

# Exploring Hungarian Policy Coherence for Development: The 'Education vs. Migration' Nexus

A policy report<sup>1</sup> prepared for

The Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid (HAND Association)

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## ***Introduction***

The aim of this policy report is to investigate the interplay between Hungary's higher education policies towards foreign students and professionals (especially from developing countries) and its migration policy. The research seeks to identify instances where education-based development assistance might come into conflict with other public policy goals such as reducing illegal immigration. However, instances of student visa denial on false (or at least not substantial) grounds may also occur and will be part of the analysis. The main research questions would be: Does Hungary synchronize its educational and migration policies towards developing countries? Are there any cases of clear conflict/incoherence?

### ***1. Hungary's development aid in national context***

According to the latest available data, total Hungarian development aid in 2011 amounts to 100 million euro (0.11% of GNI); out of this, more than 80% is distributed through multilateral mechanisms

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(CONCORD-Europe 2012). Hungary works with around 80 partner countries (beneficiaries), though most of bilateral aid is channeled to Afghanistan and its neighbors (ibid). Overall, the amount of bilateral aid decreased in 2011. National commitments to official development assistance (ODA) remain below the target of 0.33% of GNI agreed with the European Union upon Hungary's accession in 2004.

This is partly due to lack of political urgency and salience both on the side of public officials and politicians and on the side of citizens. According to a 2012 Eurobarometer survey on development aid, around **69% of Hungarian respondents admit they know nothing at all on where EU development aid goes** compared 53% EU average (Eurobarometer 2012). Furthermore, the same study indicates that Hungarians, at least those that are aware of ODA, list different focus areas of support for developing countries than most other Europeans. According to the survey, 43% of Hungarians give priority to projects and measures stimulating agriculture and food security as opposed to the EU average of 29%. Moreover, 41% of Hungarian respondents put emphasis on aid fostering economic growth (29% EU average). Conversely, activities targeted at protection of **human rights and developing education rank worse in Hungary (24 and 19%, respectively) than in the European Union** as a whole (34 and 33%, respectively). This empirical evidence on public understanding (or lack of it) on promoting development through education may prove important in the later analysis for this policy paper.

Researchers agree that currently aid efforts are diffused in too many areas and sectors (CONCORD-Europe 2012). Lovitt and Rybkova (2007) show that like other former socialist countries, Hungary relies on its specific transitional experience to market economy and liberal democracy to promote its aid efforts to third countries. This is done through transfer of know-how. Although competing for attention with other policies such as health care, food production and environment protection, education finds priority in Hungary's ODA documents – special focus is given to “*education*

(graduate and postgraduate), expert and technical expert education, curriculum development, distance learning” (2007: 19). Lovitt and Rybkova (2007) also recall that substantial part of development aid efforts of the Hungarian government are tightly aligned with foreign policy goals, especially to neighboring countries with ethnic Hungarian minorities. Another goal stems from the government's involvement in NATO and its Euro-Atlantic commitments which explain why Hungarian bilateral aid efforts are channeled to countries like Afghanistan and Iraq.

## ***2. The immigration policy perspective***

Hungarian immigration policy has been shaped and affected by its accession into the EU and later by the completion of its successful application of the Schengen area. According to the official statistics of the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN), there were 214,003 legal migrants residing in Hungary in 2009 with either a (permanent or temporary) residence permit or immigration permit, which constitutes approximately 2% of the total population (Koppány, 2010: 3).

European integration has had a profound impact on the overall application, enforcement and changes of and to the policy itself. The harmonisation process and the transposition of EU Directives, the Schengen Acquis, the Hague Programme and other EU policies and legal provisions have all had their individual impact on the way immigration is viewed in the official circles in the Hungarian government, however, the visa policy which is one of the primary points of focus for this report has seen some important changes which have had a significant impact on the ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring states of Hungary, citizens of its bilateral aid recipients and the multi-lateral aid destinations. After Hungary joined the Schengen area in 2007, the Schengen legal provisions regarding alien policing, deportation and other matters pertain to multilateral agreements that have been struck between the EU and other countries which Hungary has to adhere to. However, on a localized level the issuance of visas and the border control policing is still a local phenomenon which has seen significant

changes after the government came into power in 2006.

