea behind the preferential naturalization is the 'symbolic reunification' of the Hungarian nation, and that it should help to strengthen ethnic Hungarian communities abroad to stay and prosper in their homelands.

The most recent detailed information about immigrants in Hungary is available from the 2016 Microcensus. Although

the Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal) publishes annual migration statistics, these are much less detailed. Nevertheless these data sources can give us a general picture of recent immigration trends in Hungary, and the composition and characteristics of the immigrant population. Furthermore, the 2016 Microcensus found that the immigrant population in Hungary hadn't changed significantly since the last Census in 2011, therefore we can rely on some analyses based on the 2011 Census data as well.

In general, there are two general ways of defining immigrants in a statistical system, and as Gödri (2016) puts it, 'identifying immigrants on the basis of their citizenship or birthplace results in two populations differing in size and composition'. Foreign citizens living in Hungary constitute only part of the immigrant population and mainly represent those who arrived recently. Following the introduction of the simplified naturalisation for ethnic Hungarians, the rate of naturalisation (mainly for ethnic Hungarians) has become high in Hungary, and therefore the immigrant population is likely to be significantly underestimated if we only examine foreign citizens.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the foreign-born population is a much wider and more numerous group of immigrants: it also includes immigrants who arrived earlier and obtained citizenship.

The Microcensus in 2016 counted 136,887 people with foreign citizenship and 365,442 people born abroad (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2018). These make up 1.4 per cent and 3.8 per cent of the total population, respectively. Among foreign citizens there were 10,099 people born in Hungary, and among the foreign born, there were 68,651 people who had been Hungarian citizens since they were born, while the other 169,983 people had obtained Hungarian citizenship through naturalisation. In this analysis we will focus on foreign citizens, on one hand, and on foreign-born Hungarian citizens, on the other, as two distinct sub-groups of the immigrant population in Hungary.

The countries of origin of the immigrant population became more diversified and the overall number of immigrants increased after Hungary's EU accession, and as a result, the relative proportion of immigrants arriving from neighbouring countries (traditionally, ethnic Hungarians) declined, nevertheless it is still remarkable: almost one-third (30 per cent) of foreign citizens residing in Hungary are from four neighbouring countries with significant ethnic Hungarian communities: Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia and Serbia. Looking at the population of foreign-born Hungarian citizens, the share of these countries is overwhelming, at 85 per cent (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2018, p. 29.) This is an indication of both the abovementioned kin-state policy promoting preferential naturalisation schemes, and the changing dynamics of the immigration of ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries.

<sup>10</sup> The situation gets somewhat more complicated, however, as naturalised ethnic Hungarians may also live outside the territory of Hungary.

Looking at the general labour market situation of both groups of immigrants (foreign citizens and foreign-born Hungarian citizens), one can see significant differences between the two and from the population in general. The employment rate of foreign citizens is similar to that of the total population (48 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively), however in case of those who are Hungarian citizens, it is much higher (53 per cent) (ibid. p. 30.) Based on a more detailed analysis of the 2011 Census data, immigrants from EU member states (in both immigrant groups) display a higher employment rate than that of third-country immigrants, but the unemployment rate is lower in the case of third-country nationals than in the case of EU nationals. This is because the share of dependents, who do not even enter the labour market, is high among third-country immigrants (especially among foreign citizens) (Gödri 2016).

Labour market prospects are greatly determined by educational attainment. As in the case of the total population, economic activity improves with higher educational attainment in the case of the immigrant population as well, while the unemployment rate declines the higher the educational level. Both groups of immigrants show better educational attainment than the total population: almost two-thirds of both groups have secondary or higher education, whereas the figure for the total population is below half (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2018, p. 30). As a consequence of this, the employment structure of immigrants differs from that of the total population: the proportion of people in managerial, or highly skilled positions, as well as in commerce and services is significantly higher among immigrants (ibid, p. 32).

Naturally, the foreign population has remarkably heterogeneous social and demographic characteristics, and is also very different in term of their Hungarian language skills, date of arrival, Hungarian citizenship and place of residence within the country. Generally speaking, we can say that the employment indicators of immigrants coming from EU member states are more favourable than those of immigrants from third countries, and that there are considerable differences even among countries within the two groups (Gödri 2016).

The share of self-employed persons and entrepreneurs is an important indicator of the labour market integration of immigrants, because it shows in which migrant communities and to what extent it is common to set up (ethnic) businesses instead of entering the primary labour market. According to the 2011 Census data, the proportion of self-employed persons and entrepreneurs in the foreign-born population was somewhat higher (10 per cent) than in the total population (8 per cent) in 2011. Among certain ethnic groups, however, such as the Vietnamese (34 per cent), the Chinese and Syrians (27 per cent), and the Turkish (18 per cent), the proportion of self-employed was outstandingly high. In these groups, the proportion of those who work as members of a company was also high (Gödri, 2016). This implies that in total 35–60 per

cent of the active population of these groups presumably work in the so-called 'ethnic economy', and we can assume that it did not change significantly until the recent upsurge in labour demand that led to the targeted recruitment of foreign labour.

## RECENT TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS WITH EMPLOYMENT RESIDENCE PERMITS IN HUNGARY

Despite the single procedure and the single work and residence permit there are differences in the statistics of the immigration and the employment authorities.

According to the statistics of the immigration authority,<sup>11</sup> the number of applicants for an employment residence permit has increased substantially since 2015. (Unfortunately, the statistics of the immigration authority only indicate the number of applications, but not the number of permits granted). Until 2015, the number of applications was fairly stable: while in 2011 there were 13,187 applications for residence permits for the purpose of 'gainful activities', in 2012 there were 13,580, in 2013 12,787, in 2014 13,010, and in 2015 there were 12,650 applications.

In 2016, however, there were 14,500 applications, while in 2017 this rose dramatically to 24,539 and in 2018 the figure was 60,931. Thus the number of applications for employment residence permits increased almost fivefold in four years.

On residence permits issued, data may be found in Eurostat. In 2018, Hungary issued 55,739 first residence permits in total, according to these statistics. Just under four in 10 permits (39.1 per cent) were issued to Ukrainian nationals (21,793), followed by Chinese nationals (4,161) and Serbian nationals (3,767). Concerning the reasons for residence, employment was the most popular: out of the 55,739 residence permits 31,553 were issued for employment reasons (and 10,772 for study). (The data may not include all residence permits issued as the immigration authority must have renewed residence permits in 2018 as well.)

According to the statistics of the employment authority, in 2017, the number of work permits for third-country foreign workers in Hungary increased by 50 per cent compared with the previous year and in 2018, the increase was more than fourfold compared with 2017. The total number of work permits issued was 9,274 in 2017 and 37,920 in 2018. The employment authority differentiates between European non-EU (for example, Western Balkan countries not including Serbia, Russia, Moldova, Turkey), non-European (the most significant countries are China,

<sup>11</sup> Source: statistics of the Directorate General for the Policing of Aliens, [http://bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu](http://bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu), retrieved on 10 June 2020.

Vietnam, India, Thailand, Mongolia and the United States) and non-EU European neighbouring countries (for example, Serbia and Ukraine). Out of the 9,274 work permits, 7,176 were issued for non-European third-country nationals; 88.5 per cent of all the permits were single permits. According to the data of the National Employment Service, the geographic distribution of foreign workers with work permits changed significantly in 2017. The number of workers with a work permit arriving from the neighbouring countries decreased, which can in large part be explained by the waiver granted for Serbian and Ukrainian workers. At the same time, the number of foreign workers coming from third countries increased tremendously overall. The number of Chinese workers increased the most: it exceeded 1,500, which means a 150 per cent increase over 2016. Proportionally, the number of Vietnamese and Kosovar workers also grew substantially. The number of Thai, Indian, Japanese and Turkish workers also increased between 2016 and 2017 (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2018). In 2018, besides the significant increase, there was a big shift among country groups: out of the 37,920 work permits, 23,246 were issued to nationals of Serbia and Ukraine (non-EU neighbouring countries), with 20,537 issued to Ukrainian nationals alone. The difference between the 2017 and 2018 data reflects the change in methodology for calculating the statistics. While in 2017, Ukrainian and Serbian nationals were mainly not calculated in the total number of work permits, as according to the employment authority ‘the work residence permits could be issued without a labour market test for Ukrainian and Serbian nationals, the data on these nationals are included in the statistics of the immigration authority only’ (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2018, p. 5.), in 2018, the same authority decided to count in these nationals (Pénzügyminisztérium, 2019).

The distribution of work permits within Hungary varies considerably: in 2017, 70 per cent, in 2018, 42.9 per cent of them were issued in Central Hungary, the vast majority in Budapest. The Central Transdanubia region (Komárom-Esztergom and Fejér counties) attracted 803 foreign workers in 2011, increasing to 6,311 in 2018. In 2017, the number of work permits issued in north-eastern Hungary dropped by 76.1 per cent compared with the previous year. It is a logical assumption that the decrease can be explained by the waiver granted for Ukrainian labourers: the number of Ukrainian citizens working in 2017 was probably still high in the region, based on geographic proximity, but because of the waiver on work permits, they appear in the immigration statistics. The data for 2018 (following the change of methodology) confirm this assumption, as 14.9 per cent of all work permits (5,665 permits) were issued to this region.

The sectoral distribution of work permits shows the dominance of manufacturing (22 per cent in 2017, 24.3 per cent in 2018) and trade and vehicle repair services (18 per cent in 2017, 14.8 per cent in 2018), followed by communications (12.6 per cent in 2017, 12.2 per cent in 2018) and hospitality (12.1 per cent in 2017, 10.8 per cent in 2018).

In 2017, 35.5 per cent of work permits were granted to people with a college degree, and 26.5 per cent of them to people with eighth-grade or lower qualifications, while in 2018 this was reversed: 10.7 per cent of the work permits were issued to third-country nationals with a college degree and 34.8 per cent to those with only a primary school education. This shows that the group of foreign workers with work permits in Hungary is diverse and underlines the significance of Ukrainian workers in the labour market.

## RECENT TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS NOT REQUIRING A WORK PERMIT IN HUNGARY

The data on foreign labourers in Hungary show a very different picture if we look at the aggregate number of registered foreign workers whose employment does not require a work permit. Workers from EEA member states (EU + Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) do not need a work permit. In addition, as already stated, permanent residents and beneficiaries of international protection do not need a work permit either. Employers need to inform the relevant administrative bodies about employees working without a work permit, which means their numbers are traceable.

