



THE INTERNATIONALISED INSTITUTION

INSPIRING EXAMPLES FROM
THREE HUNGARIAN HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



This case study was prepared by Zsuzsa Jávorka, Technopolis Ltd. with input from Guia Bianchi, based on the visits to the higher education institutions as part of the Hungarian HEInnovate country review undertaken in 2016.

Introduction

Internationalisation of a higher education institution covers a very broad range of activities. Internationalisation can influence all aspects of a HEI, from the design and delivery of education, to research activities and relationships with the external environment, to knowledge exchange. Internationalisation should be understood as a catalyst and vehicle for change. It helps introduce alternative ways of thinking, creates diversity in multicultural communities and questions traditional teaching methods.

Becoming more international and entrepreneurial can mutually reinforce strategic objectives for a higher education institution. It is not possible for a HEI to be entrepreneurial without being international, but a HEI can be international without being entrepreneurial or innovative. Therefore, an international HEI whose aim is to become more entrepreneurial should integrate its internationalisation strategy into its entrepreneurial agenda.

For the purposes of this case study, some of the approaches used by three higher education institutions visited during the HEInnovate Country review in Hungary are highlighted. These institutions – the University of Debrecen, Semmelweis University and Szent István University - have the common objective of integrating their entrepreneurial agenda with the involvement of international communities, as well as undertaking activities with an international and collaborative fabric.

The **University of Debrecen** – formed from the Reformed College of Debrecen dating back to the 16th century - was established as a university in 1912. Its original three faculties have by now expanded into 14. The University is one of five research universities in Hungary. It has 24 Doctoral Schools and eight thousand students enrol its study programmes each year. The University features internationalisation prominently in its mission statement. It hosts over 4,000 international students from over 100 countries, more than any other Hungarian university. The intention of becoming more international is well reflected in changes adopted in education, international research activities and the composition of the student body. The University offers full study programmes in English in several subject fields.

Semmelweis University was founded in 1769, which makes it the oldest specialised medical university in Hungary. It is located in the capital city and has five faculties: Dentistry, Health and Public Services, Health Science, Medicine and Pharmacy and has a School of PhD Studies, which includes seven Doctoral Schools. The University's objective is to become Central Europe's leading international specialised university by 2024, which is underlined by the institution's stated values.¹ Semmelweis University is highly internationalised both in terms of education and research. Starting with education, out of the total 11k students, over 3,300 are enrolled in one of the University's foreign language programmes. The University set out to increase its student body to 15,000 by 2024, out of which 50% of students would be international and the percentage of qualified lecturers teaching in a foreign language would reach 90%. Currently, Semmelweis offers study programmes in English, German, Italian and Slovak in addition to Hungarian. In the academic year of 2015/2016 3,000 out of 11,000 students were international. The majority of international students (two thirds) were enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine.

Szent István University (SZIU) consists of eight different faculties with a total of 15,000 students enrolled in the different study programmes. These range from vocational training to doctoral studies and are offered in a wide variety of subjects, with a broad spectrum covering natural and environmental sciences, food engineering, horticulture, landscape architecture, mechanical engineering to business economics, social sciences, architecture and health sciences. The University campuses are located throughout the country, and the university headquarters are in Gödöllő. Since its young inception, the SZIU has recognised the importance of attracting international stakeholders, and offering opportunities to its students and staff to experience part of their academic career abroad.

Internationalisation is an integral part of the HEI's entrepreneurial agenda

Internationalisation, when incorporated into the HEI's strategy, can offer students, staff and the organisation several benefits. It can advance strategic thinking leading to innovation, offer advantages in modernising pedagogy, encourage collaboration between students and staff, stimulate new approaches to learning, and prompt new research collaborations. Through their internationalisation activities, HEIs can also act as gatekeepers and intermediaries for local companies in accessing foreign markets. This should be taken into consideration for knowledge exchange activities and in lifelong learning activities for local entrepreneurs.