In 2008 the Hungarian Border Guard Service was integrated into the Police force. The visa regulations being introduced after Hungary's accession to the Schengen area have made it more difficult for Serbian citizens and other bordering citizens to enter Hungary. In a period of 10 months in 2008, 681 actions of illegal migration have been recorded on the Hungarian borders (Sallai 2008). Ukrainian, Serbian, Kosovar and Moldovan citizens are the ones who are mostly involved in illegal border crossing according to the authorities, however **all three states are recipients of Hungarian aid in one form or another with Kosovo being a major recipient**. In 2008 Franco Frattini was recorded as having said *"We need to be one step ahead to the increasingly better organized networks of terrorists and criminals who have discovered the lucrative traffic in human beings, drugs and weapons. Innovative and effective border controls have to strike a difficult balance between ensuring the free movement of a growing number of people across borders and guaranteeing greater security for Europe's citizens..."* This attests to Europe's and by extensions Hungary's commitment to increasing border security and trying to control the inflow of illegal residents from non-EU countries which pass through Hungary as transit destination on the way towards Western Europe.

In the year 2007 alone Hungary extended a total of 900 million HUF of combined aid towards the states of Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia alone. Among the projects was included the provision for educational opportunities including the construction of educational facilities in these states and the opportunity if these citizens being allowed to apply for scholarships to study in Hungary. However, according to the Research Brief published in 2008 titled 'Counting the uncountable: Data trends across Europe', *"The largest flow of irregular migrants to Hungary is constituted by the group of overstayers, i.e. by persons arriving legally, but extending their stay beyond the permitted time limits. No reliable estimation exists for the number of overstayers"* (p 2). In the year 2007 alone the number of illegal immigrants in the country was estimated at more than a 160,000 people and this number has increased

many times after the financial crisis and Hungary's accession to the Schengen area. Half of this population, according to experts (Counting the Uncountable, 2008), consists of ethnic Chinese people, followed by Ukrainian, Serbian, African and other Asian immigrants.

The research project titled 'The Visa in Practice at the Serbian and at the Ukrainian borders' by Luca Váradi, 2006 discusses the lack of scientific studies and literature on visa procedures and regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the argument is made that visa procedures only increase complications for citizens with the actual filtering of potential illegal immigrants from legal and solid candidates is done at the border by the border guards, not at the consulates where visas are issued. **Consulates tend to be very liberal in the issuance of visas. However, when the candidate shows up at the border crossing, the visa is invalidated sometimes with good reasons and sometimes without it.**

**First Respondent:** The respondent was part of the Roma students who took the Roma Graduate Preparatory Programme at CEU in 2012. Unfortunately for her, she could not secure admission to the CEU MA programme after the course. She says, she felt very sad when she did not get the scholarship. However, she doesn't think that participation in the preparatory course should necessarily be preconditioned on getting admission to an MA programme in the end. She thinks that even though she didn't get admission, the programme is still useful. As she puts it: "because I have done the English Language Programme, I have more chances and networks to apply for internships with international organisations in Europe, since I can now speak English." She did not need a visa to enter Hungary because her country is part of the EU, but all her colleagues who needed visas did not have much difficulty because "accommodation, visas, and everything was arranged for them" by the financiers of the programme, she added.

*I: Response from interviews conducted with students facing difficulty in obtaining visas*

In the 10 month period focused on by Sallai Janos in 2008, the majority of visas rejected by the border guards were Serbians and Moldovans. The policy incoherence lies in the matter that the border guards are supposed to reject certain visas to enforce the idea that illegal aliens are being apprehended and the regime is not relaxed about illegal border crossing or overstaying the visas. With the influx of

Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Vietnamese illegal immigrants, the situation become more complicated, with the Serbian, Moldovan and Ukrainian students wanting to attend universities in Hungary and African students from Ethiopia and other African countries always at a risk of being returned back and their visas invalidated at the border if the guards do not deem their documents to be in order. This situation could even arise in a situation where the inviting authority is a chartered and recognized educational institution in Hungary.