Labour shortages have been a feature of the Hungarian labour market for several years. The urgency of the problem became so pressing that the Hungarian government adopted a number of measures to help with the recruitment of foreign labour from Ukraine and Serbia. Practically, these measures entail a simplified work residence scheme in the areas most seriously affected by labour shortages.

Since 1 July 2016, in the relevant jobs, neither Serbian nor Ukrainian nationals, nor their Hungarian employer have to apply for a work permit before signing the work contract. Nevertheless, this simplified procedure only applies for situations in which the foreign worker stays in Hungary for fewer than 90 days. If the worker wishes to stay for more than 90 days, the regular single application procedure is applicable, although there are simplifications in the procedure in this case as well: the employer may apply for the employment residence permit and the employment authority does not need to be consulted by the immigration authority, thus the decision on the application is taken more quickly.

In the case of a waiver from the permit, when the employment of a third-country national is reported to the employment authority, only the following data need be supplied: number of employees, citizenship of employees, form of employment. There are 127 listed professions. They are very diverse, ranging from highly skilled professions such as software engineer, architect, chemical engineer, airplane pilot and energy technician, to skilled professions, such as chef, waiter, cook, nurse/carer, social worker, cash-

ier, customer care assistant, flight attendant, gardener, tailor, carpenter, welder, skilled construction worker, train/metro/tram/bus/trolleybus driver, or unskilled professions, such as loggers, food processing workers, production line workers in food, textile, paper, plastic and the metal industry. In other jobs, the regular procedure applies to all third-country nationals (including Ukrainian and Serbian nationals) to obtain an employment residence permit.

In addition to the administrative facilitation of Ukrainian and Serbian workers' employment in Hungary, the government also dedicated half a billion HUF to labour recruitment in Ukraine. In summer 2016, the Minister for the National Economy signed a contract with a Debrecen-based company, Horizon 2020 Nonprofit Kft, entrusting it with the recruitment of 5,250 Ukrainian workers by the end of that year. The details of the recruitment programme are not known, but it seems that the sum was spent mainly on a communication campaign in Ukraine, on lawyer fees, on travel and training expenses.<sup>12</sup>

Since July 2016, as indicated above, Ukrainian and Serbian workers in certain professions with skills shortages listed in the communication of the minister responsible for employment policy do not need a work permit, although they do need a single permit if the planned employment is longer than 90 days. Thus, the waiver from the work permit means that the employment authority is not consulted by the immigration authority, so the process is much faster than in general cases. In general cases the deadline for assessing the application is 70 days, during which the employment authority conducts a labour market test and checks the future employer and the pre-contract – this part of the process is not conducted so the immigration authority can decide on the application in a shorter time. If the planned employment is not longer than 90 days, then as Ukrainian and Serbian citizens do not need a visa to stay in Hungary for less than 90 days, they may work in Hungary without a work permit. In case they stay longer, they would need to apply for an employment residence permit. By default, a seasonal work permit is needed for employment for less than 90 days; this is applicable for all third-country nationals with the exception for Ukrainian and Serbian workers in skills-shortage positions.

The work permit waiver for Ukrainian and Serbian citizens had a substantial effect on the number and proportion of registered foreign workers in Hungary. Compared with the previous year, the number of registered foreign workers increased by 23.7 per cent (from 10,553 to 13,056) between 2016 and 2017 and dramatically increased to 31,812 in 2018. Interestingly, the number of Romanian workers in 2016 was 5,663 and it went down to 3,889 in 2017, while the number of Ukrainian workers was 789 in 2016, rising to 3,246 in 2017. The number of Serbian workers also increased, from 83 in 2016 to 672 in 2017.

The number of Romanian workers increased in 2018 to 4,095, while the number of Ukrainian and Serbian workers increased significantly to 16,412 and 3,183, respectively, in 2018. Similar to the Romanian data, the number of Slovakian workers also decreased between 2016 and 2017, but increased again in 2018. The changes could be due to the work permit waiver granted to Ukrainian and Serbian short-term labourers: Hungarian employers started to substitute Romanian and Slovakian workers with Ukrainians and Serbians.

The geographical distribution of registered foreign workers in Hungary is concentrated around Budapest (54.5 per cent in 2017 and 57.8 per cent in 2018), just like the distribution of foreign workers holding a work permit. In 2017, the second most attractive region for registered foreign workers was Southern Hungary (Bács-Kiskun, Csongrád and Békés counties), which are close to the Serbian and Romanian borders. In 2018, this changed to Western Hungary (Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala counties – the biggest motor industry companies are in Győr-Moson-Sopron county).

Almost 60 per cent of the registered foreign workers were employed in three sectors: administrative and support service activities (30.6 per cent in 2017 and 43.1 per cent in 2018), manufacturing (17.3 per cent in 2017 and 11.2 per cent in 2018) and in 2017, communications (11.1 per cent in 2017 and 8.7 per cent in 2018); in 2018, construction was the fourth most important sector (with 8.6 per cent of all registered workers). Proportionally, however, the largest increase in registered foreign workers happened in the construction industry: here, the number of registered workers grew by 233.8 per cent from 2016 to 2017 (to 434 workers) and 2018, the increase was more than sixfold (to 2725 workers). Most registered foreign workers are employed in jobs that do not require any training (39 per cent in 2017 and 38 per cent in 2018), and as operators and assemblers (19.9 per cent in 2017 and 31.9 per cent in 2018). The majority (42.9 per cent in 2017 and 54.2 per cent in 2018) of registered foreign workers have eighth-grade or lower qualifications (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2018).

The work permit waiver granted to Ukrainian and Serbian labourers will continue to affect the labour market in Hungary. Several labour recruiting agencies have reacted to this new opportunity and updated their services with labour recruiting in Serbia and Ukraine. Some immigration lawyers' websites dedicate separate pages to the opportunities for Ukrainian and Serbian work migration to Hungary.<sup>13</sup>

Although no information is publically available about it, from informal communications with experts it seems that a labour union for Ukrainian workers is being formed in

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/belfold-archivum/szazmilliokat-fizetett-a-kormany-a-remelt-ukran-munkasokert-3870577/>

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: <https://www.immigrationlawyershungary.com/szerb-ukran>

Hungary. Parallel to this, Hungarian trade unions have mobilized their members, expressing their concerns about the increasing number of foreign workers, who are seen as competitors for jobs (168 Óra, 2019).

According to the study of the Institute for Economic and Enterprise Research, the number of companies employing foreign workers was decreasing between 2008 and 2016. In 2016 and 2017, their number was stagnating at 20 per cent, and increased slightly (to 22 per cent) in 2018. In terms of future prognoses, in 2017, the proportion of companies that were planning to employ foreign workers was 19 per cent, while in 2018 it was 21 per cent. This study found that the ratio of companies planning to employ foreign workers was highest (60 per cent) in Komárom-Esztergom county, which is one of the most economically developed counties, and the smallest in Hajdú-Bihar (10 per cent) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (13 per cent), counties that are much less developed (Hajdu, Horváth, & Nábelek, 2018).

Based on the recent tendencies regarding the hiring of foreign workers and the state's efforts to attract labour, primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, but also from Asian countries, the research team concluded that the empirical part of the research should focus on this population as well. As recruitment agencies play a significant role in the process of hiring foreign workers in Hungary, the stakeholder interviews for this entry point were to be conducted with representatives of the job intermediaries.

The other entry point can be deduced from the dichotomy observed in recent tendencies in the numbers of foreign workers in Hungary. Desktop research found that besides the recently expanding numbers of untrained workers recruited primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, there is also a large population of high-skilled workers coming mainly from Asian countries. Our hypothesis is that the appearance of this segment of foreign workers might be partly the result of the growing internationalisation of Hungarian higher education.

## STUDY MIGRATION

Based on a recent study on the internationalisation of Hungarian higher education, the proportion of foreign students continues to grow: from 3.9 per cent in 2006, it grew to 6.1 per cent in 2011 and 9.6 per cent in 2016. Medicine and health-related programmes are the most popular (Tempus Közalapítvány, 2018).

In autumn 2017, more than 32,000 students with foreign citizenship started full or partial studies at a Hungarian higher educational institution, making up 11.4 per cent of the total student population in higher education. The huge proportional increase has also been caused by the continuous decrease in the total number of students in higher education, but the nominal growth is still significant.

Over recent years the national composition of foreign students has shown a gradual change. In 2007, 51 per cent of international students were citizens of the four neighbouring countries with significant ethnic Hungarian communities: Serbia, Romania, Ukraine and Slovakia. By 2017, however, their relative share was only 21 per cent. The main explanatory factor is not so much the decrease in their number, but the steady increase in the number of students from non-European countries, most remarkably China, Turkey and – in the case of medical studies – Iran. Masters programmes attracting students from Syria, Azerbaijan and Jordan have also contributed to this changing picture (Kasza – Hangyál, 2018).

The phenomenon has attracted growing public and media attention. Interestingly, foreign students have never been targeted by anti-immigrant political rhetoric, although assessments of the education schemes attracting foreign students are not uniformly positive. Although universities clearly profit from the fees paid by foreign students or their sponsors, experts see a growing competition between Hungarian and foreign students for the limited vacancies, with those coming from abroad are favoured over domestic students (who bring in less money to the university). The same is said about universities' strategies: many higher education institutions have been developing their foreign student programmes at the expense of their domestic education schemes, which again narrows the options of Hungarian students (F. Szabó, 2019).

Although the majority of foreign students arrive at their university programmes on private schemes or on the basis of international cooperation between Hungarian and foreign universities, there are a number of significant state policies that shape the profile of foreign students in Hungarian higher education. The most remarkable and influential is the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme, which is responsible for one in every six foreign students in Hungary, most of them from non-European countries. The Hungarian government launched the programme in 2013. The core mission is to increase the number of foreign students in Hungary and to encourage Hungarian higher education institutions to attract top foreign students. The programme includes a one-year preparatory training in Hungarian before the education proper begins. The programme is based on bilateral educational cooperation agreements signed between the ministries responsible for education in the sending countries/territories and Hungary or between institutions. Currently more than 50 sending partners are participating in the programme from four continents.

