

WESTERN EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR EUROPEANIZATION OF UKRAINE

WESTERN-EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS IN HUNGARY

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Introduction

The present paper provides an exploratory overview about the situation of foreign/international education of Hungarian youth in Western countries with the aim of assessing governmental practices in supporting education abroad, the later repatriation of Western graduates to Hungary and their integration into the Hungarian job market. We consider both opportunities in the public sector and experiences of Western graduates in the private sector. For the purposes of this study, by Western countries we understand the following states: those 15 countries that were members of the European Union (EU) before the 2004 “Big Bang enlargement,” the countries of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway), Switzerland, Canada and the United States of America. Therefore, by Western countries we mean 21 destination states altogether.

To start our inquiry, we review the profiles and education background of the political elite, with a special attention to those who had managed Hungary’s integration process to the EU in leading positions, in order to evaluate to what extent Western graduates can be found among the main agents of change in Hungary. We will find that while Western-educated professionals might have had leading role in the reforms of the countries of the region, this was predominantly not the tendency in the Hungarian case. Western education was not a crucial determinant of who could rise high in the political scene, and was not a particularly important aspect either.

After finding that the involvement of Western graduates was fairly limited in the high echelons of politics, we move on to assess the possibilities of Hungarians to study abroad, the main characteristics of the most mobile segment of society, the attitude of the state towards their mobility, their own and their employers’ views and experiences concerning the utilization of their foreign studies once entering the Hungarian job market. Here, we will build on the experiences of two significant and somewhat different groups – participants of the Erasmus program of the EU and alumni of Ivy League universities and Fulbright Scholarship recipients. As a result of this assessment, we hope to identify certain lessons in the final section that could be shared both in the region and with partners in Eastern Europe.

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1 Agents of change: With or without Western education?

While the regime change and the country’s transition to democracy, market economy and to an open society brought along a growing interest in education abroad and actually growing numbers of Hungarians enrolled in tertiary education in foreign countries, Western graduates did not gain high importance in the higher echelons of governmental circles. The study of the composition of Hungarian governments since 1989 showed that although several ministers studied abroad at one point or another thanks to scholarships, postgraduate or postdoctoral programs, or professional trainings in their fields – very often much after their graduation from their initial degree programs, there was only one minister in the by now ten governments who held a degree from a Western higher education institution. He is **Tamás Fellegi**, who was minister for national development in the second Orbán-government in 2010-2011 and after that minister without portfolio. He studied at Harvard in 1985 and holds a PhD in political science from the University of Connecticut (2003).

Several ministers participated in postgraduate or postdoctoral programs, professional trainings or held scholarships abroad still in the 1960s, 1970s and before 1989, the year of the regime change. It is worth mentioning **Ferenc Mádl**, minister for culture and education of the Antall- and Boross-government (1990-93 and 1993-94), later President of the Republic of Hungary (2000-05), who studied in Strasbourg; **János Martonyi**, minister of foreign affairs of the first and second Orbán-government (1998-2002 and 2010-14) who studied in the Hague; **Endre Juhász**, minister for issues of European integration of the Medgyessy-government (2002-04), previously ambassador to Brussels and from 1998 chief negotiator of Hungary’s EU accession, who studied in Strasbourg; **István Hiller**, minister of the National Cultural Heritage in the first Gyurcsány-government (2004-05) and minister for culture and education in the second (2006-10) who studies in Heidelberg; **István Petrétei**, minister of justice of the first and second Gyurcsány-government, who participated in a postgraduate program in Trier; **Etele Baráth**, minister for European Union affairs of the first Gyurcsány-government (2004-06) who studied in Paris; **Imre Forgács**, minister of justice and law enforcement of the Bajnai-government (2009-10) who studied at Harvard with an IREX scholarship; **Zoltán Balog**, minister for human resources of the second and third Orbán-government (2012-), who studies in Germany several times in the ‘80s and the ‘90s.

Among the “second wave” of politicians who studied abroad after 1989 and who typically got into politics after the regime change, we mostly find recipients of Western scholarships from the Anglo-Saxon world. First to mention is **Viktor Orbán**, Prime Minister of Hungary (1998-2002; 2010-), who enrolled at Oxford Pembroke College in September 1989 with a scholarship from the Soros Foundation, but returned to Hungary already in the beginning of 1990 for the first free parliamentary elections and quit the program.¹ Further examples are **István Stumpf**, minister of the Prime Minister’s Office in the first Orbán-government, currently member of the Constitutional Court who held an IREX scholarship at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Governance in 1992-93; **Miklós Persányi**, minister for environment in the Medgyessy-, the first and the second Gyurcsány-government (2003-2007) who received a Humbert H. Humprey scholarship for the Cornell University for the academic year 1990/91; **István Mikola**, minister of health of the first Orbán-government (2000-02), currently state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2014-) who studied health management in the US and

¹ An interesting development is that Prime Minister Orbán’s name has been removed from the university’s online list of Famous Oxonians in early August 2014, during his tenure as Prime Minister of Hungary, a few days after his speech on July 26, 2014 at Baile Tusnad, Romania in which he denounced liberal democracy. Zöldi, Blanka (2014) *Hungary PM Viktor Orbán dropped from list of “Famous Oxonians”*. The Budapest Beacon. August 4, 2014. Last accessed on September 27, 2014 at < <http://budapestbeacon.com/news-in-brief/hungary-pm-viktor-orban-dropped-from-list-of-famous-oxonians/> >.

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Canada in postgraduate programs in 1991; or finally, **András Bozóki**, minister for the Hungarian National Heritage of the first Gyurcsány-government (2005-06), who participated in several postgraduate programs throughout the 1990s e.g. in Vienna, Berlin, Brighton and Florence.

All in all, we can observe that involving politicians with Western educational background in the government is not more typical of one political side than the other. We find ministers with experience in Western tertiary education institutions both in left- and right-leaning governments. Altogether we have found 13 men in ministerial position since 1990 who had some sort of Western experience as a student, but only 1 of them holds a degree due to his studies abroad.

On the highest level of the public administration, among the state secretaries and deputy state secretaries, the picture is already different, as can be illustrated e.g. by the higher echelons of public administration under the second Orbán-government (2010-2014), where data about the background of the stakeholders was made publicly available. Two secretaries of state of the 2010-2014 staff of the Ministry of Human Resources² were graduates of American universities (**Miklós Szócska**, MA, Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, 1998; **Zoltán Kovács**, MA and PhD, Central European University, 1993 and 2002) and two others studied in Anglo-Saxon universities (**Györgyi Lengyel**, Oxford Brookes University, UK; **András Doncsev**, Graceland College, US). In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), **Zsolt Németh** studied at Oxford St. Antony College in 1988-90, while **Enikő Győri** at the University of Maryland, US, in 1992. **Zoltán Cséfalvay** in the Ministry of Economy held a DAAD scholarship to Munich in 1988-89. During this period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had the most, four undersecretaries of state with Western education. Three of them held Western degrees (**Gábor Baranyai**, LL.M. from the University College London; **Bálint Ódor**, a degree in economics in Switzerland; **Tibor Misovicz**, MSc from the University of Edinburgh), while **Gergely Pröhle** studied in Germany on scholarships. Both Baranyai and Ódor were responsible for EU affairs under Enikő Győri's state secretariat. We can therefore observe that the highest-level officials dealing with EU affairs in the MFA had a Western education background. Western-educated undersecretaries of state were also to be found in almost all ministries (2 in the Ministry of Economy, and 1 respectively in the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice and the Ministry of National Development).