There are some reported instances where students who are qualified to study in Hungary could not make it simply because they have been **denied residence permit by the immigration office**. Even though sources suggest that the latter situation is a very rare occurrence, the European Network on Migration in a recent study has acknowledged there are few instances where this has occurred, but it is still unclear whether such students were fellowship holders with enough financial background to support themselves (European Migration Network, December 2012). The most common reasons for visa rejection according to the immigration office include: lack of adequate proof of financial sustainability; failure to communicate even at the basic level during counsellor interviews; forgery of supporting documents or lack of official accreditation of the institution granting the admission among others.

Another issue has been the abuse of the student route to migration. While there are indications that the study route to Hungary has been abused sometimes by **international students to gain permanent entry in to the EU**, there is no specific policy in place to make sure students actually return home after their studies. According to the European Migration Network, in many cases, primarily Chinese, Vietnamese, Egyptian, Indian and Pakistani citizens, once they enter the territory of Hungary they either fail to show up at the university or, following the registration during the first semester, they establish an undertaking and extend their residence permit with the purpose of gainful activity. There is no law that prohibits employers from employing graduates from the developing

countries after their studies, including those who study under Hungarian fellowships. Therefore the use of the student route to seek permanent employment in Hungary and other EU countries has become an obstacle to educational cooperation as a convenient tool for promoting development in Third World countries.

### ***3. The higher education perspective***

There are 71 institutions of higher education, both public and private, which operate in Hungary (Ministry of Education and Culture 2009: 2). Out of this number 18 institutions are state universities, 7 are non-state; 12 colleges are state-owned and 34 are non-state (ibid.). To promote Hungarian language and culture, the government had established the Balassi Institute (Balassi Intezet) which educates and provides financial aid to a limited number of foreigners studying in the country.

Some of the higher education institutions offer programs not only in Hungarian but also in other, internationally more popular languages such as English, German or French. However, the actual number of students studying in foreign-language programs in Hungary is not that high. For example, in ELTE, one of the leading universities based in Budapest, the total number of full-time students in 2008/2009 was 28 141 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2009:28). Of those only 120 people studied in language different from Hungarian.

In 2009, 18,154 foreign students (representing 4.9% of the high education student demographic) were enrolled at Hungarian higher education establishments, which is a fraction about half as large as in the UK, France and Germany (Móricz, 2013). There is a preponderance of foreign students in higher education who are pursuing a medical degree: they make up almost 50% of the student population at Hungarian medical universities (Móricz, 2013). For international students from Central Europe, Hungary has become the most popular destination to pursue higher education in recent years; this owes to the increasing status of preparatory courses, universities and colleges (EMN, 2012:

4). Due to a lack of statistical data, it is impossible to determine how many third-country students stay in Hungary or whether they migrate to other labour markets after the completion of their studies (EMN, 2012: 29).

**Second Respondent.** Another respondent says he paid around 760 euros for flights and other related expenses just to attend his visa interview in Kenya. According to him there is a consular officer who comes occasionally from Kenya to Nigeria and Cameroon to attend to visa applicants. However, the day he went to Nigeria from Ghana, he was told the consular had left for Cameroon. However, since he needed a visa to Cameroon, he was left with no option but to proceed to Kenya where an entry visa was not required. He said even though the visa processing was easier and fast at Kenya, taking only weeks, a typing error in his name by the embassy delayed it for additional three weeks. This caused him to report about a month late to his school in Hungary. The respondent describes it as “a very frustrating experience.”

