

Where do I want to continue my studies?

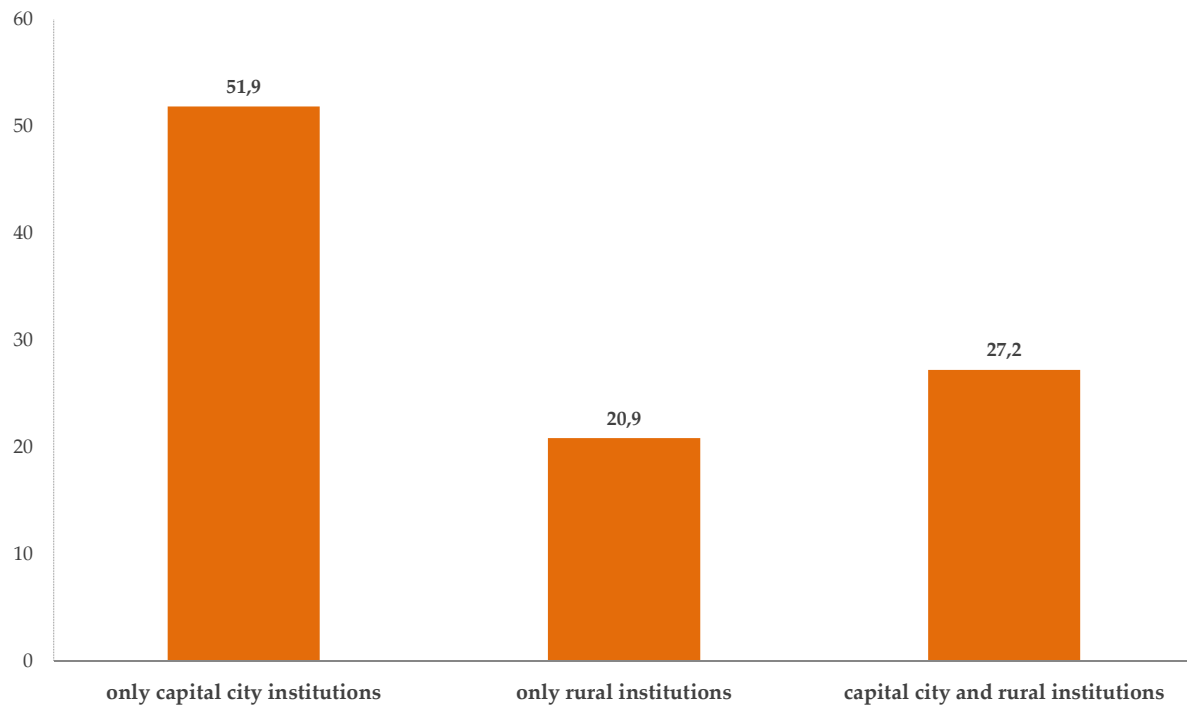
The further education plans of students from the best national high schools

Only few of the Hungarian high school students intend to attend undergraduate programmes abroad, although their numbers show a growing trend in recent years. This is what IEER research examining the intentions of continuing education reveals, in addition to the fact that the Hungarian school system is unable to overcome the disadvantages caused by family background, that is, promote social mobility. Based on the 2013 National Skills Assessment the best national high schools receive only a very small proportion of students whose father has a low level of education or low labour market status. Our results also suggest that at the post-secondary level the education system reinforces existing inequalities. This can be concluded from the fact that the ratio of students who apply to the prestigious universities in Budapest is significantly lower in the lagging northern and lowland regions (even in the best high schools of these areas) than in the region of Central Hungary. The study was based on 770 responses conducted among the graduate students of thirty Hungarian public high schools, which were the best within their region according to the 2013 National Skills Assessment.

The vast majority of the participating students (91%, 702 persons) want to continue their studies after graduation. Their semi-annual grade point average is 4.40 while for others it was only 3.78. Economics, engineering, pedagogy and teacher training courses are the most popular degree programmes among applicants; medical courses are also under consideration by many.

This year, for the majority of respondents (52%) the first three places applied to were colleges or universities in Budapest only, 21% applied to solely rural higher education institutions, while 22% applied to institutions both in the capital and in the rural areas.