However, as an interviewee who has held various positions in public administration and then in government expressed, having been educated abroad has never been an explicit criteria of selecting public officials ever since the change of the regime. While a Western degree was certainly not a disadvantage, neither was it a decisive factor e.g. in the recruitment of the team negotiating Hungary's EU-accession, a process which required thorough knowledge of the frameworks and functioning of the Union as well as of the Hungarian political and economic system.³

To understand the dynamics of the management of Hungary's EU accession process and who participated in it, some background information on the regime-changing public administration can be useful. While before 1989 Hungary belonged to the Eastern block and its relations with the West were limited, it still had some contacts through economic and trade cooperation with the Western alliances. In 1973, Hungary joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in 1982 the Interna-

² The Ministry of Human Resources (called Ministry of Human Resources in English during the 2010-2014 Orbán-government, currently Ministry of Human Capacities, remained Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma in Hungarian both during the previous and the current Orbán-governments) is a Hungarian specificity, a ministry dealing with a wide spectrum of issues including family affairs, youth, health, relations with churches, ethnic minorities, civil society, higher education, public education, culture, sport, social affairs and social inclusion. Previously, these areas were divided among various ministries.

³ Personal communication with a former public official and former member of government, September 2014, Budapest.

tional Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1990. These accessions were negotiated by two generations of civil servants in the Ministry of External Trade, and the relations were managed through the trade unit of Hungary's representation to Belgium and Luxembourg based in Brussels. This unit was organizationally separate from the embassy, was staffed with civil servants from the Ministry of External Trade, not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it enjoyed a bigger independence than the embassy. This staff officially dealt with Belgian-Hungarian bilateral relations, but in reality they also attended to relations with the European Communities (EC) and had gained experience with the EC already before Hungary became free again. While education in Moscow was a frequent feature of the MFA staff, it was less common among the Ministry of External Trade staff. Some even participated in education in the West, although it was thanks to individual ambitions. After the change of the regime, there was continuity in the ranks of public officials, and those who gained experience with the GATT, IMF, WB accessions and with the European Communities remained in the Ministry of External Trade.

Against this background, since continuity remained in public administration despite the regime change, it was a logical choice to task the team of the Customs Policy and International Organizations Department and later the Integration State Secretariat in the Ministry of External Trade, with the EU association and later accession talks in the early 1990s. As there was a strong political will both on the Hungarian and the EU side to push forth with the quick as soon as possible, the Hungarian party built on already existing resources, and hiring specifically Western-educated professionals was not raised as a priority. In 1994, the negotiations of the association agreement, which gave even more insight to the team on relations with the EU, were concluded. In 1996, the Commission sent the country questionnaire to Hungary before preparing the first country assessment. This year the Integration State Secretariat was moved from the Ministry of External Trade to the MFA, and from then on the MFA was in charge of EU association negotiations as a whole. With the questionnaire covering every small segment of legislation and the functioning of the state, a wider circle of experts from the then 11 ministries of the public administration in Hungary joined into the accession works. According to our interviewee, working on the accession talks was a privilege of the very bests with strong language skills and solid knowledge on the relevant sections of the European *acquis* and the Hungarian legislation. The participants of this process from the 11 ministries formed the base of the later staff of Hungary's Permanent Representation in Brussels set up starting in 2002. According to our interviewee who participated in this process in various functions, expertise and experience with EU-related issues gained on the job have been more important throughout the process than the issuing state of the public servants' diploma. Indeed, only some of the key figures like the previously mentioned **Endre Juhász** or **Tamás Szűcs**, coordinator and secretary of the accession negotiations in Brussels, had such experiences. Others, like **Péter Balázs**, who among others set up Hungary's Permanent Representation in Brussels and was the country's first Commissioner, had no Western education background, but had a wide range of experiences with Western structures gained at the Ministry of External Trade where he negotiated Hungary's accession to the OECD. Finally, **Péter Györkös**, who was secretary of the accession talks in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is now the permanent representative to the EU, in fact, holds a diploma from MGIMO in Moscow and not a Western university.

As we will see later on, this overall trend and approach has not really changed over the years. The recruitment of new civil servants after the regime change neither put emphasis on intentionally tapping into the pool of Western-educated Hungarians, nor did the later scholarship and graduate programs treat them preferentially. In the following sections of the paper we will discuss the trends of Hungarians gaining Western education, their opportunities and their position in the job market in order to assess whether Western education is an asset or a disadvantage in the case of Hungary.

2 The profile of Hungarian students in the “West” after 1989

Measuring the number of international (foreign and internationally mobile) students in particular is just as problematic as providing accurate data on international mobility in general. Migrants are generally not motivated to inform their home authorities about leaving the country unless they have to. This is even more likely to be the case among students, especially if they leave only for a semester or two to study abroad. Authorities of the receiving countries tend to be in a better position to provide accurate numbers, as the migrant (often students included) have to register with the authorities of the host country. Therefore, statistics published by international organizations and institutions, like the OECD, the UNESCO or the European Union, are usually based on the information received by the destination countries' authorities. Nonetheless, these are still far from being precise numbers. We look at available data while having this in mind in order to get a rough picture about the volume of Hungarian internationally mobile students and to see predominantly which Western countries have been targeted by Hungarian students.

Since the Hungarian Central Statistical Office does not have data available on the number of Hungarian students participating in tertiary education abroad for the above mentioned reasons, we turn to the databases of the OECD that has data available starting in 1998 on the number of foreign/international students enrolled by country of origin, distributed by country of destination.⁴ OECD data shows that the number of foreign/international students have been steadily increasing since 1998 and from about 5.600 reached close to 14.000 in 2011.⁵ The five most popular destinations during the 14 years when data is available have been as of 2011, in decreasing order: Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, the United States, and France. Before Hungary's EU accession the United States was more popular than the United Kingdom, but from 2004 on the number of Hungarian students in the UK quickly increased, while in the US it gradually dropped. These five countries attract the overwhelming majority of students studying abroad, amounting to close to 73% in the academic year 2010/2011.

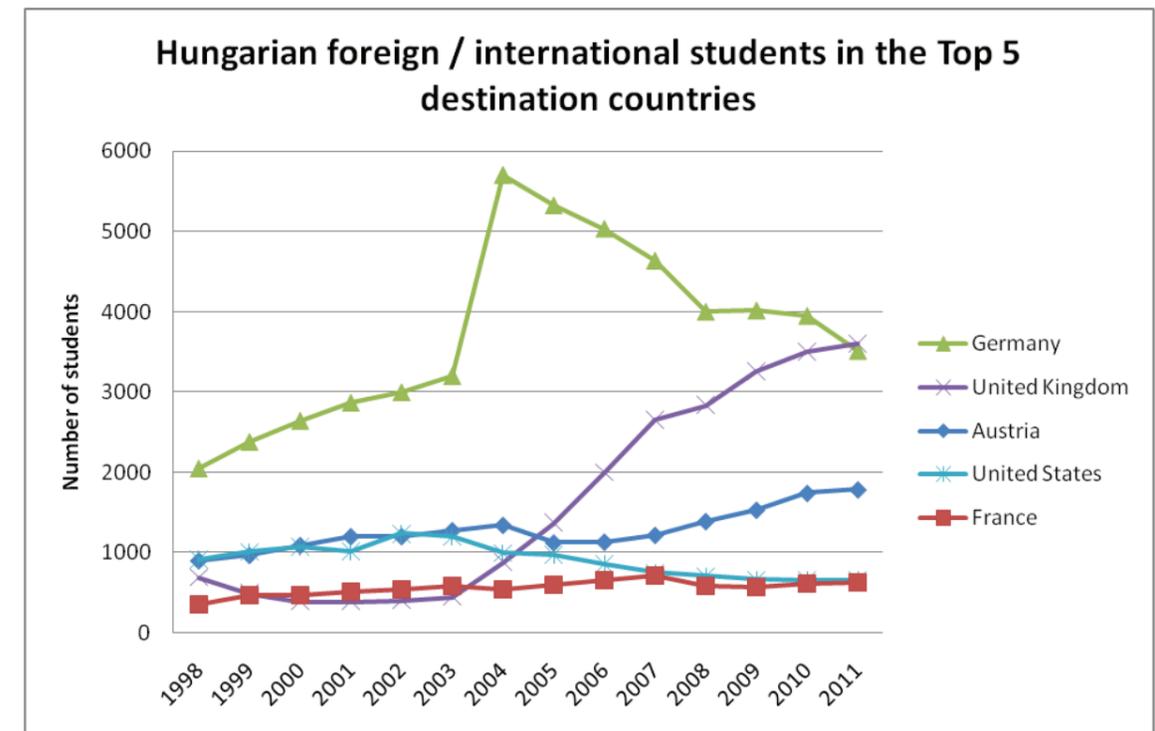
What can we know about the students participating in tertiary education abroad? Information on the socio-economic background and motivations of international students can be obtained from surveys on the European and national level that study international mobility in higher education through representative samples. Such sources prove to be fairly limited so far concerning information on Hungarian students enrolled abroad, and the limitations of the present project do not permit us to conduct a representative survey on the topic. However, reviewing the available resources, we detect that there is a slowly growing interest on the matter among Hungarian scholars both on the national and the European level.