*2: Response from interviews conducted with students facing difficulty in obtaining visas*

Surprisingly, when it comes to students pursuing higher education, who qualify as voluntary migrants, there is no official integration policy at all. This stems from the low number of voluntary migrants to Hungary, which creates no objective need for quick action in this area (Koppány, 2010: 9). Instead, the current Orbán government has viewed migration policy concerning third-country national through the prism of the fight against “illegal” migrants and prioritised law enforcement and security (UNHCR, 2012: 3). A marked consequence of this lack of policy is linguistic isolation, which has led to the creation of many separate linguistic communities (Koppány, 2010: 9). For example, while exploring life difficulties and cold acceptance of Chinese migrants in Hungary, Pal Nyiri (2006) found that many of them are isolated from Hungarian public life and integration looks like just another empty word. Thus, according to Nyiri (2006), in the long-run most Chinese do not intend to live on Hungarian soil – many sent their children to colleges in the US, the UK or, alternatively, back to China. Insecurity



for Chinese immigrants in Hungary (as in other East European countries) has discouraged those people to seek integration in this society (e.g. by learning the language) and they largely rely on global Chinese media outlets through the Internet and satellite TV.

The vast majority of applications for a residence permit in order to pursue studies in Hungary from third-country applicants are successful (EMN, 2012: 20). A lack of statistical data means that it is impossible to verify how many such applications are rejected, but there is a consensus on the fact that the most common reason for rejection is the failure on the part of third-country migrants to demonstrate that they do not have the access to or ownership of sufficient financial means to support themselves during the course of their studies (EMN, 2012: 21).

The positive economic impact of such students consists of the fact that they not only pay tuition fees (up to €5,000), but they contribute to the Hungarian economy through spending on accommodation, food, travel and leisure activities (EMN, 2012: 29). Due to a lack of statistical data, it is impossible to determine how many third-country students stay in Hungary or whether they migrate to other labour markets after the completion of their studies (EMN, 2012: 29). Such statistical data would be invaluable in measuring the true economic impact of third-country students. In any case, the presence of such students could be argued to have a positive impact in terms of Hungary's international status, which ensures the reproduction and increase in the number of international students in future years.

**Third Respondent:** “I think the major challenges are the distance. I nearly gave up because of this and the cost of air ticket, because I was informed somehow on Friday and had the interview on Sunday, so you can imagine. Above all, there was a mistake on the visa and it was delayed for 1 month. I missed the first 2 weeks of lectures. I went to Nigeria for the interview. Though I was accommodated by a family man in Nigeria, you can imagine if I had to pay for the accommodation” he said.

*3: Response from interviews conducted with students facing difficulty in obtaining visas*

A potential incoherence in this area affects students enrolling in preparatory courses. Such courses aim to provide the basis for success in later educational or academic life by preparing students for the demands of a specific course or providing them with the requisite skills to gain access to a course of study. Article 21 (1) of the RRTN stipulates that “a residence permit may be issued on grounds of pursuit of studies to third-country nationals accepted by *an establishment of secondary or higher education accredited in Hungary* and admitted to the territory of Hungary to pursue as his/her main activity a full-time course of study, or to attend a course in an establishment of higher education, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education, if they are able to verify the linguistic knowledge required for the pursuit of studies.” The important point here is that **students are only permitted to attend preparatory courses if they have already been accepted in an establishment which has been accredited in Hungary**. This stifles a potential market for preparatory courses which focus on the preparation of students for courses of study at institutions which are not accredited by the Hungarian government. Thus there are a large number of international students who do not hold a permit for the purpose of studying in the country, but a permit which is intended to serve other migrants (EMN, 2012: 16). The amount of students who are deterred from pursuing such courses in Hungary as a result of this is unknown. Given the (limited) knowledge about the positive impact of third-country international students in Hungary, however, this is an area which requires reconsideration by the Hungarian authorities.