Students can apply for study programmes at BA, MA and doctoral level, as well as preparatory courses. Apart from the tuition-free education, the Programme provides monthly stipends, medical insurance and housing allowances for scholarship holders. Grantees of the programme must apply for their visas and residence permits on their own, but they are exempt from the fees that normally apply. The Stipendium Hungaricum Programme is oper-

ated by the Tempus Public Foundation under the supervision of the Ministry of Human Capacities.

According to the statistics of the Higher Education Authority, the number of Stipendium Hungaricum students was 2,929 in the academic year 2016/2017. The top five sending countries are China, Jordan, Azerbaijan, Tunisia and Mongolia. According to the Tempus Public Foundation's statistics, the number of Stipendium Hungaricum applicants in the academic year 2017/2018 was 15,005. Interestingly, the highest number of applications were submitted from Pakistan, Jordan and Syria (in all three countries, the number of applications was over 1,000). The number of Chinese applicants was under 300. Unfortunately, the number of students accepted in the programme in 2017 is not available. It would be interesting to see whether an ethnic preference is applied in the selection process. The highest number of foreign students applied for medical programmes (197), computer science (146) and international relations (144) ("Stipendium Hungaricum – Data, facts and statistics," n.d.).

Based on the growing number of international students the research team concluded that the second entry point of empirical research should be study migration that results in long-term labour migration. In this segment, students who study and work in Hungary both under Stipendium Hungaricum and under other schemes were interviewed. In addition, coordinators of student programmes were surveyed.

## **PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO MIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION**

Surveys measuring public attitudes toward foreigners and ethnic minorities have been conducted in Hungary since 1992. Successive surveys show that rejection of immigration and negative attitudes toward immigrants in the country increased drastically after 2015, the culmination of the refugee crisis. According to a longitudinal survey conducted by Tárki, a Hungarian social research institute, the proportion of those who firmly opposed the reception of refugees hovered around 30 per cent before 2012, but rose to 40 per cent by 2015, and after that shot up to 58 per cent within a year (Ádám, 2016). In parallel with the increase in the proportion of those who firmly oppose immigration, the group of those at the other extreme (the roughly 10 per cent who would more or less let everybody in unconditionally) has virtually disappeared since 2015. Level of education and geographical location have a significant impact on people's attitudes on immigration. People in smaller settlements (villages) are more likely to reject refugees and immigrants than people living in the capital; and while two-third of people with vocational school education are against immigration, less than one-third of those with a graduate degree think the same way.

According to recent research based on data from the European Social Survey, Hungary shows remarkable differences from most European countries in terms of the unconditional rejection of immigrants. While the overall level of rejection in Europe decreased from 15 per cent to 10 per cent between 2014/15 and 2016/17, in Hungary the already high level of unconditional rejection (43 per cent) rose significantly (to 62 per cent) (Messing/Ságvári, 2019, p. 44).

In terms of extremely negative attitudes towards migrants, Hungarians rank second among the 20 European countries examined in the research. The main finding is that people who feel politically disempowered, financially insecure and without social support are more likely to develop anti-migrant attitudes (*ibid.*, p. 38.) The research suggests that the strength of norms as set by political and public discourse plays a decisive role in determining the degree to which negative attitudes turn into explicit rejection and exclusion. Hungary is a strong example of the tendency for anti-migrant attitudes to be strongest and most likely to intensify in areas in which migrants are hardly present, where people do not have personal experiences with immigrants, but at the same time lack the feeling of safety and control over their own lives (*ibid.*, p. 20).

Political parties and public actors are divided on the issue. Besides the governing right-wing, conservative parties, the far-right Jobbik party actively cultivates anti-immigrant discourse. Other opposition parties (mostly left-wing and/or liberal formations), although highly critical of the government's stance, seldom openly emphasize the humanitarian and moral responsibility of the state, probably because they fear losing votes.

The issue of growing foreign labour in Hungary has received attention in the Hungarian media as well. One independent news site reported the case of a large tyre company seeking machine operators, whose job advertisement listed knowledge of Ukrainian as an advantage because of the large number of Ukrainian employees (Haszán, 2018).

Other media outlets have reported on factories employing Indian and Costa Rican workers. According to the report, an agrarian company in western Hungary employs Asian workers, who remain in Hungary for a year, then fly back home. The director of the company admitted that the labour shortage is so serious that companies do not require any training from the workers, the only expectation is that 'workers are actually willing to work'. Another factory hires Serbian and Costa Rican workers. According to the reporter, some of them have their families here, but most of the Costa Ricans are young, single men (Wiedermann, 2018).

## 2.

## ENTRY POINTS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND CASE STUDY SELECTION

Based on the recent tendencies of hiring foreign workers and the state's efforts to attract labour primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, but also from Asian countries, the research team concluded that this phenomenon should be one of the entry points to be investigated in the empirical part of the research. As recruitment agencies play a significant role in the process of hiring foreign workers in Hungary, the stakeholder interviews for this entry point would be conducted with job intermediaries.

The other entry point can be deduced from the dichotomy discerned in recent tendencies concerning numbers of foreign workers in Hungary. Desktop research found that, besides the recently expanding numbers of untrained workers recruited primarily from Ukraine and Serbia, there is also a large population of high-skilled workers, coming mainly from Asian countries. Our hypothesis is that the appearance of this segment of foreign workers might be partly the result of the growing internationalisation of Hungarian higher education.

Based on the growing number of international students the research team concluded that the second entry point of the empirical research should be study migration that results in long-term labour migration. In this segment, students who study and work in Hungary were interviewed, together with coordinators of student programmes.

### CASE 1: HIGHER EDUCATION – AN OPPORTUNITY OR A SETBACK?

Hungarian higher educational institutions (both public and private) actively target international students through various forms of study programmes and structures. The state-run Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme, Erasmus programmes and private universities offer a continually growing portfolio of English language based educational opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students for third-country nationals (non-EU citizens). This phenomenon is an essential driving factor in Hungarian migration.

The research team conducted ten semi-structured interviews: eight with current or former students already active in the labour market (see Table 1) and two local service provider professionals from the international offices of two different universities (one private and one public state-run institution). The sample is heterogeneous in many ways. Gender representation is equal, and seven nationalities are represented. The research considered the length of time already spent in Hungary. The shortest period is one year – showing the perspective of 'freshmen' – the longest is eight years; the average in our sample is three and a half years. Except for one person, all the students studied in

Table 1  
International students interviewed in the higher education entry point

Nationality	Age	Gender	Length of stay (in month)	Type of work	Type of residence permit at the time of the interview
Palestinian	25	F	36 (HE1)	knowledge worker	working based
Kenyan	20	F	12 (HE2)	manual labour (as student)	study based
Pakistani	26	F	12 (HE4)	manual labour (as student)	study based
Armenian	28	F	60 (HE3)	knowledge worker	working based
Chilean	36	M	48 (HE8)	knowledge worker	working based
Indonesian	33	M	48 (H5)	knowledge worker	working based
Pakistani	28	M	36 (H6)	manual labour (as student)	study based
Afghan	30	M	96 (H7)	knowledge worker	in transition*

Note: \* His study-based residence permit expired but he has applied for the working residence permit and is still waiting for the result.

English and shared lectures with other foreigners. Two students received the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship, one studied with another type of government grant and two students had a private scholarship at the Central European University. Three students maintained self-financed studies in public universities.

Despite the limited number of participants and the broad spectrum of their profiles, the diversity represented in the sample is a definite asset. Such data allow us to develop a comprehensive insight into the challenges, expectations and opportunities of young third-nationals integrating into the labour market. Focusing on and analysing individual experiences, this chapter aims to build a more general picture of these narratives.

### **Motivations and resources – a career anywhere**

The background of the interviewees – age, nationality, financial situation, level of education – provided the main motivating factors for studying in Hungary. Amidst this diversity, one common pattern is visible. The first and strongest motivation was to continue higher education in a foreign country in English, while Hungary was not in the target at all, as a potential career opportunity or a preferred destination. The students were focusing on their studies and not on other long-term opportunities the country may provide. Although this was not always explicitly mentioned during the interviews, the general attitude was evident: almost all of the students looked at Hungary as a temporary resort, only a stepping stone. As the Armenian MA programme graduate put it, 'I came here because of the university and not because of the country' (HE3). Regarding the 'final destination', Germany and Canada were the most frequently mentioned. Others were motivated by circumstances, such as a close friend or a family member who had already moved to Hungary or the region.

Students, however, who come from countries that are affected by armed conflict or mass poverty (Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kenya) did refer to better general living conditions. But even then, they did not specifically target Hungary, leaving home basically for 'any' new country. The Palestinian female research participant explains this phenomenon. 'I feel comfortable here compared with everything with my country. I just feel that I can build my career here. In Palestine, I can't start from zero. I can't. I can build myself anywhere, then I can go back, and I might achieve things there. But starting from zero, this is the opportunity that Hungary gave me' (HE1).

Applying to Hungarian higher education was motivated by the significant number of accessible scholarships. Two of the students attended private university programmes, but they were entitled to free tuition, monthly living allowances and accommodation in university dormitories. The other six students enrolled at public universities. Four

of them had tuition-free studies, financial support and optional accommodation in dormitories. Meanwhile, two students were self-financed for a certain period of their studies. Although private institutions are reported to provide higher quality services, it is essential to highlight that the social and financial conditions of these two groups were similar during their studies. All of them started to work during their studies for the same primary reason: to meet their daily financial needs. Career plans were not necessarily considered at first. At the same time, most of the interviewees said that low living costs were the only country-specific condition they took into consideration. On the other hand, the students realised early that previous savings, family support and scholarships would not be enough to cover their needs.

Friends and relatives were deemed crucial as sources of information about general conditions. Fellow countrymen already living in Hungary provided critical support during the first stages, but also later. Most students emphasized that this was a misguided strategy, and that they should have put more effort into seeking active connections with locals instead of comfortably mixing with their own groups. The Chilean male student highlighted this during the interview. '*I noticed this about Chileans in Hungary in a Facebook group, that most of the time, people are lost. Instead of doing their research, they ask their questions. Also, they give answers which are not correct, let's say. The answers are given from very personal experience. [...] Many times, people rely on the social network, rather than doing their research*' (HE8).