¹ <http://semmelweis.hu/english/the-university/mission-statement/semmelweis-universitys-strategy/>

At the **University of Debrecen** a particular attention is dedicated to creating and managing partnerships. The University capitalises on established networks to find its international partners as well as to help source partners for other stakeholders in the region. The University broadens its international network primarily through research cooperation. The institution boasts a great number of **external relations** with partner companies both nationally and internationally, which provide the opportunities to introduce students to industry for example through practical training. The partner companies benefit from research results and knowledge exchange through staff and students, who in turn can train and exchange ideas on an international level.

In the last few years five accredited **clusters** were established around the University which contribute to elevate the University's practices also internationally. These clusters are the Pharmapolis Innovative Pharmaceutical Cluster, the Hungarian Sports and Lifestyle Development Cluster, the Northern Great Plain Regional Thermal Cluster, the Pharmapolis Innovative Food Industry Cluster and the Silicon Field Cluster. Of these clusters, the Food Cluster and the Northern Great Plain Regional Thermal cluster are also internationally accredited. The international members of each cluster reaffirm the University of Debrecen and the surrounding region as critical hubs of innovation in the relevant industries.

Integrating internationalisation into the strategic development of the organisation as a whole also facilitates the allocation of resources and builds synergy between different activities. To pursue this goal, **Semmelweis University's Directorate of International Relations** strives to explore and establish new collaborative ties around the world, thus allowing the University to successfully fulfil its mission in education, research and healthcare. The Directorate allows researchers to take part in the global market of knowledge, which can only be achieved through international collaboration. The Directorate contributes to these objectives both in strategic and practical terms. An important aspect of the fulfilment of this objective is the coordination and improvement of student, teacher and researcher mobility programmes.

While Semmelweis University and the University of Debrecen show a very keen interest in internationalisation, **Szent Istvan University** must also be mentioned for its internationalisation endeavours. The University reflects its regard for internationalisation through its membership of the Association for European Life Science Universities, the European University Association, Education and Culture Lifelong Learning Programme ERASMUS, Euraxess, Tempus Public Foundation, Central and South Eastern Europe (CASEE), European Network of International Relations Officers and The European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE)². At a basic level, involvement with such international schemes indicate the attention Szent Istvan pays to internationalisation. The University also supports the internationalisation of disabled students through its **ExchangeAbility Week**. The ExchangeAbility project was launched by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in 2010, with the objective of supporting disabled students going abroad to study. The ExchangeAbility week has also been conducted at Semmelweis University.

The HEI explicitly supports the international mobility of its staff and students

International mobility brings in new educational and research ideas, creates intercultural opportunities and long lasting partnerships. In addition to attracting international staff and students, an entrepreneurial HEI actively encourages and supports the international mobility of its own staff and students. All three Universities presented in this case study actively encourage their staff and students to take part in mobility programmes. Both staff and students have allocated time and resources to go abroad, with mobility forming a part of the curriculum.

As part of their studies, students at the three different HEIs can benefit from the **Erasmus+** scholarship and experience part of their studies abroad. They can choose to either study or work in a foreign European country. All HEIs welcome incoming students by offering courses and degree programmes in English and other languages. At the **University of Debrecen** University faculty level coordinators are available for the Erasmus" programme to help students to get prepared for international mobility and support staff members to identify possible industry partners. The University's participation in student mobility programmes is successful, in the least three years more than 500 foreign students were hosted as a result of exchange programmes.

The Universities host international students from all around the world through different international mobility schemes, as well as through the funding provided by the **Stipendium Hungaricum** programme.³ The aim of the programme is to promote cultural understanding, economic and political relations between Hungary and

² <http://sziu.hu/memberships>

³ <http://www.tka.hu/international-programmes/2966/stipendium-hungaricum/>

other countries. Currently 49 sending partners are engaged in the programme, managed by the Tempus Public Foundation (TPF). International students can benefit from the exemption of tuition fees, they receive a monthly stipend to cover some of their expenses, get free accommodation in university dormitories as well as medical insurance.

While the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship is only aimed at foreign students, all three Universities have **double-degree programmes** which are open to both Hungarian and international students. These programmes are coordinated with partner institutions, thus reinforcing educational and institutional bonds, expand the students' training opportunities and contribute to student mobility opportunities.