#### ***4. Financial assistance for higher education offered by the Hungarian government and Hungarian universities to foreign citizens***

##### **1. Organization (structure) of Hungarian state scholarship assistance for higher education**

In order to foster the dissemination of Hungarian culture and promote Hungarian language abroad, the government had set up the Balassi Institute (Balassi Intezet), which provides language training and financial support to foreign students willing to learn Hungarian. The institute operates through a network of offices and training facilities, including operations in a number of major European and US cities like Brussels, London and New York, to mention a few.

Within this institute a department called the Hungarian Scholarship Board (HSB) administers and disburses all types of financial assistance to foreign researchers, students and international professionals with strong interest in Hungarian language (Balassi Institute 2013a). In 2005 the Hungarian Ministry of Education established a scholarship pool with various types of financial support for students coming from a predetermined list of countries.<sup>2</sup> Through this pool the HSB finances study visits, short-term research trips, one-semester or full-year exchange programs at local universities and different research projects, including PhD and postdoctoral studies. The following is a list of the scholarship options for 2013/2014 (Balassi Institute 2013b):

- *semester/partial studies (3-10 months) for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at university or college abroad;*
- *postgraduate studies, research (3-21 days or 1-10 months) for Master's degree holders or PhD students;*
- *full PhD program (36 months). This represents a tuition waiver for students who have successfully entered a Hungarian doctoral school;*
- *partial PhD studies (10 months). This option is available for PhD students from non-Hungarian institutions planning to expand their research in Hungary;*
- *postdoctoral studies, research (1-10 months). This option is only available to PhD holders;*

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Korean Republic, Kuwait, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom.

- *research stay (3-21 days or 1-10 months). Available for associate professors or high-ranking academics as well as researchers holding minimum a PhD or an equivalent degree.*
- *summer courses in the summer of 2013 (2-4 weeks).*

Nevertheless, a study by O'Donnell (2009) indicates that international students interested in studying in Hungary (even on an exchange basis) face financial difficulties. Noting the volatile exchange rate of the Hungarian forint, which can decrease the purchasing power of stipends, the study also stresses the need for increased availability of credit funding for higher education.

## **2. Financial assistance offered by Hungarian universities**

Financial assistance for pursuing higher education is usually associated with priority support for Hungarian students but there are diverse possibilities to fund one's studies, especially in private institutions. Central European University is prime example. With the economic crisis still suffocating many colleges and universities in Hungary, the prospects for financial aid to foreign students seems limited. The ongoing debate to cut overall state funding for higher education further amplifies these worries. However, opportunities still exist. Below is a short list of some of the universities based in Hungary which offer financial assistance to international students.<sup>3</sup> The list is compiled on the basis of a 2009 publication by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture and the websites of the respective institutions:

- ***Andrássy University Budapest (AUB)*** – This small German-speaking university offers the so called Andrásy Europe Scholarship, which provides support for Hungarian and international students enrolled in a Master's program at AUB. There are also a number of other MA

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3 Note that many universities and colleges in Hungary, even those offering instruction in foreign language and/ or specifically attract international students, do not explicitly state what are the financial support options (if any) on their websites.

scholarships intended for EU and non-EU nationals provided by various German and Austrian donors. Similar funding opportunities are available for PhD students.

- **Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME)** - BME offers financial aid in the form of reduction of tuition fees (usually between 3200 and 5000 euro per semester) to those B. Sc. students who have demonstrated outstanding academic results. The university also supports masters and doctoral students through scholarships disbursed on a competitive basis.
  
- **Corvinus University of Budapest** – This university makes use of the state scholarship pool for foreign students established in 2005 under the HSB. Nationals from Afghanistan, Lithuania, Mongolia, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen and Vietnam can also apply for state funding of their studies on the basis of the bilateral intergovernmental agreements. Corvinus University also works in partnership with the Visegrad Fund (though its scholarships are offered only to citizens from certain countries<sup>4</sup>). Citizens from developing countries<sup>5</sup> who pursue degree in a development-related field could consider applying for financial aid from the Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program.
  