This study contains reflections on two private institutions, the Central European University and the International Business School. Students and stakeholders reported a well-functioning care system as the central resource for solving issues related to administrative processes, housing or job seeking. State-run universities provided support services to some extent, but according to the interviews, these were more ad hoc than systematic. Other potential local resources, such as the same age groups, fellow students and civil society, were rarely reported. Each student mentioned – some just indirectly – that at the beginning they relied on their families' financial support. After a while (proportionately with the length of stay), they had to be self-supporting.

While students only indirectly mentioned the role of the family's financial support, both of the professionals working in the international offices of universities referred to it as critical. They added that some of the students could afford to pay, but many of them borrow money from their extended family to start the programme, and they often run out of money after the first couple of semesters (HES2, HES4). To summarize this situation, it is vital to highlight the opposing forces that less wealthy and poorly informed students may find themselves caught between. On one hand, the monthly living allowance provided, for example, by the Stipendium Hungaricum Programme or the grant from the Central European University, is not enough to



cover basic needs. On the other hand, family support is only available for a limited period, so many students have to seek a job alongside their studies. In the current labour market situation, such students are in a weak position because they do not speak Hungarian, and their networks are small. They are still without relevant work experience, legally they are eligible only for part-time jobs, and their schedules are hectic because of their studies.

### **Circumstances of arrival – swimming in deep and unknown water**

First impressions of Budapest were mixed, similar to the first experience of dealing with this new urban cultural environment. Excitement, disappointment, stress, depression and challenge were the words used to describe the feelings and experiences that arose during the period of arrival. A nineteen-year-old female Kenyan student, for example, declared: *'I've never been away from my parents and family, and being almost 8,000 miles apart was kind of ... really, I was really nervous, but I was really happy when I came here, I got to meet good friends who made it feel like home, so the surroundings were good, so I do not, I cannot complain'* (HE2). The role of the community, especially in this context, was significant in other interviews as well. Orientation in the city or on the university campus, and arranging accommodation were provided mainly by peer helpers. A substantial part of the interviewed students got in contact with people from their own countries and received intensive support during the first days. At the same time, the few who did not find existing supportive community networks talked about high stress, being lost, confused and even depressed sometimes.

The students who were enrolled in private universities underlined the importance of the services the international office provides to newcomers. The support centres acted as a community organiser and connected newly arriving students based on their nationality. They also operated an online apartment rental page only for their students. Such organised services are rare in state-run institutions. Coordinators have less capacity and resources to cover the needs of a significant number of international students. Often, the helping hands of 'random' Hungarians supplemented the missing services. The experience of 'supportive teachers, helpful landlords, patient coordinators' was a recurrent narrative.

Similar patterns are identified in the general role of educational institutions after the induction period. Those who studied in state-run universities instead linked their positive experiences to the university staff rather than to the institutions. Examples of individual kindness, personal care and efforts are mentioned often, but little was said about systematic institutional services. In contrast, the two students who graduated from the Central European University emphasised the importance of the official services offered by different units of the university, such as accommodation, mentoring, career consultation

and labour market integration, as well as job opportunities during studies and after graduation. Access to these was based on an institutionalised, predictable and reliable system. Internship programmes are also important services that universities provide besides the study programmes.

In the interviewees' experience, public universities were successful as regards the compulsory internships included in the core curriculum. On the other hand, the graduate and undergraduate students represented in this research found jobs alone or with the assistance of their networks. This is probably because public institutions are barely embedded in the international labour market. That was confirmed by an employee of a state-run university career centre (HES2). Their students fall back on their networks when seeking career opportunities.

Even though there has been a significant increase in the number of non-EU students enrolled in Hungarian higher education, there are substantial obstacles in the transition towards the internationalising labour market. The question remains whether this is down to strategic policy choices or a missed opportunity due to lack of resources and/or competence.

### **Career – plenty of jobs, but plenty of obstacles**

Five interviewees (Afghan, Palestinian, Armenian, Indonesian and Chilean) reported, with some minor differences, that their lives and careers, in general, have developed throughout their studies and current work. Characteristic of this group is that all of them have graduated – so they are no longer students – and have found better jobs than they could expect in their home countries. It is their current jobs and career opportunities that keep them in Hungary. As the Armenian business administration graduate expressed it: *'I have some hopes with this organisation because it is a huge organisation, and it operates in many countries, so I am not focusing [mainly on] Hungary ... I am only here because of my job'* (HE3).

The two Pakistani interviewees shared the feeling that they had experienced something of a decline in their career positions and lifestyles. What they have in common is that they are self-financed and have to pay tuition fees, which means that employment is crucial. In their home country, they both belong to the middle class and had already started a career. In Hungary, their financial situation and working opportunities have changed dramatically, leading to stress and disappointment. This situation was interpreted by the male Pakistani student as follows: *'A better study programme is one thing; the other thing is if I can make enough money. When I came to Hungary, I thought people are nice here, things are good, but if you have no money, then what [are] you gonna do?'* (HE6). The other student living in similar circumstances drew similar conclusions. *'Like if I knew more about Hungary, I would not come here, yeah, for sure. I didn't know ... Even [though]*

*I knew most [aspects of the situation] after I applied, and I got selected ... I didn't know that the salary will be quite low' (HE4). Both of them have found only low paid physical work due to their lack of Hungarian language skills. They had no other choice, but to work to pay the tuition and to be able to maintain their already limited lifestyle.*

Those who have experienced similar conditions have been significantly affected by it. Low-paid jobs disappoint those who have had more prestigious jobs and social positions at home. The female Kenyan student, however, takes the opposite view when describing her situation as a hotel cleaner. *'The first reason [to work] was I am trying to secure myself a good spot. So that by the time I am graduating, I have a... maybe if I have been working with this company for this long, they can give me a full-time job. Because [...] I don't think I am ready to go back to Kenya, because I am not [going to] be doing anything, so that was the first reason just to kind of secure a good spot for a job before this visa expires and I have to go home' (HE2). She is the youngest among the students we interviewed and arrived last in Hungary.*

Last but not least, this is her first official job. She looks at it from a different angle and sees it as a strategic opportunity. This is the first step in independent living and long-term career development.

Those who have better financial conditions can focus directly on their career plans, and they are eager to take even unpaid internships related to their studies. From the perspective of the international coordinators, a common aspiration is that, after a successful internship, the students will be offered a job at the same company. International students face more difficulties finding an internship than Hungarians, however. Even multinational companies prefer Hungarians at the intern level because, at this stage, fluency in Hungarian is essential. As a result, international students face a significant linguistic barrier when trying to enter the labour market as interns.

As long as someone has a study-based permanent residence permit, the legal conditions for finding employment are not tricky. At the same time, the transition after the end of their studies to a work-based permanent residence permit is a complicated and lengthy legal procedure. The Chilean male who had completed an MA in public administration described the obstacles that he faced when he was searching for employment. *'As soon as they see that you are not Hungarian, sometimes they just say no, because you are foreigner, and they don't want to deal with working permit processes. They don't support that' (HE8).*

The number of companies willing to assist in the visa procedure of a third country citizen is limited because of the very long (90 days) official period and the extra administrative effort required. It is a significant obstacle faced even by educated young professionals already familiar with the country and its working culture. All of those who

managed to stay after their studies had to cope with this. The Indonesian business administration specialist also talked about this period: *'I have got many phone calls for an interview, but the first thing they asked, "Are you eligible to work in Hungary?" I said: no, but yes, if you are willing to provide my working visa. At that moment, mostly they just run away' (H5).*

## Working conditions

According to specialists, shared service centres, embassies and 'ethnic economies' (restaurants, travel agencies) are the main 'sectors' in which non-EU students may find a job. A student coordinator of a social science department added the following distinction: *'Students with a financial and HR background can more easily find jobs in Hungary. With a commercial background, it is almost impossible for them to find a job in their field, and they usually end up finding a job outside their profession' (HES2).*

Full-time employees who have already completed their studies (the Afghan, Palestinian, Armenian, Indonesian and Chilean research participants) started their jobs within a year and continued their career at beginners level. Three of them got a position that is not related to their studies, but working conditions in general are regarded as adequate, with the potential for promotion. The ones who were successful in finding employment and could manage the transition procedure are legally 'tied' to their employers. They are mainly satisfied, but they still do not have free access to the labour market. Whenever they would like to apply for a new position (changing their employer), they have to start the administrative procedure again.

The experience of working beside one's studies is in a different dimension compared with the experience of third-country workers. The legal framework is more permissive in the case of the students. Similarly to Hungarians, foreign full-time students can take up part-time jobs, up to a maximum 24 working hours per week without any migrant-specific regulations. At the same time, there are fewer job opportunities and working conditions are more complicated. All the research participants in our sample have experienced this contradiction. Due to workplace obligations, sometimes they even had to skip classes. Social life and leisure time both declined. It is just a bad memory for those who have already passed this stage. Nevertheless, most of those who still study and work are rather disappointed. One of them, the male Pakistani student, highlighted another factor: *'So, I tried so much to find a good job ... but nobody gave it to me for good money. From that time, I could not find a good job for myself. I applied to many companies, but if they are looking for English speaking people, they still need someone who speaks Hungarian and English' (HE6). These circumstances – the narrowness of the labour market – entail the risk that financially vulnerable people may engage in unregistered employment.*

In most cases, good working conditions slightly modified the initial immigration strategy, and positive experience motivates them to settle or at least to stay longer than they planned initially.

According to both stakeholders (HES2, HES4), the following sectors are accessible and have already gained a good reputation among foreign students: shared service centres, embassies, 'ethnic economies' (restaurants, travel agencies). The same was emphasised by a graduate (see above): *'Students with a financial and HR background can more easily find jobs in Hungary. With a commercial background, it is almost impossible for them to find a job in their field, and they usually end up finding a job outside of their profession'* (HES2). The female Palestinian student explained the reasons that made her leave Palestine, contrasting it with her opportunities in Hungary. *'But Palestine will never give me the opportunity to start from the very beginning without [having done] anything else before. [...] A state employee, getting 500 dollars per month as salary and this is the job for the rest of my life, I won't be promoted, I won't be getting a salary or something because I don't have someone [to help me] ... I am not involved in corruption, no one from my family, not one of my friends, not one of my club, so this is the biggest thing that I can get'* (HE1). Moreover, later on, she described what she is expecting in her current workplace that might make her stay: *'Feeling comfortable ... respect from others around [me]. [A situation in which] I believe that no one will take my opportunity [from me] just because they know [someone] [...] This is what [would] make ... me feel comfortable that I know that I can get what I deserve; no one will steal my opportunity'* (HE1).

