



Research into Hungarian Schengen visa situation

The issue

The entry of Hungary into the Schengen visa regime was simultaneously a final accord of the process of reintegration into the (West) European political and economic space, and of the process of cutting the country off the states located outside the EU, particular its Eastern neighbours. While the resulting freedom of travel exercised with regards to the other Schengen countries is welcome the effective semi-isolation vis-a-vis countries whose citizens have to acquire a Schengen visa in order to visit Hungary is worrisome. Worse than that, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is harder to receive a visa from Hungarian embassies than from the embassies of other Schengen states and that whatever flexibility the Schengen system offers, it is not always used by the Hungarian consular services. Hungarian Europe Society would like to address the problem and as the first step to undertake desk research into the situation, which is the subject of this proposal.

Why is this a problem

The losers of the situation are both Hungary and the countries that are negatively affected by the situation. Hungary loses, first, by missing the connections (economic, scientific, cultural etc.) that would be created if more people visited the country. Added to this are the financial losses stemming from the not realised fully tourist potential of non-Schengen visitors. Hungary also misses out an opportunity to play a more active role internationally through exercising its soft power towards other countries, where it holds largely unrealised potential. Countries that are subjected to the Schengen regime, usually non-democratic ones or just building their democracies, lose an opportunity of exposure to the functioning of a democratic, even if imperfect, country.

Research questions

The research will answer the following questions:

1. What has been the impact of the introduction of the Schengen system in Hungary on the number of visitors subjected to it?
2. Is there evidence that it is harder to receive Hungarian Schengen visa than a Schengen visa from other EU embassies?
3. If so, what are there reasons for this? Are there any particular procedures followed by the Hungarian consular services that lead to this situation?
4. What should be done to improve the situation?
5. What field research should be conducted in order to better understand the problem?

Data sources

We expect the researcher(s) to work with the following information:

1. Visitor statistics in the period before Hungary's entry into the Schengen system and after it (including changes related to subsequent changes to the relevant law), all compared to other Schengen countries (by country of citizenship and by year since 2003), *general statistics from KSH and EU*
2. Visa statistics: the number of one-, two- and multiple-entry visas issued and the periods they were issued for, the number of rejections in the visa process and reasons for them, (by country of citizenship and by year since 2003), *general statistics, data to be obtained from the Külügyminisztérium és a Bevándorlási Hivatal.*
3. Hungarian laws and lower level regulations influencing the visa process, their relative strictness vis-a-vis the general Schengen framework, since 2003, *generally available laws, internal regulations of the Külügyminisztérium és a Bevándorlási Hivatal, interviews with civil servants working in the area.*

MET has several members with access to data and contacts related to the visa problems, they will be mobilised to share them within this project.

We will tapping upon the experience with similar research of Batory Foundation in Poland.

Project outcome

We expect the following outcome of the research:

1. An analytical paper presenting the findings (20-30 pages), including a summary (1 page) and appendixes
2. A paper presenting policy recommendations (up to 5 pages)
3. A paper with suggestions for further research directions (up to 5 pages)
4. A list of information sources (data, persons interviewed, informal contacts, audio recordings of the interviews if made, etc.)

Dissemination of findings

To facilitate dissemination of the research outcome it will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

- Publication of the paper on the internet + paper publication (100 copies)
- Publication of an abbreviated version of the paper in English on the internet
- Mailing announcement of the paper to the MET mailing list expanded with names of researchers, policy-makers and civil servants, foreign embassies
- Articles written in the media (MET members)
- A half-a-day roundtable on the issue organised for policy-makers in the area with invited guests from CEE presenting the results of research conducted there
- Use of the finding in the joint project with Czech, Polish and Slovak partners on the same topic (application submitted to the Visegrad Fund, decision expected by the end of December)

Project period

We aim at completing the project by the end of June 2009.

The researchers

Research will be conducted by dr. Illés Sándor, who will be responsible for the statistical analysis, and dr. Attila Melegh, who will carry out the legal part of the research. The research will be supervised on behalf of MET by Tamás Molnár, who will be responsible for the final shape it takes (all CVs attached).

Budget

1. Researcher(s) 2*30 days @ 16,000 HUF = **960,000HUF**
 2. Research supervision (Tamás Molnár, MET) 10 days @ 16,000HUF = **160,000HUF**
 3. Outreach
 - printing of paper publication (50 pages) 100 copies @ 1000 HUF = **100,000HUF**
 - roundtable
 - coffee/pogacs/napkins 50 persons @ 1,000HUF = **50,000HUF**
 - invitations/mail 50 persons @ 200HUF = **10,000HUF**
 - foreign guest to present outcomes of CEE research ticket **100,000HUF**
 - foreign guest hotel 2 nights @ 12,000HUF = **24,000HUF**
 - foreign guest transportation **6,000HUF**
 - foreign guest meals **15,000HUF**
 4. Coordination – Jerzy Celichowski **0HUF**
 5. Project assistant (Zoltán Dóczy) 15 days @ 8,000HUF = **120,000HUF**
 6. Concept (István Hegedűs) **200,000**
- SUBTOTAL: 1,675,000HUF**
7. Unexpected expenses (5%): **83,750HUF**
- TOTAL: 1,758,750HUF**

Project assistant will be responsible for the publication and other forms of the dissemination of findings, the organisation of the roundtable and ad-hoc logistical assistance throughout the project period.

Disclaimer

Jerzy Celichowski, who will coordinate the project within the Hungarian Europe Society, is an employee of Open Society Institute. He will not benefit financially from a grant to this project.

About the Hungarian Europe Society (Magyarországi Európa Társaság, MET)

<http://www.europatarsasag.hu>, www.europesociety.hu

The Hungarian Europe Society as a non-governmental and non-partisan organisation, intends to be involved in the ongoing international dialogue on the future of liberal democracies. The core of its interest and activities - although not exclusively - is the European Union and the Hungarian membership inside the Union. Its objective is to represent and promote the idea of a united Europe, and the European common values, in Hungary and abroad. Regarding this mission, members of the society - social scientists, journalists, diplomats, students - have had initiatives in many areas:

- to organise lectures, conferences, and other events to study and discuss European issues such as the institutional reforms of the European Union, the decision-making process, the European legal system, the methods of concertation between member states, the common European political culture, and the enlargement process,
- to evaluate the European Union model with a special regard to Hungary's place by expressing their opinions in publications and in the mass media,
- to attend foreign and Hungarian political, academic, business and civic events, and explore the issues of international politics, particularly, the development of European theoretical and practical politics,
- to establish international contacts with other Hungarian and foreign think tanks by setting up a research group
- to edit an on-line Internet periodical,
- to undertake the task of expanding the knowledge of the Hungarian public about the European Union in co-operation with other civil groups,
- to join in the network of European NGOs,
- to lobby and mediate in cooperation with business actors to reconcile Hungarian and EU interests,
- to instruct students engaged in university/college education related to the European Union,
- to implement lectures and training programmes related to EU issues for other target groups,
- to treat other relevant issues of political and social life - such as human and minority rights, sustainable economic growth, protection of the environment, freedom of the media, cultural identity and globalisation as well as autonomy of arts.

The chairman: István Hegedűs, sociologist (ihegedus@t-online.hu).

Vice-chairpersons: Attila Bartha, Kopint – Tárki, research director (attila.bartha@kopint-tarki.hu) and Petra Bárd, National Institute of Criminology, researcher (bardp@ceu.hu)

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