- **Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)** – ELTE does not provide financial aid to foreign students on its own, but works in cooperation with a number of donor organisations which offer funding. Among partnering organizations are the HSB, the Visegrad Fund, the American Institute for Foreign Study (only for US citizens), the StudentAid BC and the Brunswick Student Financial

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4 Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

5 List of eligible countries from the developing world is available at:  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/EXTWBISFP/0,,contentMDK:20296359~menuPK:551559~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:551553,00.html>

Assistance Program (last two only available to Canadian citizens).

### **3. Recommendation with regard to the 'education vs migration' nexus and the related policy incoherences**

- **Tie state scholarships given to foreign students with assistance during the visa application and the immigration procedure.** The Ministry of Education and universities, especially state-funded ones, should ensure that students awarded with scholarship or other type of financial support get the necessary assistance when applying for visa and other immigration-related documents. This could include several different measures: a) support meetings for students with officers from the respective educational institution and the immigration service; b) waiver of application fee for visas and other related documents; c) letters of support from the ministry and the respective host universities intended to help students when entering Hungary and crossing the border. Each letter should contain contact information so the border control can get in touch with the supporting Hungarian institution, if needed; d) improved coordination between the ministry of education, the ministry of interior and the immigration service when screening applicants for Hungarian educational institutions and conducting security clearance procedure. All these measures should come in complementary package in order to overcome any incoherence stemming from educational and development goals set by the government, on the one hand, and the security and immigrations tasks of the state, on the other.

### **5. Other Problems**

It should be noted that other obstacles to foreign students also exist. In recent years research points to heavy **bureaucratic procedures** that stand in the way of both Hungarian students willing to study abroad (on exchange basis) and to foreigners interested in Hungarian higher education.

O'Donnell (2009) outlines a number of obstacles to incoming and outgoing student mobility related to policies of both the Hungarian government and individual universities. These are “*issues with credit recognition, dense curriculum requirements, and a lack of financial assistance for student mobility*” (2009:32). For instance, it was found that Corvinus University and ELTE do not count many university-level courses taken abroad towards the respective degree; for those classes which are taken into account, the Hungarian universities did not recognise the full credit count given, for example, in the US (O'Donnell 2009). Though widely acknowledged as very valuable life experience, any exchange program becomes a complicated endeavor in the face of non-recognition of academic workload abroad which is usually followed by an intense round of exams in the home institution in Hungary. This seems to be a problem in many academic institutions across former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

According to O'Donnell (2009), another significant obstacle for foreign students willing to study in Hungary stems from **the insufficient financial support**. The same study highlights, for example, the volatility of the Hungarian Forint (HUF) against other currencies which sometimes decreases the purchasing power of stipends disbursed in HUF (2009: 36). However, in current times of crisis the government is constrained to extend further support to Hungarian and foreign students alike. Reform policies towards fiscal consolidation have in a way adversely affected funding on education in Hungary. Between 2011 and 2012, out of the twenty countries in the EU that made cuts in their education budgets, Hungary was among those countries that recorded significant cuts of more than 5 %. For the year 2013, there have been reports of government's plan to cut the number of entirely state-funded undergraduate places from 38,000 to 10,000. The state budget for 2013 reportedly includes a \$167 million cut in higher education spending compared to 2012 (Kata, January 25, 2013). It is obvious that these developments will have an adverse effect on the number of and fellowship amount available to international students. Péter Radó, a sociologist and specialist in education policy, says: "If we look

at state spending on higher education, Hungary is at the level of the Third World countries. The average [state] spending is 1.6 percent in the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development], but it is certainly above 1 per cent in most of these countries, while in Hungary it will be around 0.5 percent, the lowest level in the country's history." (Kata, January 2013).

In order to increase availability of funding, the government might consider support for relaxing conditions for students to take bank loans for enrollment higher education programs. A recent report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2012) shows that increased availability of loans for financing vocational education improved the opportunities for young people to pay tuitions and seek appropriate educational institutions. Around 41% of Hungarian respondents who borrowed money claimed that they would not have been able to continue their education without loans (2012:96).