⁴ We find it necessary to clarify certain terms used in the statistics in order to give a transparent picture. Our explanations are based on OECD definitions.

By country of destination we understand the country reporting the data. The country of origin is the country of citizenship of the student. Foreign students are those students who are not citizens of the country they are enrolled in. International students are those who left their country of origin and moved to the destination country for the purpose of study. Data before 2004 was only available for foreign students, but since this does not capture mobility well, the category of international students was introduced. Foreign students might have been those who, albeit not citizens of the country of study, already resided in that country before starting their studies due to their own or their parents' prior mobility.

⁵ The year refers to the year in which the given academic year ends. 2011 is the latest data accessible as of June 2014. It refers to academic year 2010/2011.

Figure 1. Hungarian foreign/international students in the Top5 destination countries



On the national level, education was one of the main elements of a representative survey series, the so-called “Ifjúság Kutatás” [Youth Survey], which has studied the socio-economic situation of people aged 15-29 since 2000 every four years. According to the published reports, the topic of education abroad was touched upon first only in 2008 in the survey. At this time, researchers asked the respondents if they had ever studied or if they planned to study abroad. 8% of the whole sample claimed that they had already have experience with education abroad. This ratio was higher among college students (10%) and university students (17%). 12% of all respondents planned to study abroad at some point. Among college students and university students this group was bigger – 23% and 26% respectively. Unfortunately, the survey did not go deeper and the report did not discuss further characteristics or motivations of students with a study abroad experience.⁶

After the 2008 report the most recent survey, conducted in 2012, showed somewhat surprising results. While we would expect that the ratio of students with study abroad experience would grow, the results indicate that only 3% of the youth (aged 15-29) has studied abroad previously. Among people with tertiary degree this proportion was higher, but still only 7%. Note that the report does not cite the rate concerning those who were still enrolled in higher education at the time of the survey.⁷ Focusing on plans and willingness of mobility rather than on the characteristics of those who had already left the country, the 2012 survey examined both the topic of education and labor mobility.⁸ Concerning

⁶ Szabó, Andrea, Béla Bauer (eds.) (2009) *Ifjúság2008. Gyorsjelentés*. [Youth 2008. Quick report.] Szociálpolitikai és Munkaügyi Intézet, Budapest. p. 31.

⁷ Székely, Levente (ed.) (2012) *10 kérdés az ifjúságról. Magyar ifjúság 2012 kutatás első eredményei*. [10 Questions about the Youth. First results of the 2012 Hungarian Youth Research.] Kutatópont Kft., Budapest. p.11.

⁸ Ruff, Tamás (2013) *Ifjúsági mobilitás: hajlandóság, lehetőségek és tervek*. [Youth Mobility: Willingness, Opportunities and Plans.] in: Székely, Levente (ed.) *Magyar Ifjúság 2012. Tanulmánykötet*. [Hungarian Youth 2012. An Edited Volume.] Kutatópont Kft., Budapest. pp.152-178.

willingness to leave Hungary for study or work purposes, the survey found that 52% of people aged 15-29 would do so if given the chance:⁹ 12% of all respondents said that they would leave even to settle down definitely abroad, 12% would leave even for more than 5 years, 28% for less than 5 years. 34% of all respondents claimed that they can only imagine their life in Hungary and would not work or study abroad.¹⁰

With regards to study mobility, women are more open to the idea than men. The younger cohorts are more motivated to study abroad, 14% of the people aged 15-19 plan to leave for education, while only 7% of the 25-29 year olds have such intentions. 20% of high school students, 18% of college and university students and 12% of people in vocational schools providing final exams consider studying abroad. Only 7% of those studying in vocational schools not preparing students for final exams plan to participate in education abroad. Young people living in the capital and in villages are less, while those living in seat towns of the counties are more inclined to study abroad in the future.¹¹ Naturally, this survey did not differentiate among Western and non-Western destinations.

Internationally comparable information on the socio-economic background of Hungarian students studying abroad is still wanting. A Europe-wide comparative survey worth mentioning still is “Eurostudent,” as in the near future it will have results on Hungarians, as well.¹² The project, which is now in its fifth cycle, has dedicated a big section to the internationalization of education and mobility collecting data on the background and characteristics of European students enrolled not in their country of origin, including even the form of their enrolment (various bilateral or European programs or individual mobility). Regrettably though, after being an observer for two cycles, Hungary has only become an active participant of the project in the current edition the results of which will not be available before 2015. Nonetheless, Hungarian scholars’ engagement in the project indicates that the topic of youth research is of increasing importance and relevance for the country, and the growing number of Hungarians studying abroad suggests that exploring this domain will likewise gain weight.

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9 *ibid.* p.159.

10 *ibid.* p.160.

11 *ibid.* p.166.

12 The results of the last survey are available at <www.eurostudent.eu>. Last accessed on September 26, 2014.

3 Governmental Support for the Foreign Education of Hungarians

Since the change of the regime in 1989, the Hungarian higher education system has undergone several sets of serious reforms, but supporting Hungarian students’ opportunities to study abroad or helping their repatriation has never been high on the official governmental agenda. There are certain opportunities sponsored by the government to receive support for attending tertiary education in the West, but these are usually structured,¹³ conducted in the framework of bilateral interstate agreements, and as such provide support only for a limited duration – 1-2 semesters or even less. Individual mobility, that is, acquiring a full tertiary degree abroad, has not been financially sponsored by the Hungarian state. While recently a training-abroad period has been incorporated into the main governmental internship program for future civil servants, there is no official program that would specifically aim at recruiting Western (or in general, foreign) educated youth to public administration. Nor does any governmental program exist to help their repatriation and integration into the private sector. The present section of the paper will discuss the main characteristics of the government-sponsored scholarship and internship programs having an international mobility element and will also discuss financial support available for education abroad.

Since non-structured, individual education is arranged on a personal basis, there are no official estimates of how many Hungarians might have been studying in such forms in foreign countries’ higher education institutions. It is nonetheless worth to discuss whether the Hungarian state itself supports – conditionally or unconditionally – such individual initiatives.

An important determinant of whether students decide to participate in a higher education program abroad is whether they can finance it either from individual resources, scholarships or loans. Therefore, the availability of financial support provided by the state, even if conditional, can be a major facilitating factor. Hungarian authorities until now have provided relatively low financial aid for students who participate in tertiary education in a foreign country. In fact, financial support opportunities in the form of loans are more limited for them than for students attending higher education programs in Hungary. While the so-called Diákhitel [Student Loan]¹⁴ is widely available for students enrolled in Hungarian higher education institutions either as lower amount any-purpose loans (Diákhitel 1) or to cover their entire tuition fees (Diákhitel 2), Hungarian students enrolled abroad are eligible only for any-purpose loans and only if they are “engaged in a degree program of an EEA higher education institution offering a college degree recognized in Hungary.”¹⁵ The maximum amount of the any-purpose loan is HUF 250.000 per semester as of June 2014, which would amount to about EUR 830. Hungarian students enrolled in degree programs abroad are not eligible to apply for tuition fee loans. They can, of course, use the any-purpose loan to pay their tuition fees abroad, but the amount is unlikely to be enough to cover the fees in any Western college or university.