### Administrative processes – in the labyrinth of the Immigration Office

In general, the legal aspects of administrative procedures concerning study-migration are accepted; there are no complaints about discriminatory laws or unrealistic conditions. The Pakistani student doing an MA in software engineering said: *'To apply for the residence permit is not too difficult, in my opinion. From the legal aspect as a self-financed student, you have to show a sufficient balance on your account. Just make sure you will not be a burden on the country or the government. Everybody wants to see that if somebody is coming to study here, he is not sleeping outside. These kinds of things they were asking for, which is acceptable for me. Obviously, if you are going somewhere, you need to obey, or you need to accept the rules and regulations and everything. So for me, it was not a big problem'* (HE6).

The circumstances and administrative procedures combined with the language barrier can cause great frustration, however. The female student from Armenia said: *'Many people are getting really disappointed when they are dealing with immigration office directly, so it is probably the first factor that disappoints people about Hungary'*

(H3). Potential ignorance on the part of state officials, and conflicts because of the lack of a common language were mentioned in each interview. The Indonesian student shared his experience of how the tone changed when he started to speak Hungarian.

*'In government offices, I always use Hungarian because I found that they do not speak English. Even in Miskolc, one lady said: "Another foreigner...", so I started to speak Hungarian, and she was quite surprised, and she mentioned that she did not know I can speak Hungarian... if you cannot speak Hungarian, they do not want to [help] you'* (H5). More often, procedures to apply for the residence permit, changing address, or requesting a tax number were surrounded by impatience, anger, verbal aggression, discriminatory attitudes and rudeness. The experience of the nineteen-year-old female student from Kenya reflects this. *'When we don't understand what they want us to do or we do it wrongly, they will be impatient and no, they won't say anything but you can just tell the attitude and the look on their faces. [...] Maybe because they did not grow up seeing many immigrants at their time, and maybe they are not open-minded about immigrants coming to their country. I don't know what might be the reason'* (H2). Those who could minimise direct contact with the immigration office – because an agency took care of the process, or the university offered a similar service – avoided a significant stress factor.

Delays in the immigration-related administrative procedures were common and often negatively affected other aspects of life as well. Some missed the registration deadline for the academic year because of the slow visa procedure. For the same reason, one of the students could not secure accommodation and had no other chance but to rent a more expensive private room. One other interviewee had to wait three months for the work permit after graduation and risked losing the job offer; meanwhile, she was not allowed to travel. One international student coordinator estimated that out of 100 student visa applications, usually 15–20 face some difficulty. *'The Immigration Office is horrible. Sometimes they don't touch a student visa application for months, and they start dealing with it right before the semester starts. (...) It seems that there are countries that are particularly disliked by the Immigration Office, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. We provide the students with all the documentation they need for their residence permits. We even organise a group visit to the Immigration Office. Still, they are vulnerable to the Immigration Office's shortcomings and the eight-hour wait there'* (HES4). Delays in administrative procedures started domino effects and, as a direct consequence, caused harm and restricted integration.

Administrative issues with the authorities typically appear during the first few months after the students arrive. In many cases, immigration officers are the first direct Hungarian contacts outside of the university departments. It

often negatively affects how the students perceive Hungarians in general.

In the other hand, the second stakeholder interviewee (HES2) drew attention to the opportunity provided by the newly introduced residence permit for the purpose of job-seeking or entrepreneurship. She said that this nine-month window for third-country students is a pull factor, and a lot of third-country students wish to seize this opportunity.

## Social life – missed opportunities

Undoubtedly the length of stay influences social networks, similarly to language skills. Those finishing their first academic year still have only a few and loose relations outside their ethnic group. The Kenyan student would advise new students as follows: *'Make as many friends as possible from anywhere to have a good network, you never know when or where a friend can help you ... I don't have many of them [Hungarian friends]. I think that's one of my challenges. As you've heard, most of my friends are Kenyan, and I think that's something I'd do differently, working towards making more friends who are not Kenyans'* (HE2).

Social networks consist primarily of friends from their ethnic group, family members, other international colleagues or classmates, and only a limited number of Hungarians. All the interviewees shared the general perception that Hungarians do not understand English or do not want to speak English. Again, the language barriers are behind the distance between the international students and locals, and the same can be observed among the causes of negative experiences. The Armenian former student gave a detailed interpretation of this phenomenon: *'I really regret that I didn't at least make a bit of effort to speak Hungarian. Because I think it is also psychological that the locals get excited when a foreigner speaks their language. You get special treatment if you speak their language, but I think that it is not about Hungary, but it is generally the case with other countries as well. And when I didn't speak Hungarian but I was also trying to communicate in the shop or a public place, I thought that Hungarians are rude. Then when I got some Hungarian friends, I realised that this is just a common perception of Hungarians. Maybe it is a psychological thing that if they don't speak the language and then you are trying to communicate something, they get nervous. They reflect this nervousness through being rude, but in fact, they are nice people, they are really nice and also not aggressive, they don't want to harm you, they are not treating you as a bad person, they are just, it's the way they express themselves'* (HE3).

English, the official study language, is not the first language of any of the people interviewed. Therefore, meeting the various educational requirements needed an extra effort on a day-to-day basis. It is not surprising that learn-

ing Hungarian and socialising with Hungarians were not among the primary strategic goals. In the longer term, however, this is likely to create certain difficulties if one wishes to continue one's career in Hungary. The average length of time spent in Hungary among the interviewed students is 3.5 years. Still, family ties are reported as substantial and vital financial and emotional resources. Half of the research participants have family members (brother, sister, wife, boyfriend) in Hungary or the region. These networks and connections are essential at the beginning, but to maintain such close dependence in the long run, again, might narrow the chances of labour market integration.

## Living in Hungary – staying or moving on

Five students had the chance to live in university dormitories within the framework of their scholarships. At the time of the research, this had changed. Only one student remained in a dormitory. All the others were living in shared private apartments.

In some cases, two or three people share a one-room studio and cannot afford more privacy. Although renting is expensive in Budapest – compared with students' budgets, especially at the beginning – the research participants did not complain about it, nor about landlords. The main problems were conflicts with flatmates (other international students). To maintain private accommodation in the centre of Budapest is among the factors that might force students to take or search for jobs with poor conditions. Moreover, many mentioned that they were not adequately informed about housing conditions and working possibilities. Four research participants went to study or to do an internship in countryside towns (Kőszeg, Pécs, Eger and Miskolc). Their experience was often very positive compared with Budapest. They found these towns more relaxed, affordable, reported better functioning services for international students, more helpful locals, and many emphasised that they have not experienced any form of racism there. At the same time, they all returned to the capital to continue their professional life. All considered settling in Budapest because of the job opportunities and their own migrant communities and networks.

The most evident pattern is that none of the students arrived with a long-term plan of settling in Hungary, but that changing circumstances came to modify this attitude. The Afghan student, who has been in Hungary for eight years, explained his relationship to the question of staying or leaving. *'I [have] spent more years in Budapest than anywhere else. I [f]ell in love with Budapest. Let me give you a specific example: I went to Austria to extend my passport. I was there only for one night, but I felt that I'm far from my home, I felt strange, I tried to storm back to Budapest. In Budapest, I feel it is my home'* (HE7). He is exceptional in the sample and represents the previous scholarship system, under which international students were expected to complete their studies in Hungarian as

part of much longer university programmes.<sup>14</sup> Despite all this, he is uncertain whether he will settle in Hungary. *'Of course, if I [c]ould get a good job in Budapest, I would go for it. I would be happy about it. But if not, you know, it is difficult. Even Hungarian people, if they do not get a good chance in Hungary, they have to go to other countries. Everyone tries to live* (HE7). Along similar lines, although none of the others seem certain about settling in Hungary, present trends seem to indicate that many of them are becoming more and more attached to their lives in Hungary. Not so much to the country perhaps, but rather to a workplace or a newly established family. These are, of course, somewhat random (natural) life events and not well-thought-out, long-term strategies. When asked directly about their plans, it was at least clear that none were planning to return home in the short or medium term. Italy, France, Germany, Norway, Canada, Spain were mentioned among the targeted countries.

## Conclusion

As a national strategy, the immigration of students from non-EU countries is motivated by the growing number of scholarships and English-language educational programmes. Many see this offer as a stepping stone, an entry point to the labour market. The intentions of the authorities, as discernible in current migration policies, are not necessarily in line with the career plans of graduating students. The current legal and administrative context does not support the integration of these highly educated young knowledge workers into the Hungarian labour market.

The research has identified another significant gap that causes tension in the system. The monthly living allowances (Erasmus, Stipendium Hungaricum, CEU grant) are not enough to cover basic needs. This means that students have to mobilise other financial resources. Previous savings and/or support from the family are necessary, but many of the non-EU students do not have such a background or ongoing support during their studies. Thus they have to work. But access to the Hungarian labour market is limited for these students. Generally speaking, they have little work experience, do not speak Hungarian and their schedules are hectic.

<sup>14</sup> In recent decades, Hungary – before establishing the Stipendium Hungaricum programme – has offered a range of state-run study grants as part of the country's international development strategies. Applicants were expected to complete their studies in Hungarian (after a year of language preparation) and they were enrolled in unified university studies for 4–6 years. Since the Bologna Process in higher education, study programmes have been structured in terms of BA and MA levels. Stipendium Hungaricum primarily offers grants in MA and PhD studies, mainly in English. BA studies in Hungarian remain part of the portfolio but in a significantly smaller number. EU harmonisation processes, changes in the structure of higher education, the enormous dominance of English in academia and the impact of international trends are among the driving factors of the transitions in the Hungarian educational landscape.

## CASE 2: INTERMEDIARY AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

The initial research concept in Hungary focused on slightly different labour migration attitudes from what came to be the final direction of the field research. Desktop research looked at different groups of non-EU workers employed in various sectors of the Hungarian economy. Nationality, profession and educational background played an important role in selecting potential research areas. In the empirical part of the research, it was challenging to keep the focus on identifying categories.