The HEI seeks and attracts international and entrepreneurial staff

The internationalisation of an HEI depends upon people who can stimulate new approaches to teaching, learning and research in a global framework, using world-wide reputations and contacts to benefit the HEI's international network. While the international offices are the primary points of contact with regard international activities including staff and student mobility in the different institutions, additional units, such as TTOs and Semmelweis Innovation Centre also play an important role in promoting internationalisation in combination with entrepreneurship and innovative initiatives.

At the **University of Debrecen**, the newly established Innovation Ecosystem Centre supports and monitors entrepreneurial activities and initiatives. A very popular initiative run among students is the **Team Academy**, a course where students can turn their ideas into action. The method used is 'learning-by-doing', where students have the possibility of meeting coaches and entrepreneurs. The aim is to foster entrepreneurship by attracting international guests to teach and provide coaching in entrepreneurial activities. In this way, international students can collaborate with other students whilst boosting their entrepreneurial skillset. The University draws experts from its networks of partners at the international level to engage them in the delivery of the programme.

The **Semmelweis Innovation Centre** also contributes to the internationalisation at the University. Its helps attract international partners who stimulate and foster research activities with business partners. The Centre gives several awards during the year to the most innovative research findings and to those applications with an international outreach. One example is the Semmelweis Budapest Award, founded in 2009, which recognises the achievements of an international researcher working in the field of medical biology. The researcher will have produced internationally acknowledged results, contributed to the benefit of humanity, and opened up new ways of understanding living natural science.

Szent Istvan University runs an **International Week** to attract staff and researchers from foreign institutions. It has been in operation annually since 2012 and consists of workshops, faculty visits and cultural events where staff at partner universities can learn more about the University, whilst also promoting their own university at an International Fair. The International Week provides the opportunity for participants to get to know each other and build relationship, thereby it lays the foundations of future effective collaborations.

International perspectives are reflected in the HEI's approach to teaching

Access to new ideas for teaching and learning in the international environment can increase an HEI's ability to compete on the international market. Therefore, an innovative HEI should have a teaching and learning environment tailored to a more global audience. Entrepreneurial higher education institutions should invest in an internationally orientated curriculum, aimed at preparing students for performing professionally and socially in an international and multicultural context. Such an internationalised curriculum embraces both 'internationalisation abroad' and 'internationalisation at home' by providing opportunities for staff and students to experience education and work placements in other countries whilst simultaneously bringing new cultural experiences to the home campus through sharing international teaching, learning and research experience in multicultural classrooms.

All three Universities have a large number of international student body, that required reforms to be put in place to adjust teaching model. The education is available in multiple languages, however it is often focused solely on international students with limited interaction and contact between them and their Hungarian counterparts. Still, there are strong intentions in the different institutions, as reflected by **Semmelweis University's** mission statement as well, to further increase the international orientation of their teaching both by increased international student number and by its teaching. A particular approach was chosen by the University, who do not only seek to attract a high number of students to attend the study courses in Hungary,

but the University opened an off-campus in Hamburg resulting in German students not even having to leave the country if they want to study at Semmelweis.

The international dimension is reflected in the HEI's approach to research

Strategic international research partnerships are an important component of an entrepreneurial HEI. These partnerships provide a means to enhance the reputation and brand of HEIs. Networks with other HEIs and organisations offer the chance for institutions to benefit from research opportunities and to facilitate international mobility of students and staff.

Research activities on the international level represent an important focal area for the three Hungarian Universities, who are all active in a range of European Union Structural Funds and through Horizon 2020 funded international research projects and initiatives. To facilitate and enhance international research collaborations, the Universities implement a number of supporting mechanisms. For example, the **University of Debrecen** approaches internationalisation by inviting and employing visiting scientists and foreign researchers. In 2014, over hundred researchers from 31 countries were hosted at the University. Doctoral and post-doctoral students are also encouraged to go abroad as part of their programme.

Semmelweis University also incorporates an international dimension into its research by declaring its vision for 2024 to establish itself as the Central Europe's leading international, specialised University and a knowledge centre. In order to accomplish this aim, the University set in place a series of mechanisms which favour the coordination and improvement of student, teacher and researcher mobility programmes as well as it strives to get involved in large international initiatives. The latter is showcased by the University's participation in the EIT Health KIC.