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13 By structured study abroad schemes we refer to those opportunities that are available for the wider public and are conducted in a pre-established framework that regulates the form and length of the program. As opposed to the structured schemes, student mobility also takes place in non-structured, individual forms where the student enrolls in a degree program abroad without intermediaries.

14 The main advantage of a student loan is that any student enrolled in a Hungarian higher education institution is eligible. There is no credit appraisal, the interest rates are relatively low and students can start repaying the loan even years after their graduation.

15 Source: the official website of the Hungarian student loan, Diákhitel. Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <<http://www.diakhitel.hu/index.php/en/to-our-clients/2011-10-11-11-30-04/are-you-studying-abroad>>.

While individual study abroad plans hardly receive any institutionalized financial support from the Hungarian authorities, there are many structured opportunities offered and sponsored by the Hungarian state providing both a framework in the form of interstate (intergovernmental and interministerial) agreements and scholarships for the students. As of 2014, Hungary has agreements about various types of study opportunities with about 40 countries,¹⁶ but the number fluctuates every year. Of course, only part of these actually offer places in Western institutions. These opportunities are under the supervision of the Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság [Hungarian Scholarship Board] that was founded in 1991 by the government of the Republic of Hungary in order to advertize opportunities for scholarships provided in the framework of interstate agreements, for scholarships of the Viennese Collegium Hungaricum and for the Hungarian National Eötvös Scholarship, as well as to receive and evaluate the applications submitted for these. While scholarships to the Collegium Hungaricum and the National Eötvös Scholarship are available only for graduate researchers on pre- or postdoctoral level, the interstate agreements hold positions for students on BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD/DLA level, as well. As part of the interstate frameworks, various programs are available: full degree studies, partial studies for 5-10 months in general, summer schools for 2-8 weeks, and short or long research stays for 5-21 days and 1-12 months respectively. If an application is accepted, the student is granted a scholarship to cover the travel costs and part of his or her living costs in the destination country.

For the purposes of the present paper full degree studies and partial studies have the most relevance, but full degree studies are only available to Russia and to Croatia at the time of writing. For partial studies, to which only those Hungarian citizens can apply who are enrolled in full-time degree programs in a Hungarian higher education institution at the time of application, for the academic year 2014/2015 no Western country was listed in the calls for application on undergraduate and graduate (MA/MSc¹⁷ and PhD/DLA)¹⁸ levels. According to the annual results, however, some scholarships have been awarded for Switzerland for partial studies, as well.¹⁹ Table 1 shows the results of the applications for the 2014/2015 academic year. By Western countries, we mean the previously defined 21 countries of the EU15, EEAS, US and Canada. Non-Western destinations include everything else that does not fall under the former geographic delimitation. In the case of scholarships offered through the Hungarian Scholarship Board, these destinations are typically found in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the Middle East, North Africa and the Far East.

Table 1 – Number of governmental scholarships awarded in interstate frameworks for the AY 2014/2015

	Western destination countries		Non-Western destination countries		TOTAL
	Awarded	Waitlisted	Awarded	Waitlisted	
Summer school	3	1	76	7	87
Partial studies	0	0	45	6	51
Research stay	1	1	32	0	34
Doctoral studies	0	0	3	0	3
Research (CH)	4	0	0	0	4
MA Arts (CH)	3	0	0	0	3
Postdoc (CH)	4	0	0	0	4
TOTAL	15	2	153	13	186

Another important interstate framework coordinated by the Hungarian Scholarship Board is the cooperation with the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), the German Academic Exchange Service, which contributes significantly to the number of Hungarian students pursuing studies in Germany. The Scholarship Board treats this framework separately from all others and applies different rules for the application, as well. Scholarships are available 1) for summer schools, 2) for (short and long) research for doctoral students and young researchers, 3) for graduate studies (in any scholarly area / for artists and architects), 4) for research for academics and researchers with a scientific degree, and 5) there are scholarships for former DAAD scholars. Table 2 shows the number of DAAD scholarships awarded for the 2014/2015 academic year.

Table 2 – The number of DAAD scholarships awarded for the AY 2014/2015.

Type of scholarship	Number awarded
Summer school	67
Research scholarship for doctorate students and young researchers	20
Scholarship for graduate studies	14
Research scholarship for academics and researchers with a scientific degree	7
Scholarships for former DAAD scholars	3
TOTAL	111

The above two tables show that the DAAD framework in itself has provided 2/3 of governmental scholarships for the 2014/2015 academic year and makes up the overwhelming majority of scholarships to Western destinations supported and sponsored from governmental sources: 111 as opposed to the 15 (plus 2 waitlisted) scholarships from other interstate agreements. Altogether 126 (plus 2 waitlisted) scholarships have been awarded for Western destinations, while 153 (plus 13 waitlisted) for non-Western ones, which clearly shows that the latest calls were absolutely dominated by opportunities in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and the Far East.²⁰

16 Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság (2013) Pályázati felhívás külföldre szóló ösztöndíjakra 2014/2015. [Call for Application for Scholarships Abroad 2014/2015.] p.2. Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <<http://www.scholarship.hu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=wYXg1sR0nQ0%3d&tabid=39&language=hu-HU>>.

17 Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság (2013) Részképzés 2014/2015. [Partial studies 2014/2015.] Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <http://www.scholarship.hu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mhs_mXcytAs%3d&tabid=39&language=hu-HU>.

18 Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság (2013) Teljes doktori- és doktori részképzés 2014/2015. [Full doctoral and doctoral partial studies 2014/2015.] Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <<http://www.scholarship.hu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ANzgjJWkaM%3d&tabid=39&language=hu-HU>>.

19 Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság (2014) Külföldi ösztöndíjakra jelöltek névjegyzéke [List of those nominated for foreign scholarships.] Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <<http://www.scholarship.hu/tabid/79/mid/650/newsid650/154/language/hu-HU/Default.aspx>>.

20 Among the expired calls from previous years, one can find scholarship opportunities in *Belgium* (research stay, summer school, postgraduate studies), *Finland* (long research stay), *France* (doctoral, graduate and postgraduate studies, research stay, summer school), *Greece* (summer school, postgraduate studies, research stay), *Ireland* (summer school, short research stay), *Iceland* (partial studies, summer school), *Luxemburg* (partial studies, summer school), *Norway* (summer school), *Italy* (partial studies, language courses, postgraduate courses, research stay and summer school) *Austria* (research stay), *Switzerland* (research stay), *Spain* (summer school). Occasionally, the Hungarian Scholarship Board also published calls for scholarships in the US, UK and Canada, but these were typically not part of interstate agreements.
Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság (2014) Aktuális pályázatok. [Current calls.] Last accessed on July 31, 2014, at <<http://www.scholarship.hu/P%C3%81LY%C3%81ZATOK/Aktu%C3%A1lisP%C3%A1ly%C3%A1zatok/tabid/68/language/hu-HU/Default.aspx>>.

From this data, we can draw the conclusion that compared to the overall number of Hungarian students participating in tertiary education abroad, as indicated by OECD data, the governmental scholarship recipients only amount to a miniscule ratio. Governmental scholarships for full or partial studies have not been available in the United Kingdom and the United States at all, while in the other three top destinations (Germany, Austria and France) their numbers are minimal. Even in the case of Germany, the DAAD scholarships do not even amount to 1% of the Hungarian students studying in the country, if counting only the DAAD scholarships granted for graduate studies. Therefore, we can conclude that the Western education of Hungarian students is primarily supported by sources other than Hungarian governmental scholarships and are typically conducted in frameworks other than interstate agreements. For this reason, we find it necessary to examine what other sources and opportunities have been available for Hungarian students to pursue tertiary education abroad over the years.