In terms of nationality, profession and previous education, the research sample in Case 2 is slightly more diverse than the non-EU student group – indeed, such a small and heterogeneous sample is not representative. We were able to describe similar trends, however. Reflecting on the circumstances, we also understood the 'Intermediary and temporary employment agency' entry point category a little more broadly. For each employee in Case 2, a third party was involved in hiring, administration and control procedures, albeit of course to varying degrees. Internal relocation, labour hiring, AISEC intermediation and a foreign agency have all played their parts in the experiences of the foreign workers in the research sample. Having said that, the nature of the connections between the employees and the intermediaries varied. Personal experiences, motivations and other factors that we investigated were, however, similar. In the analysis, the individual perspective is emphasized, although we also examine the general legal and social context.

Unlike in the previous case study (1), it was challenging to include the stakeholders' viewpoints in our assessment. First of all, the recruiters of the interviewed workers were not willing to participate in the research project. We had to involve stakeholders from other companies. Both were experts in HR-related issues, but they were not able to represent the recruiters' perspective adequately.<sup>15</sup> No doubt their interviews had a significant impact on our understanding and shaped our interpretation, but in the core text, less emphasis is placed on quoting them directly.

The research participants come from Mexico, Turkey, Uganda, Ivory Coast, Georgia and Ukraine, representing three sectors: IT customer service, construction and factory production. Only two of them – and this is one of the limitations of the sample – are untrained workers; the rest are highly educated knowledge workers.

<sup>15</sup> The interviewees represented the senior HR level of the intermediaries, but regarding their main tasks they were rather responsible for employee integration than shaping strategic corporate decision-making.

Table 2  
**Non-EU citizen labour migrants interviewed – job intermediary entry point**

	Age	Gender	Length of stay (in months)	Type of work	Type of job intermediary
Mexican	38	M	8 (J12)	Software engineer	Internal relocation
Turkish	29	M	8 (J15)	Engineer	Labour hire
Ugandan	25	M	12 (J13)	IT manager	AISEC programme
Turkish	46	M	10 (J16)	Architect	Labour hire
Ukrainian	23	M	18 (J17)	Factory worker	Foreign agency
Georgian	28	F	8 (J11)	Architect	Labour hire
Ukrainian	23	F	1 (J18)	Factory worker	Foreign agency
Ivory Coast	23	M	5 (J14)	IT manager	AISEC programme

### Motivations and resources – starting a career anywhere

Similar to the student group, the workers primarily chose the company rather than the country. Whether we look at the motivations of the Eastern European low-skilled factory workers or of a top manager in the international IT sector, we found a similar attitude. The Turkish architect – who had already gained experience on other international construction sites – underlined this: *‘Especially I am not looking for the country of the company. I’m interested in projects where I can express myself, where I can give my contribution. So, Hungary was not something special. They could have told me Georgia or an African country ... if the project is OK, I think about going’* (J16). Financial conditions were the most often mentioned motivating factors. Potential savings and better living conditions were attractive.

Besides material interests, other goals were mentioned as well. These are typically rooted in the individual’s life stage. In some cases, the satisfaction of these demands overrode the financial issues. Gaining professional experience or their commitment towards their profession was important for the highly educated construction industry employees. Each research participant compared what they had left behind in their home countries to their current

conditions. The following table summarises how the foreign workers felt about the changes in their life.

Except in one case, the research participants’ initial motivations and expectations were met by what they experienced in Hungary. The satisfactory rate is higher than among the students.

They also listed improved living conditions, potential family reunification, the ‘EU experience’<sup>16</sup> and better security in general. The young Turkish engineer explained in detail why he left Turkey and what had caused his frustration. *‘Actually we had a company in Turkey, and we had bad times, and that is why I had to work somewhere [else], I really did not want to be here, but because of the bad crisis in Turkey, I had to leave. [...] I’m engaged, and I’m planning to marry, and this is also a problem for me, I should go to Turkey. Actually, I [counted on being able to do paid] overtime ... and [being able to] save some money, but unfortunately, it’s not like [that] here’* (J15). All the others were pleased with their decision to move to Hungary. The Ukrainian factory workers reported the most significant change in living conditions among all the interviewees. They left Ukraine because of the poor living conditions, the high unemployment rate and limited future possibilities. (Only the Ugandan IT manager mentioned similar driving factors.)

Table 3  
**Subjective and objective perception of current conditions**

	Type of work	Salary	Living conditions	Overall feeling of satisfaction
Mexican	Similar	Similar	Similar	Satisfied
Turkish	Similar	Similar	Worse	Disappointed
Ugandan	Earlier intern	Higher	Better	Satisfied
Turkish	Similar	Lower	Better	Satisfied
Ukrainian	Similar	Higher	Better	Very satisfied
Georgian	Similar	Higher	Better	Satisfied
Ukrainian	Similar	Higher	Better	Very satisfied
Ivory Coast	Earlier student	Higher	Better	Satisfied

<sup>16</sup> In the eye of the employees not only the job position or the reputation of the company was important. By itself working in the European Union was an important development in their career.

The 23 year-old Ukrainian manual worker introduced himself as follows: *'I'm from Ukraine, and there I don't have the chance to live an average life, so I have come here because it is a good starting point and I will see what happens'* (J17). The female factory worker, also from Ukraine, added: *'It wasn't a difficult decision, we haven't had many work opportunities at home, and the jobs available to us were in horrible conditions. Here we can develop ourselves; we can save money and support our families'* (J18). Like the Ukrainians, other research participants were encouraged to emigrate by someone close to them (friend, parent, former boss, or colleague). The interviewees, in most cases, reported that the relevant information about working and living conditions in Hungary generally came from family members and friends already working with the targeted companies. Their job applications were supported by these networks, as well as by recommendations.

On the other hand, in every case, intermediary actors were the primary resources and facilitators of the next steps – administrative procedures, arrival, and housing – albeit in slightly different ways. The relevant companies and agencies took care of all the following issues: working permit, insurance, taxation, accommodation, transportation. None of the employers reported the need to mobilise other resources to start their life in Hungary. Unlike the students, none of them had to spend time and energy to create the necessary conditions. Their higher satisfactory rate is due – among other things – to the fact that they did not have to engage with the administrative procedures of immigration directly.

Except for the factory workers, there was no need to mobilise financial resources, such as savings. No significant investments were required for transition. The two Ukrainian labourers emphasised that it took four months to raise a specific budget that covered the period in Hungary until they received the first wage.

### The role of intermediary and employer

As explained above, the arrival of the employees was safe and pre-arranged. This reduced potential stress. The companies organised transportation. For example, the engineers and architects were picked up from the airport by a private driver. The manual workers were welcomed by their friends and colleagues, and translators were provided by the agency to help with check-in to the workers' accommodation. The following description by one of the Ukrainian workers is a good illustration of the contrast between the arrival of the students and that of the workers in our sample. *'We arrived in Budapest directly to the hostel; our friend was here. We got the room, and we could arrange for the three of us to stay in the same room. Then, we just threw the bags in the corner and rushed into the city for sightseeing'* (J18). The potential stress, frustration, instability and of being lost, often mentioned by the students, were reduced by the various services provided by the employers. As a result, excitement and fascination characterised the first days.

The overall impression of the intermediary and employer companies was the same as with regard to the support provided during the administrative procedures. Regarding employment-related issues, the intermediaries completed all necessary applications without actively involving the clients in the process. A Ukrainian worker explained why he had trusted the intermediary company: *'My parents arrived here half a year earlier than I did. When they were looking at this option in Hungary, they received photos, documents. Information about the company, the job, and the workers' accommodation. Their experience was that about ninety per cent of these things were correct. I was not asking questions when I came because I knew already what I could expect'* (J17).

Regarding the stakeholder interview with the HR officer, the labour hire company (employing the Turkish and Georgian professionals) guaranteed the relevant services in the original contract. The internal relocation of the Mexican software engineer was brought about by a deal between the Hungarian and American subsidiary companies. Part of the employer's rights remained with the sender company, but the migration procedure was managed mainly by the Hungarians. AISEC charges its members a certain fee, and in exchange candidates have access to job offers and labour market-related training. The Ukrainian workers came through a Ukrainian agency. For services such as application procedures, transportation, housing and translation, the company takes a 'commission' from each month's wages. It is essential to highlight that the exact legal conditions of this exchange were not clear from the interview. The interviewees did not know the circumstances and did not show any interest in them.

### Working in Hungary

The average age of the workers in our sample was 29 years (youngest 23 – oldest 46). For all of them, their current position is their first assignment in the European Union, and for six of them, it is the first job outside their home country. The average time already spent in their current positions is nine months (shortest 1 – longest 18). Our research findings are based on a relatively young group of workers at the beginning of their careers. This is evident in how they have been affected by the 'Hungarian experience': skills and career development, opportunity to continue studies and the 'EU experience'. Except for the two oldest persons, the Turkish architect (46) and the Mexican software engineer (38), all the workers considered their position as a stepping stone towards an international career or, as the young Turkish engineer sees it, towards higher positions at home. *'Turkish companies care if you have been working abroad. They don't even know about it; they don't even think about it, they just say this guy went to Europe he should be really experienced, let's take him. It's a stupid reason'* (J15). It may be beneficial to take a closer look at this aspect. The 29 year-old engineer was the construction manager on a project in the Turkish capital for three years, and mentioned that his skills exceed

what is needed in his current job. In his view, the 'EU experience' is essential in the Turkish labour market and not necessarily in terms of professional attainments. Later on in the interview he gave an example. *'I thought it would be better here. You know what!? Illegally we cut some trees on the construction site here, but I think in Europe it should not be like this. But here, interesting things are happening, but no one says anything [...] I've seen other construction sites pour their waste into the river [...], and people do not care about it'* (J15).

Besides the career interest, a good general atmosphere in the workplace was essential for all the workers. The Ukrainian labourers are employed in a supplier's factory producing diesel fuel filters for the car industry. The male engineers are working on a construction site in Budapest beside the Danube, in a rapidly developing residential area. The female architect is working in the back-office. They were hired by a Romanian company that provides labour hire and site management to a Hungarian investor and subcontractors. In both places, female employees talked positively about the general atmosphere in the company in comparison with their previous jobs. The Ukrainian female factory worker said: *'I have been working in a different place because I've changed often. My priority condition was the treatment that I've received from bosses and/or the behaviour of my colleagues. It happened many times I (or my colleagues) were treated with disrespect. We were not officially registered. We had to work even when we were sick. Our basic rights were violated'* (J18).