Distribution of higher education institutions in Hungary applied to by high-school students according to major urban and/or rural institutions (per cent), 2015



Source: GVI (N=685)

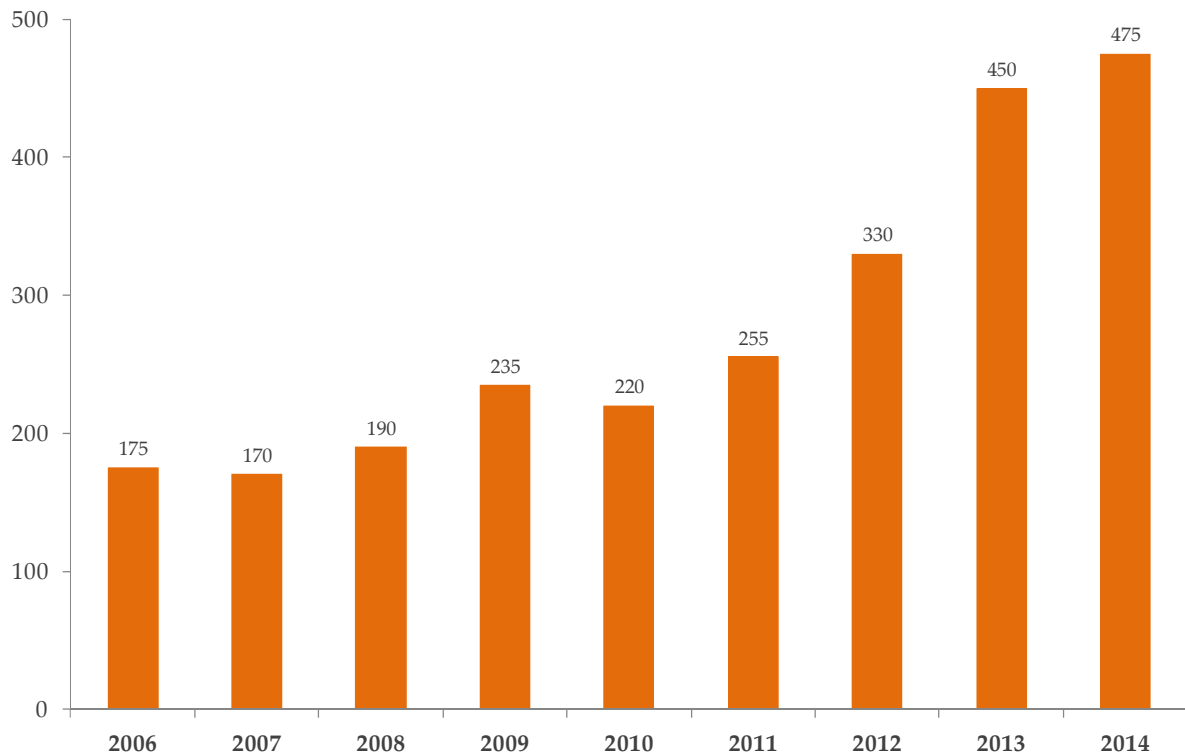
Our results show that only 5% of students of the best secondary schools in Hungary submitted an application to foreign higher education institutions. They typically have good academic achievements and their fathers have higher education degrees, work in a managerial position, are white collar, or even an entrepreneur. Most of them applied to tuition-free institutions and in the long run many of them want to stay abroad. The most popular destination is the United Kingdom.

The fact that there are no masses of Hungarian students doing their undergraduate studies abroad is also supported by Austrian and British statistics. Accordingly, the number of undergraduates from Hungary was around 500-500 persons in both countries in 2013 and 2014 (in the case of Austria it was for both bachelor and five-year programmes), which is a very low figure considering that 79 thousand high school students graduated in 2014 and 106 thousand persons applied to the Hungarian higher education institutions. In Hungary Austria and the United Kingdom are among the top three of the most popular destinations in terms of further education migration, so our assessment should be considered a suitable approximation for a better understanding of the total number of Hungarian undergraduates abroad.