4 Structured Study-Abroad Opportunities Supported by External Actors

Several states provide scholarships and grants for visiting highly prestigious universities and educational programs in foreign countries, however, contacted organizations were not allowed to share the recipients' contacts with us and requested information about their profile was usually not available. Still, in order to illustrate the main types of opportunities, we present some of the organizations managing government-supported scholarships in the main destination countries we have contacted.²¹ More information is available about students participating in the most well-known study-abroad framework of the European Union, the Erasmus program; therefore we will focus more on the motivations and experiences of these students, which can give some insight to the experiences of international/foreign students in general, as well.

4.1 BILATERAL FRAMEWORKS – THE EXAMPLE OF FRANCE AND AUSTRIA

Among the bigger and most renowned scholarship opportunities are the ones provided by the French state for foreign students. The French Government Scholarship Program for International Students is based on bilateral agreements. The program is managed and backed by the Campus France agency, providing a range of services from tourist tours to practical daily info related to residency in France during the duration of the scholarship. The program has no restriction with regards to the field of studies, therefore various professions and fields are chosen by the scholarship recipients. Two types of scholarships are available for Hungarian students, professionals, junior and senior researchers: short study trips and 1-6 month-long exchange programs focusing on teachers, senior researchers; as well as long-term programs for graduate (Master and PhD) students. The French higher education system differs from the Hungarian in the sense that it offers both research and practice-oriented Master fellowships. The latter, called “*apprentissage*”, is more like an internship but with a diploma at the end. In this case, companies pay the tuition fee of the students who have the obligation of returning to their home countries after finishing their studies. The compulsory follow-up of this program is conducted in the framework of the “*Association des Anciens Boursiers Hongrois de l’Etat français*” (AABGF). The Association was founded in 1997 with the aim is to support, follow and connect previous grantees and also those who participated in such program on their own without receiving any scholarship or financial support from the French Government. It has approximately 200 active members currently. Its activities also entail organizing annual balls, excursions, networking events and professional lectures in various fields for the membership.²² Concerning the returns from all programs, trends have changed significantly over time. Until 2006, 70% of the grantees returned after the fellowship or scholarship ended. Due to the significantly better conditions of studying, researching and employment abroad, however, grantees use the program as a springboard. After 2006, many grantees have stayed in France or moved further, mostly to Germany, England or to Scandinavian countries.²³

21 The British Council has also been contacted to request an interview concerning Hungarians studying in the UK, but no reply was received. Concerning Germany, we have already discussed the DAAD program which is without doubt the most important German framework target not only Hungary, but practically any country of the world.

22 Unfortunately, we were not granted access to their membership database due to data protection reasons, therefore we could not conduct interviews with the recipients concerning their experience. We also did not receive information about the annual numbers of recipients.

23 Personal communication with a representative of the Embassy of the Republic of France in Hungary, September 2014, Budapest.

Another atypical, and not strictly educational program sponsored by France is the invitation-based Eiffel Program of Excellence, where potential grantees cannot apply directly, but receive invitations from institutions. Therefore participation, especially from CEE countries, is exclusive. Invitations are profession-dependent – legal studies, political science, engineering are represented. The program was founded in the late '90s and about 3000 international fellows participated since then. As the program director of the French Embassy in Hungary says, an approximate number of 2600 professionals spent more than 6 months in France, the rest spent a short-term exchange of usually 3 months. Mostly business sector professionals receive these grants, besides mainly constitutional lawyers, public servants and diplomats. After the program, they return to their home country and continue in their field, therefore utilizing their experiences in their country of origin.

The main Austrian-Hungarian bilateral framework is conducted under the supervision of the Austrian-Hungarian Action Association founded in 1990. The organization is based on bilateral agreements between the Hungarian and the Austrian state aiming to provide scholarships both for Hungarian and Austrian students and researchers. Summer universities are also organized within the program. Additionally, the following activities are supported: joint research and education programs within exchange programs, research on Hungarian-Austrian dissertation topics, joint education and research projects, short-term residency programs for researchers, publication of research materials, publications of activities that were supported by the Association, as well as Hungarian and German summer language courses. Generally around 30-40 applicants receive some kind of support from the association every year, including applicants from both countries. In the past 24 years, many Hungarians participated in the program, although for data protection reasons no access was given to actual grant recipients.²⁴

4.2 ERASMUS – THE PAN-EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

16 While destinations countries generally provide institutionalized bilateral programs, the Erasmus program of the European Union is without doubt the most widely-known and most popular study-abroad opportunity among Hungarian students that offers scholarships as well to study in Western higher education institutions. Between the introduction of the program in the academic year 1998/99 and the academic year 2010/11 when the latest data is available, 34210 Hungarian students have participated in the program altogether. The number of students benefiting from the program increased steadily starting with only 856 in 1998 and reaching 4164 in 2011.

The review of the number of Hungarian students studying in the various destination countries over time shows that the most popular have always been countries which fall under our “Western” category, even though Erasmus scholarships are available for the new EU member states as well. The most popular destination is, as expected, Germany. The number of students completing their Erasmus here grew from 243 in 1998 to 908 in 2011, that is, almost fourfold. It also means that close to 25% of Hungarian Erasmus students go to Germany. In the second place, German destinations were stably followed by France until 2010, but numbers are significantly lower here: 133 in 1998, 336 in 2011. Although it has not been among the overall top five destinations based on the OECD numbers, among Erasmus opportunities Italy firmly holds the third place since 1999 (141 students that year, 314 in 2011). Some fluctuation can be observed in the fourth and fifth places over time. Until 2006, Finland has been in the fourth place, but since then the number of students gradually dropped. It is not clear whether the number of opportunities has dropped too, or rather the students use them less. Until 2005, the Netherlands have been very popular and held the 5th place in the ranking. Although the number of student choosing to complete their Erasmus here is still growing, they have been outnumbered by those who decide

24 Email communication with a representative of the Embassy of Austria in Hungary, September 2014.

upon Spain and more recently on Austria. With recent changes, in 2011 Spain took the 4th and Austria the 5th place in the ranking.²⁵ Interestingly, the United Kingdom has only been once among the top five Erasmus destinations (in 1998 with the modest number of 87 students), therefore the great increase in the number of Hungarians studying in the UK after Hungary's EU accession is certainly not a result of expanding Erasmus opportunities to the country. We should of course note that the number of students studying in various destinations with Erasmus scholarships is not solely dependent on the preferences of the students, but also reflect the available options provided through the networks of their home institutions. With expanding cooperation among higher education institutions in Europe, the number of available placements naturally grew, as well.

Previous studies published in 2003 and 2010 have inquired about the motivations, good and bad experiences of Hungarian Erasmus students.²⁶ In both cases the surveyed and the interviewed students highlighted the possibility to improve their foreign language skills as one of the most important motivations to participate in the program. Additionally, participation in international research networks, access to courses not taught at the home university were also listed by the surveyed students in 2000.²⁷ Interviewees of the 2010 study also mentioned that they wanted to see how a different higher education system works, how their field is taught in other countries, to get access to current literature in their field of study not available in Hungary, but also to get to know new people, different cultures and “see the world”.²⁸ Some scholarship recipients also mentioned that without this financial support, they would not have been able to study abroad. At the same time, the 2003 survey showed that the scholarship is generally perceived to be rather low and is not enough to cover living costs.²⁹

While the motivations are manifold and both personal and professional reasons can be found behind the individual applications, the above mentioned main goals and motivations have been met according to the recipients of the scholarship. Their language skills improved, they got to know different cultures through the exchange. At the same time, the study-abroad period also contributed to their personal development: they became more open-minded, developed their communication and intercultural skills, and became more receptive to cultural differences.³⁰ Some of them reported significant progress in their professional career in academia upon their return home thanks to opportunities the study-abroad period presented. Upon their return, Erasmus students generally felt that the study-abroad period might have increased their chances on the Hungarian job market, as well.³¹

25 The source of the numbers is the website of Tempus Foundation that manages the Erasmus program (and other elements of the EU's Life-long Learning program) in Hungary. Website: <<http://english.tpf.hu/>>.