Employers do not provide the same visa application support to family members (family reunification). The Turkish engineer's fiancée wanted to come to Hungary, so they had to start a private procedure: *'They told her we don't want to be the sponsor for your work permit. But to have a work permit, you cannot do it by yourself. You should have a company supporting you, but companies say that you should go to them when you have a work permit. So, you are in an unresolved loop'* (J15).

The foreign workers in our sample (except the software engineer) are treated as if they are single. As a result, they are more dependent on the temporary working community of the company. The female Georgian architect confirmed this interpretation: *'When you are working in a company we are looking at [it like] it's our second family ... we are spending several hours [a day] here'* (J11).

Through detailed questions we elicited that the work-related role of the employer is seen as more diverse and less favourably. Other than the factory labourers, all the employees had some complaints about working conditions. Working arrangements, contracts, general terms, fixed or extra working hours, weekend shifts and salary are of central importance to those who arrived almost exclusively to work. In what follows, we analyse the question of working hours, mainly from the perspective of those working in the construction industry. Working time is particularly flexible in construction, which often gives rise to headaches.

The Turkish engineer and architect help us to understand this better: *'Anything unexpected happens in the construction site – for example, the concrete arrives late – mainly, the foreign workers are expected to stay'* (J16). The young Turkish engineer believes that this is not a coincidence. Moreover, it is a hidden rule, an unspoken practice that single foreign workers – because they are alone in Hungary and work is their only duty – in this sector are more adaptable with regard to flexible working schedules. But this interpretation directly leads to unequal treatment, as the other Turkish construction specialist described.

[Interviewer: Is there any difference between Hungarians and foreigners?] *Yes, of course. Hungarians are not coming on weekends. Not the workers, I'm talking about the office staff. Workers, if you pay them, they are coming, but they don't want to. And they are right. One may have a family, and he wants to spend this time with them. He is right, especially in summer, for example. One of them said that school is closing, I want to be with my family, and I have kids. He was right, and he didn't come on Saturday.* [Interviewer: But can a foreign worker say the same, for example, you if you had your family here?] *No, I can't say. [...] You should act like Hungarians, and go home at 5 o'clock, never stay. Once you remain till 10 o'clock, they will ask you the next day to do the same'* (J16).

At the same time, wages do not necessarily reflect such flexibility, and it has a destructive impact, as the engineer pointed out. *'I have a [particular set of tasks to do], but I am [also] doing a lot of other people's jobs. I think they bring here Georgian and Turkish guys because they don't know their rights, this is the main reason. We work in Hungarian public holidays, it is impossible. [...] We needed this job because our country is in crisis; that's why we are here. But the funny thing [is that it's] the same money as in Turkey, so I don't know why I am here'* (J15). The extra workload did not surprise any of the employees. But they did complain, because these extra working hours were not paid even though their contracts stipulated 40 hours. The senior architect also criticised this state of affairs, but was not surprised. The young engineer – without previous international experience – was considering returning home. He was aware of the extra workload, and the fact that he would be expected to work on weekends. After all, he had applied for this position because he believed that the company would follow EU labour regulations, and that extra hours would be paid and he could save more money. He was disappointed that, instead, he had to work overtime without being paid for it.

Regarding time and money, the factory employees were highly satisfied in light of their original expectations. The workers' previous experience of Ukrainian factory conditions was very harsh. As one of them put it: *'We expected something like in Ukraine or even worse, but we have been positively surprised, and it's like a dream. We have two aluminium factories in our city, and this is what we can compare it with. It is very heavy physical work for 12 hours a day, standing throughout each shift, carry-*



ing heavy objects. The aluminium dust left us coughing badly by the end of the day' (J18). Predictability, safe conditions, staff care, appreciation, better working conditions in general, and a significantly higher wage, including the possibility of accumulating savings – these were the keywords describing what was missing in their home country and what they benefited from in Hungary. 'One shift is 12 hours, and after three days, we got three days off. It's not a hard job at all. Even if we have to stand for the whole 12 hours. The heaviest object I have to carry is no more than 5 kg' (J17). 'What we do here is a lot easier' (J18), added the female worker.

In one of the interviews with representatives of the intermediary actors, a recruiter shared similar thoughts about different conditions in Hungary and Ukraine: 'They get better pay here than at home, they really want to work, and they are very happy to work' (J153).

Analysing migration tendencies and policies requires an understanding of the relevant questions from a broad perspective. But any assessment should include the differences between individual perspectives and the overall picture. Individual expectations and evaluations of conditions often relativise regulations and the impact of various policies. For example, regulated working hours are a particular benefit to factory workers.

### Administrative processes – dependency factor

Administrative procedures were efficient, and in most cases, the employees did not have to follow or be aware of what was happening. They submitted the required documents to the companies, and they managed the rest. In some minor cases (family member's visa application, delivery of documents and registering a new address), the employees had to engage with the bureaucracy, and their experience was not different from that of the students. Long delays, officials only speaking Hungarian, burdensome bureaucracy and exhausting waits in the immigration office were repeatedly mentioned. The Georgian architect explained: 'Standing and hanging around for five hours in that office is something unbelievable. They have this online form ... to solve this problem ... to [complete] this documentation online, but even Hungarians cannot understand [it]' (J11).

The difference between a privately managed administrative issue and the work-based residence permit managed by the company is enormous, as the interview with the human resource manager of the hiring company made clear. Furthermore, excellent relationships with the government or government-related companies makes a significant difference. 'The company qualifies as a top employer [kiemelt munkáltató], which makes the administrative burden of employing foreign workers a lot easier and the process more flexible' (J153). It gives the employer a stronger position and facilitates administrative procedures. The

employees are tightly connected to the companies, and they have minimal space to find better working conditions with different companies. The students reported less dependency in terms of their legal status and were freer to change plans, discover other opportunities and develop more flexible lifestyles. Among the workers, notwithstanding the abovementioned general satisfaction, vulnerability may quickly develop because of the massive dependency on the employer.

### Life in Hungary – 'singles' with dependents at home

Social networks are based mainly on family members in the home countries and current colleagues in the workplace. Local Hungarian friends were mentioned in most of the conversations, but not as potential resources to rely on. The amount of working hours and the language barrier limit networking capacities and interest.

Families play a crucial role in workers' lives. The young IT manager from the Ivory Coast mentioned their emotional support. 'I'm kind of a reserved person. I can be open to people [when] I really feel the trust. For instance, I [m] used to talk[ing] to my family. I know they will be there always for me if I need emotional support. So, I think I would go to my dad [...] we can talk' (J14). Families are behind financially driven decisions, and they are the purpose of home visits. Only one interviewee did not have to support a family, but all the others have dependents at home. The money sent home makes a significant contribution but it is not the only one. The foreign workers in our sample are not the sole breadwinners in their families. For example, the Ugandan IT manager sends home (not necessarily regularly) a certain amount of money that is used to provide better education for his younger siblings. The factory workers decided to send money every month: 'The family really needs the support. It was our own decision to send money. The average salary in Ukraine is 8,000 hryvnias [€300], here we can make enough that we can send home 4,000 hryvnias [€150] and it doesn't hurt us at all' (J18).

It was characteristic among the students that they depended on their family's financial support, and they had to work alongside their studies to cover basic expenses. It is the other way around in the workers' case; they earn enough to send money home and cover their needs, including spending their limited free time as they prefer. They take longer holidays and visit the family and friends at home. While some students could hardly afford yearly home visits, all the employees spent their long vacations in their home countries. The workers spent their leisure time with sports, and visiting ruin bars and other tourist sites. The fact that they can afford such activities had a positive impact on how they perceive their living conditions.

Fear and bad feelings characterised the original expectations about potential obstacles to integration and rela-

tions with the host community. Indirectly or directly, all the research participants referred to Hungary's dominant anti-immigration reputation. All the interviewees explained similar concerns. The African members of the AISEC program put it directly: *'When I read all these things, I kind of had a fall back and asked myself, OK I don't know if I will be really welcomed where I am going, and it kind of got to me ... I have got concerned because every time I just made a random Google search anything related to Hungary was all about the anti-immigration movements'* (J13). While the students rarely encountered cases of verbal aggression and xenophobic acts, the employees did not report any cases at all. The Mexican software engineer said the same. *'Hungary, despite the political climate that may seem to be surrounded by anti-immigration and what-not, I haven't seen a single ... concerning [instance of] mistreatment from anyone [...] my perception is that I'm being welcomed, I feel safe, and I feel my family is safe'* (J12).

## Plans

One general pattern is discernible in the research sample: even though most of the workers are satisfied by their conditions, none of them plans to stay in Hungary for the long term. The exception is the Turkish architect: *'I have two kids, they need school education, and I want to move them here for the long term, but even this is full-time work, construction business always has risk, we have no future, you don't know [what may be coming] next'* (J16). His reasons for considering Hungary as his future home are evident. He is the oldest in the sample, his family lives in Ukraine and he has two children just reaching school age. He is looking for stability, security and quality education, which international temporary employment could not offer him.

Returning home was also not an option for the majority. The 23 year-old factory worker who followed his parents

to Hungary one and a half years ago is not willing to return home and yet does not plan to stay: *'I have no idea if I will ever return home. I don't know how to answer this question. Everything is so difficult in Ukraine, and only time will tell whether things, conditions, life can change there or not'* (J17). The recently arrived Ukrainian youth expressed the most specific plan: *'The first plan is to save money for two or three years, and then we will see whether it is enough for anything'* (J18). These interview quotes reflect on the individual's current situation, such as the length of time already spent in Hungary, age, family status, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and conditions at home.

## Conclusion

Although it made analysis more difficult, the diversity of our research sample can be considered an advantage. It allows us to compare the results with the study of the non-EU students, and through the interpretation of individual cases, one can identify the areas in which policy development is possible and needed.

It is essential to highlight the general circumstances of the non-EU workers again, regardless of their position, type of assignment or specific legal relationship with their employers. They live in a legal and lifestyle 'bubble'. Within this bubble, most of the time, they feel comfortable, but opportunities to step out from this status are very restricted. These firm boundaries – such as legal dependency on their hiring company – prevent them from pursuing their broader interests. It also prevents workers from developing career ties with the Hungarian economy in the longer term. On the contrary, the lack of social integration and even isolation strengthen non-EU workers' feeling that Hungary is a temporary stop (no longer than the two-year work permit) that may enhance their international labour market position.