However, what must also be taken into account is that according to the statistics of these two countries the number of Hungarian students at their colleges and universities is on the rise in recent years. Since the migration process is self-reinforcing,

we should not rule out the fact that in the near future the number of Hungarian undergraduates abroad will significantly increase.

The number of Hungarian B.A. students at UK universities between 2006 and 2014 (persons)

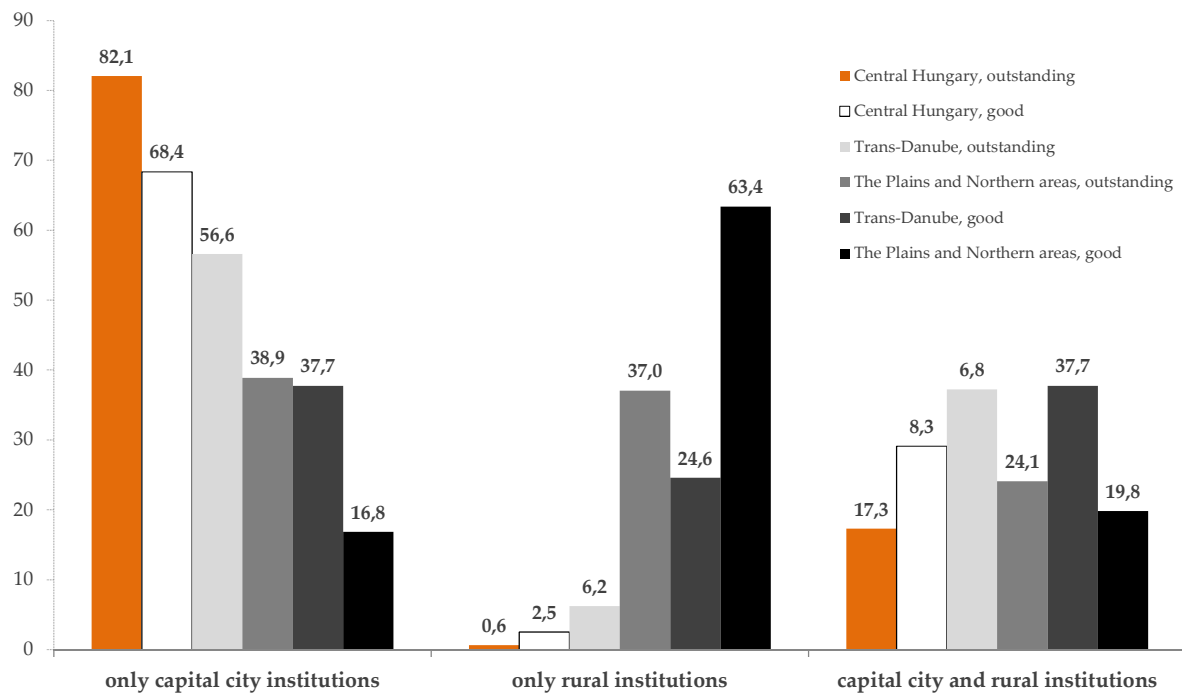


Data source: <http://www.ucas.com/data-analysis/data-resources>

Our results suggest that the education system reinforces social inequalities on several levels. On the one hand, it was found during the examination of students attending the nation's top high schools that only a small proportion of the most disadvantaged groups in terms of family background can reach the best national high schools. Among these secondary schools there are almost no students whose father has only a primary level of education (8 grades), and only one in ten have a low labour market status.

On the other hand, our results show that the regional inequalities of present-day Hungary affect discernibly the high school graduates' decisions about applying to universities. A very small proportion of children from the marginalized northern and lowland regions applies exclusively to universities in Budapest while most of the students from the Central Hungary region opt for the most prestigious universities in Budapest. Such decisions will lead to considerable differences between these young people coming from the different regions concerning their labour market position and earnings during their subsequent life.

Plans for further education by high school students wishing to continue their studies according to school type (percent), 2014



Source: GVI (N=685)

Note: The differentiation between “outstanding” and “good” high schools is based on the same aggregate rankings of the National Skills Assessment that were used at the sampling. Of the 493 high schools presented here, sorted by large regions, the top 15% were considered *outstanding high schools* while those between the top 15% and the top one-third were *good high schools*.