26 Tót, Éva (2003) *Az európai oktatási programokban való részvétel hasznosulása*. [The Utilization of Participation in European Educational Programs.] *Educatio* 2003/4, pp. 551-565.

The article builds on a survey of 8000 Hungarian Erasmus students out of which 2000 gave answers.

Kurucz, Katalin, Bettina Beregi, Ildikó Hlavatý (eds.) (2010.) *Erasmus sikertörténetek. Volt ösztöndíjas hallgatók munkaerőpiaci esélyei*. [Erasmus Success-stories. Chances of Former Scholarship Recipients on the Job Market.] HOPPÁ Diszeminációs füzetek 23. Tempus Közalapítvány, Budapest. 2010.

The paper builds on personal interviews with 9 Erasmus scholarship recipients who by the time of interviewing had already finished their studies.

27 Tót (2003) p. 554.

28 Kurucz et al. (2010) pp. 15-30.

29 Tót (2003) p. 563.

30 Kurucz et al. (2010) p.2.

31 Tót (2003) p. 554.

5 Western-educated professionals on the Hungarian job market

Engaging Western graduates on the Hungarian job market, both in public administration and in the private sector is the main channel through which the country can profit from their knowledge, skills and expertise acquired abroad. We can safely assume that them bringing home new ideas and approaches to business, research or leadership can contribute to the competitiveness and therefore to the growth of the Hungarian economy. For this reason it would be logical to provide support for and facilitate the return and reintegration of Western graduates in their country of origin.

The results of a survey conducted in 2010 by Educatio Nonprofit Kft. on the career development of young graduates showed that those students who expected better chances on the job market after studying abroad did not have unrealistic hopes. With study-abroad experience students generally found a job about a month faster than those who only studied in Hungary; unemployment rate was significantly lower among them; they were more likely to be in a top management position and were more likely to be satisfied with such aspects of their job as wage, prestige or career prospects. Additionally, they earned somewhat better than those who have not studied in other countries.³² Private companies interviewed by the Tempus Foundation in 2010 all agreed that foreign experience is indeed seen as an added-value during their recruitment processes, especially because in their experience it contributes to the candidates having better language and communication skills.³³ As a matter of fact, employers expressed that they value work experience abroad more than study-abroad experience, as the former also proves that the candidate, on top of speaking the language, knows how to use his/her knowledge in practice.³⁴ From this follows that employers in the private sector are actually less interested in where the candidate studied, how the given institution ranks internationally, and put more focus on practical and soft skills built up during studies or training abroad.

5.1 SUPPORT FOR REPATRIATION AND INTEGRATION INTO THE PRIVATE JOB MARKET

While employers overall value foreign experience and degrees as the previous section outlined, and attracting Western graduates of Hungarian origin to enter the job market in Hungary would certainly be beneficial for the country, there have not been so far any governmental initiatives to this end. At the same time, some non-governmental projects have been created, however, with limited success. From the recent past and the present we consider here two initiatives worth introducing, the “Project Retour” program and the newer “Gyere Haza!” [Come Home!] program.

The “Project Retour” program was established in 2003 by Regina Saphier,³⁵ a Western graduate of Hungarian origin herself, as a non-governmental, grassroots initiative seeking to help the return of highly educated Hungarian graduates and experts from countries which are typically described as “brain drainers.” Our area of inquiry, the Western countries, can be broadly described as such. Saphier strongly

32 Survey results quoted in Kurucz et al. (2010) pp. 3-6.

33 *ibid.* pp. 7-9.

34 *ibid.* p. 8.

Kardos, Anita (ed.) (2013) *Nemzetközi Mobilitás és Munkaerőpiac*. [International Mobility.] HOPPÁ Disszeminációs füzetek 40. Tempus Közalapítvány, Budapest. 2013.

35 Saphier, Regina (2014) *A kutatói hazatérés ellenjavallt*. [Returning Home as a Researcher is Advised Against.] Virtual Humanism blog. Last accessed on September 26, 2014 at <<http://virtualhumanism.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/saphier-regina-a-kutato-i-hazateres-ellenjavallt/>>.

emphasized that such activity should be undertaken by the state for its own best interest.³⁶ She had the impression that these returning Hungarian experts and graduates face a lengthy and burdensome process integrating into the society and finding their way on the Hungarian job market. Her opinion and actual experience is backed up by the views of those of our interviewees who returned to Hungary after their Fulbright program ended. Saphier’s NGO sought to facilitate the first months and years of these repatriating elites by bringing them to the attention of potential employers, organizing networking and information events, lobbying the government to make steps in order to help the repatriation, inspiring research on and concerning the target group and by initiating and coordinating cooperation among the stakeholders. She was positive that with Hungary’s EU accession certain structural funds will be available to help the operation of her initiative and the return of Western graduates.³⁷ In the wake of the EU accession, this initiative has been the very first in Hungary and even in Europe to set such goals.³⁸ The idea to “launch the circulation of Hungarian intellectual capital” gained the initial verbal support of the Ministry of Education and Minister Bálint Magyar as well, but financial or structural support never followed from the government. Working with volunteers, the NGO functioned for two years and according to its founder it became quite well-known, but due to lack of financial support it was forced to close its doors in June 2005.³⁹

Naturally, not only highly-educated Hungarians live abroad. As opposed to Project Retour which targeted specifically this segment of the society, the currently running “Gyere Haza!” program, founded in March 2011 by Tristan Azbej, former vice-president of the Young Christian Democratic Union, does not make such distinction. It targets any Hungarian who is currently living abroad, let that be for family, work or study reasons, and who wishes to return to Hungary. Since its start, the program remained connected to the Young Christian Democratic Union. In March 2013, thanks to the financial support (HUF 2 million, which equals about EUR 6400) of the Ministry of Human Resources,⁴⁰ the Gyere Haza Alapítvány [Come Home Foundation] was registered to continue their work through the establishment of an online Career Point which provides free advice for young Hungarians who wish to return to the country. There is no publicly available information on the actual content of the cooperation between the Foundation and the Ministry and whether the Ministry streamlines the focus of the Foundation or seeks to recruit Hungarians living abroad for public administration. There is no sign of that though.⁴¹ The Foundation claims to provide assistance concerning the Hungarian job market, job seeking strategies, questions about labor law, social aid or the conditions of founding business. There are indeed information materials available on these topics on their website. In June 2013, they report-

36 Saphier, Regina (2004) *Viszed innen az agyadat?! [Won't You Take Your Brain from Here?!]* Élet és Irodalom Vol.48. Nr. 23. June 4, 2014. Last accessed on September 26, 2014, at <<http://www.es.hu/kereses/szerzo/Saphier%20Regina>>.

37 Information on the Project Retour Office on Klubháló – Közéleti Társaságok Szabad Hálózata [Club Network – Public Organizations’ Free Network]. Last accessed on September 26, 2014, at <<http://www.klubhalo.hu/modules.php/cpg/download/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=14>>.

38 Sággy, Erna (2005) *Agyelszívók. A legsikeresebb állástalan diplomás*. [Brain-drainers. The Most Successful Unemployed Graduate.] 168 Óra Online, September 27, 2005. Last accessed on September 26, 2014, at <<http://www.168ora.hu/itthon/agyvisszaszivok-2080.html?print=1>>.