### 3.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Making statistical data sources more transparent and more easily accessible would help service providers to become better informed about the situation of foreigners in the labour market. Furthermore, it might help to shape public opinion about immigrants and immigration, as the media could rely on more accurate sources of information.

Increasing the legal mobility of foreign workers in Hungary could be a partial solution to the labour shortages in the private sector, and would reduce irregular secondary movement across workplaces and even countries.

The complications and difficulties in the visa procedure hinders the integration of skilled professionals into the private sector labour market. Easier access would help to develop the capacities of small and medium-sized businesses, and made them less dependent on recruitment and temporary job agencies.

Harmonising and optimising labour law and regulations would also help. Different authorities often do not know what the applicable regulations are, and their systems often do not correspond; in other cases, there are bureaucratic duplications and overlaps. The constant delays and conditions in the immigration office discourage applications, and impose a burden on all parties involved: employers, employees and the administrative staff as well.

It would also make sense to connect the social care sector (both state and NGO) with the relevant private and government stakeholders to develop an alternative care system, able to deal with the growing number of people in need of special assistance among foreign students and migrant workers.

The newly developed system of recruitment companies and temporary work agencies is still under-regulated. Setting up operational protocols and quality assurance systems is essential in order to minimise the risk of exploitation, and enhance the protection of the workers they are dealing with. Professional training and competence development of the staff of these companies could significantly raise the quality of their services.

Anti-migration discourse in the local and international media has adversely affected Hungary's reputation. It weakens Hungary's position in terms of labour market competition and has a negative impact on social and economic sustainability. A more balanced and differentiated political and social discourse on immigration is needed in order to change this negative tendency. Planning and implementing awareness-raising activities, as well as developing new communication strategies for key actors are much needed.

## REFERENCES

- 168 Óra (2019). Külföldi vendégmunkások vehetik el a magyarok munkáját a szakszervezetek szerint. Published in 168 Óra Online on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2019. <https://168ora.hu/itthon/kulfoldi-vendegmunkasok-vehetik-el-a-magyarok-munkajat-ok-nem-tiltakoznak-a-jogsertesek-ellen-168895>
- F. Szabó, K. (2019). *Hazai felsőoktatás: külföldiek előnyben*. Népszava Online. [https://nepszava.hu/3050777\\_hazai-felsooktat-as-kulfoldiek-elonyben](https://nepszava.hu/3050777_hazai-felsooktat-as-kulfoldiek-elonyben)
- Gödri, I., & Tóth, P. P. (2005). *Bevándorlás és beilleszkedés. A szomszédos országokból Magyarországra irányuló bevándorlás az ezredfordulón*. Budapest: KSH Népeségtudományi Kutatóintézet.
- Hajdu, M., Horváth, Á., & Nábelek, F. (2018). *Rövidtávú munkaerőpiaci prognózis – 2019*. Retrieved from MKIK Gazdaság- és Vállalkozáskutató Intézet website: [https://gvi.hu/files/researches/557/prognosis\\_2018\\_tanulmany\\_181123.pdf](https://gvi.hu/files/researches/557/prognosis_2018_tanulmany_181123.pdf)
- Haszán, Z. (2018). *Olyan sok már az ukrán vendégmunkás a Hankooknál, hogy ukránul tudó magyarokat keres álláshirdetésben a cég*. <https://444.hu/2018/10/04/olyan-sok-mar-az-ukran-vendegmunkas-a-hankooknal-hogy-ukranul-tudo-magyarokat-keres-allashirdetesben-a-ceg>
- Kasza, G. – Hangyál, V. (2018). *Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Holders' Expectations and Attitudes*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest.
- KSH. (2008). A nemzetközi vándorlás főbb folyamatai Magyarországon. *Statisztikai Tükör*, 2.(177.). Retrieved from <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/nemzvand.pdf>
- Kolozsi Á. (2016, November 17). *Sosem látott mértékű a magyarországi idegenellenesség*. [http://index.hu/tudomany/2016/11/17/soha\\_nem\\_latt\\_merteku\\_az\\_idegenellenesség\\_magyarorszagon/](http://index.hu/tudomany/2016/11/17/soha_nem_latt_merteku_az_idegenellenesség_magyarorszagon/)
- Messing, V. – Ságvári, B. (2019): *Still Divided But More Open; Mapping European Attitudes Towards Migration Before and After the Migration Crisis*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/15322-20190505.pdf>
- Migration Issues in Hungary. (2017, August). Retrieved September 11, 2017, from International Organization for Migration website: <http://www.iom.hu/migration-issues-hungary>
- Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium (2018). *A külföldi állampolgárok magyarországi munkavállalásának főbb sajátosságai a 2017. évben*. Készült a Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium Elemzési és Bérpolitikai Osztályán. [https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/7/3/3/doc\\_url/stat\\_kulf\\_mvall\\_mo\\_adatok\\_2017.pdf](https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/7/3/3/doc_url/stat_kulf_mvall_mo_adatok_2017.pdf)
- Pénzügyminisztérium (2019). *A külföldi állampolgárok magyarországi munkavállalásának főbb sajátosságai a 2017. évben*. Készült a Pénzügyminisztérium Elemzési és Bérpolitikai Osztályán. [https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/7/2/7/doc\\_url/Elemzes\\_a\\_kulfoldiek\\_magyarorszagi\\_munkavallalasarol\\_2018.pdf](https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/7/2/7/doc_url/Elemzes_a_kulfoldiek_magyarorszagi_munkavallalasarol_2018.pdf)
- Stipendium Hungaricum – Data, facts and statistics. (n.d.). <https://www.tka.hu/international-programmes/7862/data-facts-and-statistics>
- Tempus Közalapítvány. (2018). *Nemzetközi hallgatók a hazai felsőoktatási intézményekben*.
- Wiedermann T. (2018). *Megháromszorozódott két év alatt a külföldi munkavállalók száma | G7 – Gazdasági sztorik érthetően*. Retrieved June 25, 2019, from G7.hu website: <https://g7.hu/allam/20181003/megharomsorozodott-ket-ev-alatt-a-kulfoldi-munkavallalok-szama/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Márton Bisztrai** has a degree in cultural anthropology. During the first chapter of his academic life, he had several research projects in Palestine. He is the author of the book *Hít, Fegyverek, Szüzek – Keresztények Palesztinában* (Faith, Guns and Virgins – Christians in Palestine). Since 2015 he is working with refugees and other vulnerable migrant groups both in the field and in researcher positions. Besides Menedék Association for Migrants, he has been working for SOS Children Villages Hungary and in UNHCR.

**András Kováts** obtained degrees in social policy and special education at ELTE University, Budapest. He is the director of Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants and a part-time research fellow of the Institute for Social Sciences. He has worked on immigration and asylum since 1995. He has participated in several national and international programmes related to immigrant integration and migration policy development either as partner or as professional leader. Menedék Association provides services to foster the social integration of refugees and other immigrants in Hungary under his coordination. He regularly performs teaching, expert and consulting work for national and European organisations and institutions. He has authored or edited dozens of professional publications.

**Eszter Kovács** completed her PhD at Pázmány Péter Catholic University's Doctoral School of Political Theory in Budapest. She holds master's degrees in International Studies (from Corvinus University of Budapest) and in Nationalism Studies (from Central European University, Budapest). Currently she is a research fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies of the Centre for Social Sciences. Her research interests include migration, diaspora communities and diaspora and kin-state policies.

**Vivien Vadasi** is a lawyer, graduated from Eötvös Loránd University. She joined Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants in September 2017 as the Association's legal adviser. She has been working in the field of migration, asylum and integration since 1997. Previously she worked as a civil servant in the Hungarian central administration: until May 2004 she had worked for Hungary's accession to the EU in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. Between 2005 and 2012, she was Justice and Home Affairs counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU responsible for migration, asylum and integration. She returned to the Ministry of Interior of Hungary in 2012, where from 2015 until June 2016 she was the head of the Migration Unit in the Department for EU Cooperation.

## IMPRESSUM

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Regional project "Flight, migration, integration in Europe"

Publisher:

Office Budapest Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

1056 Budapest | Fővám tér 2–3.

Tel.: +36-1-461-60-11 | Fax: +36-1-461-60-18

[fesbp@fesbp.hu](mailto:fesbp@fesbp.hu)

[www.fes-budapest.org](http://www.fes-budapest.org)

Project director: **Beate Martin**

Project coordinator: **Csilla Malomvölgyi**

Commercial use of all media published by the FriedrichEbert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.

**Other related documents:**

Mikołaj Pawlak, Luliia Lashchuk:

Entry to a market, not to a state.

Situation of migrant workers in Poland

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/17066.pdf>

Zvezda Vankova, Bisztra Ivanova:

Temporary home or final destination?

Situation of migrant workers in Bulgaria

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/17069.pdf>

Toró Tibor, Kiss Tamás, Viorela Telegdi-Csetri:

Moldovans: outsiders or insiders?

Situation of migrant workers in Romania

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/17070.pdf>



## PERPETUAL TEMPORARINESS

### Situation of migrant workers in Hungary



With the intensifying labour shortage the scale of immigration for the purpose of work has been increasing in the past few years. The urgency of the problem became so pressing that the Hungarian government adopted a number of measures to help with the recruitment of foreign labour from Ukraine and Serbia. Highly qualified third-country nationals have an EU regulation that allows them to take up gainful employment during their studies. Despite all this, the opportunities for immigrants to integrate into the labor market and socially remained limited, regardless of social status.



The complications and difficulties in the visa procedure hinders the integration of skilled professionals into the private sector labour market. Easier access would help to develop the capacities of small and medium-sized businesses, and made them less dependent on recruitment and temporary job agencies. It would also make sense to connect the social care sector (both state and NGO) with the relevant private and government stakeholders to develop an alternative care system, able to deal with the growing number of people in need of special assistance among foreign students and migrant workers. The newly developed system of recruitment companies and temporary work agencies is still under-regulated. Setting up operational protocols and quality assurance systems is essential in order to minimise the risk of exploitation, and enhance the protection of the workers they are dealing with.



Anti-migration discourse in the local and international media has adversely affected Hungary's reputation. It weakens Hungary's position in terms of labour market competition and has a negative impact on social and economic sustainability. A more balanced and differentiated political and social discourse on immigration is needed in order to change this negative tendency.

For more information visit:  
[www.fes-budapest.org](http://www.fes-budapest.org)