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- 1) The NGO network represents needs to advocate for an electronic centralized system to be put in place for the better processing of visas and the effective monitoring of all candidates entering Hungary for the propose of studies or otherwise. The system could be designed after the model being used by the UK border agency in the form of the central academic service or CAS which issues a unique identity to every student applying or entering the country for the purpose of education. This ensures that the cases of mistaken identity or unnecessary scrutiny remain at a minimum as all the information related to the purpose of visit and the student's academic destination in the country.
- 2) Advocacy efforts need to be made targeted at the ministry of foreign affairs and the interior ministry to reduce the visa application processing times. The processing time and entry



- requirements for the students need to be handled separately by the consulates and the presence of honorary consulates in areas with the absence of embassies needs to be ensured.
- 3) Advocacy needs to be conducted targeted towards better coherence between the reformed border guard (absorbed in the Police Department post 2008) and the consulates issuing visas. Especially for students travelling from Eastern European states and African countries special provisions and support letter authority needs to be devolved to the education institutions in the country to ensure that students have complete documentation before arriving at any port or border of Hungary.
  - 4) Extensive primary research needs to be undertaken to determine the amount of students who are deterred from participating in preparatory courses in Hungary because third-country nationals can only obtain a visa for such courses if they have already been accepted in an establishment which has been accredited in Hungary. Since quantitative data is almost impossible to obtain, such research should comprise of interview-based case studies. Such research would enable decision-makers to determine the real cost of this incoherency.
  - 5) Up-to-date statistical data on international students labour market participation (particularly whether it is inside of outside Hungary) should be recorded. Without such information, decision-makers are unable to assess the true economic impact of international students and are thus unable to make policy decisions based on evidence. Such data could be obtained by contacting former students in Hungary (electronically or by mail) and asking them to fill out a simple questionnaire. More data could also be collected on the consumption habits of students while studying in Hungary, which would also help to determine the true economic benefits of international students.
  - 6) Given what is known about the positive economic benefits of international students, it is imperative that migration policy concerning third-country nationals should not be viewed

through the prism of the fight against “illegal” migrants, which has resulted from the fact that there is no official integration policy whatsoever for voluntary migrants. Instead more emphasis should be placed on positive integration in policy-making and positive policies should be enacted. Not only would this prevent the linguistic isolation of migrants (especially Chinese communities), but it would also make the Hungarian labour market more accessible to students after their studies, have a positive economic effect.

### ***Concluding remarks***

A major recommendation is that Hungarian migration authorities should invest more time and money in maintaining **up-to-date statistical records on migration policies**. This would not only ensure greater transparency, but also be beneficial for evidence-based policy-making. Moreover, statistical data on the number of third-country nationals who do not attend preparatory courses in Hungary as a result of the stipulations of the RRTN would help measure the magnitude of the policy coherence. However, more basic statistical data on the number of student who stay in Hungary after graduating from their studies would also be highly relevant and help to explain the extent of the positive economic impact that international students play in Hungary. Some of the funding for this collection could be diverted from the new administrative detention regime (UNHCR, 2012: 3).

Hungarian authorities should seriously consider the **adoption of specific post-educational policy** that traces whether foreign students, especially from the developing world, actually return home after their studies. This is especially important in cases where Hungarian scholarship and other forms of financial assistance are extended under the condition that the beneficiary would return to his or her home country upon completion of the respective educational programme. The government should apply stricter regulation regarding the employment opportunities for such students.

In order to support higher education for foreigners the Hungarian government should think of

ways to attract banks willing to **lend money to third-country students**. The credit may be tied with the obligation of the borrowing student to study Hungarian in lieu of attractive interest rate and other relaxed conditions.

The broader implication of this report is that the Hungarian government needs to invest in **awareness campaigns regarding the development aid** obligations. No new projects or improvements in policy coherence would matter, if public knowledge on this area is limited or even non-existent. This also means that authorities should promote internationalization of (higher) education and help foreign students in adapting to national characteristics of Hungary.

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