39 HVG Online (2005) *Befejezte a hazatérőket patronáló Saphier Regina*. [Patron of returners Regina Saphier is finished.] September 28, 2005. Last accessed on September 26, 2014, at <<http://hvg.hu/itthon/20050928saphier>>.

40 Erdályi, Péter (2013) *Izraelbe ment dolgozni a magyar fiatalokat külföldről hazacsábító szervezet alapítója*. [Founder of Organization Attracting Home Hungarian Youth from Abroad Went to Work in Israel.] 444.hu, December 11, 2013. Last accessed on September 26, 2014 at <<http://444.hu/2013/12/11/izraelbe-ment-dolgozni-a-magyar-fiatalokat-kulfoldrol-hazacsabito-szervezet-alapitoja/>>.

41 The Foundation has been contacted via email to request an interview about their activities, but no reply was received.

edly received the 100th inquiry from Hungarians abroad.⁴² Even though by now estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands of Hungarians live abroad, the Facebook group of the program counts less than 1000 followers as of June 2014.⁴³ For a program basing its activities on its online platforms, this is a very poor achievement.

After the failure of Project Return, which was partly due to the lack of governmental interest and support and partly to financial constraints, the fact that the “Gyere Haza!” initiative managed to secure some governmental support is a positive development and suggests that the authorities might have started to recognize their own potential role in supporting the return of Hungarians, let them be highly qualified Western graduates or Hungarians who have left to work abroad. At the same time, official support for repatriation has not gone further. No governmental initiatives have been put in place to reverse brain drain and attract home the best qualified Western graduates.

5.2 EXPERIENCES OF WESTERN ALUMNI

To get a better overview of how the highly qualified segment of Western-educated Hungarians find returning to their country of origin, we conducted interviews with representatives of several Ivy League alumni organizations, the Fulbright Commission and Fulbright alumni from various fields of studies.⁴⁴ All four interviewed associations in Hungary were founded by former students of the respective universities with the aim of promoting their alma mater, providing professional background, organizing events and networking. They differ from alumni organizations in terms of structure and services but function in a similar way involving active former students and people affiliated with the universities. Their main aim is to provide professional programs and preserve communities formed from students of the same universities. Although they provide information on the Ivy League schools to prospective students, their assistance does not go further, e.g. they do not provide financial help for covering the high costs of education in the US.⁴⁵ While on a case by case basis they might be able to facilitate the return of a graduate to Hungary through their networks, they do not provide assistance in job search and do not follow the career paths of Hungarian Ivy graduates *per se* either.

The associations were founded in the early 2000s due to the changes of perception and value of such diplomas. As association directors say that in the ‘90s the biggest value of such an education was the solid knowledge of the foreign language as studying abroad was not available for many. However, the professional value of these diplomas was not much appreciated back then in Hungary. As László Czirják, founder and director of the Columbia Club of Hungary and Member of the Board of the Fulbright Hungarian–American Commission for Educational Exchange mentioned that Columbia, and in general the Ivy-brand, is recognized primarily in academic fields of career. Some fields of studies in some sectors have become more respected since the ‘90s, for instance legal and finance diplomas from prestigious American universities in the banking and investment sector or in big multinational corporations. Nevertheless, job openings in these sectors are limited and fill up quickly. Briefly, according to the account of Mr. Czirják, having a Western diploma is not such a big advantage on the Hungarian job market. This fits to a bigger trend, however. Such diplomas are not appreciated to their true value

42 HVG Online (2013) *A külföldön dolgozó magyarok nem ostromolják a Gyere Haza Pontot.* [Hungarians Working Abroad are not Bombarding the “Gyere Haza” Point.] June 26, 2013. Last accessed on September 26, 2014 at <http://hvg.hu/karrier/20130626_A_kulfoldon_dolgozo_magyarok_nem_ostromol>.

43 Facebook page of the Gyere Haza Alapítvány is available at <<https://www.facebook.com/gyerehaza/>>.

44 Interviews conducted via email, phone and personally with four alumni organizations, the Columbia Club of Hungary, the Harvard Club of Hungary, the Yale Club of Hungary and the Stanford Club of Hungary, the Fulbright Commission in Hungary and with 6 former Fulbright scholarship recipients who wished to remain anonymous.

45 Education in Hungary is free while in the US it varies 50.000-100.000 USD annually if the university is prestigious.

because Europeans are generally not familiar with the structure and prestige of the US higher education system and cannot really differentiate among universities, he added. Even if the reputation is recognized, in Hungary it rarely leads to higher salaries. Therefore, since the tuition fees are extremely high for the Hungarian average, if career options do not pay off, choosing this kind of education is simply not worthwhile in terms of finances in the case of Hungary.

One of the biggest advantages for those who studied abroad is that they have the chance to decide whether to return to Hungary or not. Though visa questions in the US for instance may pose obstacles, education is a significant step towards residency, work permit or even citizenship. In fact, according to the account of Mr. Czirják, reasons for one’s return have been mostly personal, family-related.

Personal interviews with former Hungarian Fulbright students show several common features regarding their experiences on spending an academic year in the USA with the Fulbright Scholarship Program. They all highlighted the importance of the professional experience, knowledge and the strong encouragement on their mentors’ and fellow researchers’ side. However, concerning the perception of their Fulbright Scholarship, interviewees emphasized that in Hungary neither the scholarship itself, nor the universities related to it are appreciated or recognized. On the contrary, they noted that their knowledge and experience gained through the program were considered “suspicious and unreliable” in many contexts with slight differences depending on the very field and subject. In an academic career, Fulbright is recognized but the more practical the field is the less it is known or appreciated (HR officers do not count it as an advantage when seeking for a job, according to the experiences of the interviewed alumni). They mostly implied that the perception of their diploma or program attendance had a rather contradicting reception when looking for jobs or applying to a research position back in Hungary after their return. The network they built in the US and through the program – which they all emphasized as an important gain – was absolutely useless in Hungary, but was quite important when looking for opportunities and/or contributors to their further activity or research abroad. They consequently said, in the field of academia, the “Fulbright visiting researcher” title opened doors.

The policy of the Fulbright Program states that applicants must return after completing their research/study program, and all participants declared in their application their aim of returning and utilizing their expertise gained through the program. This mostly served though the fulfillment of the application criteria. On the question about the reason of their return no one mentioned the purpose of utilizing the expertise and knowledge gained through the program in Hungary. Some of them had the goal of getting a visa easier in the US in that way with the slight chance of finding an opportunity to get a visa extension after their program ended.

To conclude, every participant considers the program as a milestone or a very important phase of their career, it did alter their view on education and professional development, however, the recognition of the actual value of their education in Hungary is still non-existent.

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The initial assessment of the composition of governments and the higher echelons of public administration showed that although it is far from being dominant, there are several Western graduates or Western-educated professionals in these positions. Nonetheless, as our interviewee also acknowledged, attracting specifically graduates of Western higher education institutions has never been a priority in the reform of public administration. The graduate programs of public administration running since 2004 have not targeted foreign graduates either, nor did they treat them preferentially, as we will see. The first big initiative to renew public administration and offer paid traineeship positions to fresh graduates was

launched in 2003 as a pilot project in Northeastern Hungary (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county)⁴⁶ and in 2004 as a national project under the name of “Diplomás pályakezdeket a közigazgatásba” [Fresh graduates to public administration].⁴⁷ The program offered a 9-12 month long paid scholarship for college and university graduates with the prospect of being hired for an additional period at least as long as the training period itself. The framework ran until 2010 when it was replaced by the “Magyar Közigazgatási Ösztöndíj” [Hungarian Public Administration Scholarship].

It is not aimed specifically at foreign or Western-educated graduates, but it recognizes the potential value of experience gained abroad. The current public administration scholarship scheme does try to create the opportunity for trainees to develop their skills and gain some experience abroad through spending a couple months in other EU countries usually in the middle of their training period. This way the recipients first get some experience in their home unit in central or local administration or in background institutions where they participate in trainings, then they go abroad to public administration offices of other EU countries to gain insight into public administration abroad and to collect best practices. Finally, they spend some time before their training ends with their home unit again. At the end of the program, all participants have to prepare a final report about their experiences, especially about those they gained during the foreign element of the training. They are also required to take a final examination, which, if passed successfully and if they are granted civic servant status later, can provide them an exemption from the basic exam of public administration that civil servants have to take.

The first cohort of the scholarship started its training in February 2011. The first edition of the program envisioned 4 months spent abroad, 6 in the home unit, and requested the participants to commit for 2-3 years to working in public administration after the traineeship.⁴⁸ Based on the experiences of the first year, the length of the program remained 10 months, but the foreign training element was reduced to 2 months from the second edition on and no prior commitment was requested from the trainees to stay in public administration once the scholarship is over. Therefore it no longer promised employment in public administration after the completion of the scholarship. According to accounts of participants, the first cohort was indeed offered some kind of contract in a Hungarian public administration unit after the training, although this employment varied unit by unit and case by case. Home units often could not offer 2-3-year placements for the scholarship recipients already after the first year of the scholarship, mainly due to limited openings being available in the units.⁴⁹ This is why the organizers no longer requested 2-3-year commitments in advance from the applicants from the second year on.

The period of foreign training held some logistical challenges in the first year until all trainees found host units abroad. While they could indicate their preferred institutions in the given host country, this could not always be taken into account entirely. In certain cases the areas covered by the host unit did not match the training area of the scholarship recipient, which did not facilitate the utilization of the acquired foreign experiences back home. Nevertheless, even in these cases the foreign training effectively contributed to the trainees' language skills. When returning from the training-abroad period, the trainees usually got placements in their original home units (if at all), although in bigger institutions they sometimes received offers in different units than where they had originally worked.

46 Munkaügyi Levelek (2003) *Programok végzős fiataloknak*. [Programs for graduating youth]. A Munkaadó Lapja, nr.67. September 15, 2003. Last accessed on September 26, 2014 at <<http://munkaugyilevek.hu/2003/09/palyakezdek-tamogatasa/>>.

47 Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium (2004) *Diplomás pályakezdeket a közigazgatásban*. [Fresh graduates in public administration.] Last accessed on July 2, 2014 at <<http://www.szmm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=21158&articleID=20973&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>>.

48 Information on year 2011 of the Public Administration Scholarship <<http://www.kozigosztondij.gov.hu/index.php>>.

49 Personal communication with former scholarship recipients, July, September 2014, Budapest.

For those who received their degrees abroad, a new requirement was introduced from the second edition on: they had to complete the accreditation process of their degrees in Hungary until 6 weeks before the start of the scholarship the latest.⁵⁰ In the first year no such requirement had been set. Considering that accreditation can be a lengthy and burdensome process, according to some personal accounts, this requirement might actually disadvantage foreign graduates instead of supporting them and valuing their experiences gained abroad, in international environments.

50 Information on year 2012 of the Public Administration Scholarship <<http://kozigosztondij.gov.hu/2012/index.php>>.

Information on year 2013 of the Public Administration Scholarship <<http://kozigosztondij.gov.hu/2013/>>.

Information on year 2014 of the Public Administration Scholarship <<http://kozigosztondij.gov.hu/2014/>>.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review of the situation of Western-educated professionals in Hungary did not paint a promising and model-like picture for partners from the region to follow, nonetheless, it can still provide some lessons learnt and maybe even some good practices.

We have found that inclusion of Western graduates into the highest ranks of political leadership and public administration has not been a priority in Hungary per se. Prior education in the West was not a determining factor in selecting those officials who dealt with Hungary's accession to the European Union, although it certainly was not a disadvantage, since high proficiency of foreign languages was a requirement to become a participant and contributor of the process. The profile of the main agents of change in this field could be described as follows: highly experienced professional with excellent language skills and deep knowledge gained through experience on job on Western institutions like GATT, IMF, WB, OECD or the European Communities itself. Once Hungary joined the European Union and there was some time to lean back and rethink the future development of public administration, new traineeship frameworks started, but they also did not target Western-educated youth. Moreover, to enter the program foreign degree holders have to accredit their diplomas before the traineeship which, having in mind the often lengthy and problematic process of accreditation, creates additional burden for Western graduates, as well, who would wish to join the public administration.

While more and more Hungarians study abroad, as shown by the numbers of OECD, only a minuscule ratio is supported by governmental scholarships. There are no governmental programs which would send Hungary's best and brightest to prestigious Western universities with the aim of bringing them back to serve in public administration or to contribute to the development of the country in other sectors. This is a practice that is direly missing. The training-abroad element of the currently running public administration traineeship scheme is to some extent seeking to give a chance to potential future civil servants to gain experience abroad, but it is questionable whether 2 months in another country's public administration unit is enough for this. An additional downside is that there is no guarantee that the acquired experiences will be made use of upon the return of the trainee, since by now after several rounds of the program public administration can only provide placements for a smaller segment of the participants.

In the private sector, experiences are more positive. According to surveys, graduates with experience in foreign education find jobs faster, unemployment among them is lower, and they are generally more satisfied with their jobs. Employers however mostly do not differentiate among the various universities, they generally value language and soft skills acquired abroad and not the knowledge itself the graduate had the chance to build up by attending a college or university ranking high on international charts. While wages might be a bit higher in the case of graduates with foreign experience, the difference is not that significant. Even though in some sectors prestigious degrees are becoming more recognized as the accounts of Ivy League alumni suggest, this is still not widespread. This suggests that, given the current Hungarian situation, if somebody wants to study abroad with the specific aim of increasing his or her chances back on the Hungarian job market afterwards, financially it most likely does not pay off to invest into a – at least internationally – very prestigious degree, e.g. in an Ivy League institution, but it is certainly worth going on an Erasmus scholarship to acquire the above mentioned skills valued by Hungarian employers.

The attempt of Regina Saphier in the framework of the Project Retour initiative draw attention to the difficulties of Western graduates face when they wish to return to Hungary and would like to find a

placement that matches the level and prestige of their qualification. At the same time, it calls attention to the phenomenon of brain-drain that naturally affects Hungary. Although the verbal support of the Ministry of Education at the time proved the acknowledgement of this trend, no governmental support followed to turn it back. The financial support coming from the government for the "Gyere Haza!" program certainly can be seen as a positive development, although the initiative itself still have not reached a wide audience and great publicity despite running since 2011.

While the overall trends are not too encouraging in Hungary, some of the above mentioned, recently occurring practices deserve recognition and maybe attention from partners. The public administration traineeship program is certainly a promising initiative and, if conducted with sufficient planning, can contribute to the renewal and reform of public administration. If the program itself values foreign experience – and the training-abroad element certainly suggests so – it is important to make it easily accessible to those who already possess study or work experiences from abroad. It would be advisable to accept trainees in fields where new staff is needed and where placements can be offered afterwards, in order to avoid losing the freshly acquired knowledge of the trainees.

The fact that Western graduates find that their diplomas are not recognized and appreciated in their home countries, and they do not find job opportunities matching their qualification, definitely facilitates brain-drain. Turning back the trend is certainly a complex and challenging process. If attracting highly qualified professionals back to their home country is the goal, the governments need to take up a bigger role in this. For this reason, governmental support for the "Gyere Haza" program is a good start, but relying solely on NGOs to do the job is not enough. If governments wish to reverse brain-drain they need to invest and actively engage in this, e.g. they need to cultivate relations with civil initiatives of course, if there are any, they should create attractive opportunities in public administration for graduates of relevant fields, they should provide financial and administrative support for start-ups, SMEs to reach new entrepreneurs, and of course they should create a secure and stable political environment that is conducive to economic growth. This, however, already goes way beyond our inquiry.