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# HUNGARY

## COUNTRY PROFILE

### DRIM

Danube Region  
Information  
Platform for  
Economic  
Integration of  
Migrants

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## SHORT INTRODUCTION

Traditionally speaking, Hungary is a transit, source, and destination country of both regular and irregular migration. Its geographical location, European Union (EU) membership and relative prosperity act as a pull factor for migrants from neighbouring countries, including ethnic Hungarians. A part of the Hungarian border is also an external border of the EU. Due to such a geographical location, Hungary is one of the main transit countries of irregular migration on land towards other Member States of the European Union. Eastern and south-eastern migration routes cross the territory of the country, with the so-called Western Balkan route (via Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia or Croatia and then via Hungary to other EU Member States) being the most active. Prior to the construction of the fence along the two southern borders, Hungary-Serbia and Hungary-Croatia, the country was one of the main entry points into the EU for migrants seeking to move on to other Member States.

### TABLE WITH BASIC INFORMATION

Capital: <b>Budapest</b>
Official language(s): <b>Hungarian</b>
Population (end of year 2016): <b>9,855,571</b> <sup>1</sup>
Foreigners as percentage of total population (end of year 2016): <b>1.5%</b> <sup>2</sup>
Percentage of foreigners in the labour force (end of year 2016): <b>0.42 (based on the total number of employed people and the number of work permits and number of registered EEC workers<sup>3</sup>)</b>
Unemployment rate (end of year 2016): <b>4.4%</b>
Degree of urbanisation, number of cities over 100,000 inhabitants: <b>In Hungary there are eight cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. There is a large gap between Budapest (1,759,407) and the second largest city (Debrecen - 203,059); all other cities have between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants.</b>
Country's accession to the EU: <b>1 May 2004</b>
Accession to the Schengen Area: <b>Hungary joined the Schengen Area on 22 December 2007. In Hungary's case, this means that border controls have been lifted along the stretches of the Hungarian-Slovenian, Hungarian-Austrian and Hungarian-Slovak border, whilst border, customs and finance guards continue to operate along the Ukrainian (136.7 km), Romanian (447.7 km), Serbian (175 km) and Croatian (344.8 km) border. The Border Guards organisation no longer operates independently; officers have been integrated into the police force.</b>

<sup>1</sup> Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/eurostat\\_tablak/tab/tps00001.html](https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/eurostat_tablak/tab/tps00001.html)

<sup>2</sup> Piackutatasok.hu Based on the database of the Central Statistical Office, <http://www.piackutatasok.hu/2016/04/ksh-az-itt-elo-kulfoldiek-50-szazaleka.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://ujegylenloseg.hu/beszeliunk-egy-kicsit-a-kulfoldi-vendegmunkasokrol/>

## THE MIGRANT POPULATION

The main determining factors behind the immigration processes in Hungary are EU membership and the introduction of simplified naturalization. After 1990, the main sending states were Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine and the immigrants were mostly people with a Hungarian ethnic background. There was a change after Hungary joined the EU, when immigration from the neighbouring countries decreased (except Slovakia) and the number of immigrants from older EU member states and from Asia – especially China – increased. After 2011, when the simplified naturalization process was introduced, a high proportion of immigrants from neighbouring countries entered Hungary as Hungarian citizens, so they do not appear as foreigners in the statistics (Gödri 2015).

The number of foreign citizens in Hungary grew from 93,000 to 206,000 between 2001 and 2011, which was the highest recorded growth rate ever. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the foreign-born population (both EU and non-EU nationals) in Hungary was 148,400 in 2016. Contrary to the trend of the previous decade, the overall number of foreigners in Hungary has recently been decreasing. However, the number of non-EU citizens within this population is still increasing. Nevertheless, the majority of the total foreign population comes from other EU countries: the top three countries are Romania (28,641), Germany (18,773) and Slovakia (8,744). Beside the EU countries, the Chinese (16,500 persons) and Ukrainians (6,900 persons) were the most significant groups in 2015<sup>4</sup>. The number of Chinese nationals living in Hungary has doubled since 2007. Furthermore, 4% of foreign citizens come from the entire American continent and 3% from Africa (*International Organization for Migration*, 2016).

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<sup>4</sup> Main countries of citizenship and birth of the foreign-born population, Eurostat database, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/1/1c/Main\\_countries\\_of\\_citizenship\\_and\\_birth\\_of\\_the\\_foreign\\_foreign-born\\_population%2C\\_1\\_January\\_2015\\_%28%C2%B9%29\\_%28in\\_absolute\\_numbers\\_and\\_as\\_a\\_percentage\\_of\\_the\\_total\\_foreign\\_foreign-born\\_population%29\\_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/1/1c/Main_countries_of_citizenship_and_birth_of_the_foreign_foreign-born_population%2C_1_January_2015_%28%C2%B9%29_%28in_absolute_numbers_and_as_a_percentage_of_the_total_foreign_foreign-born_population%29_YB16.png)

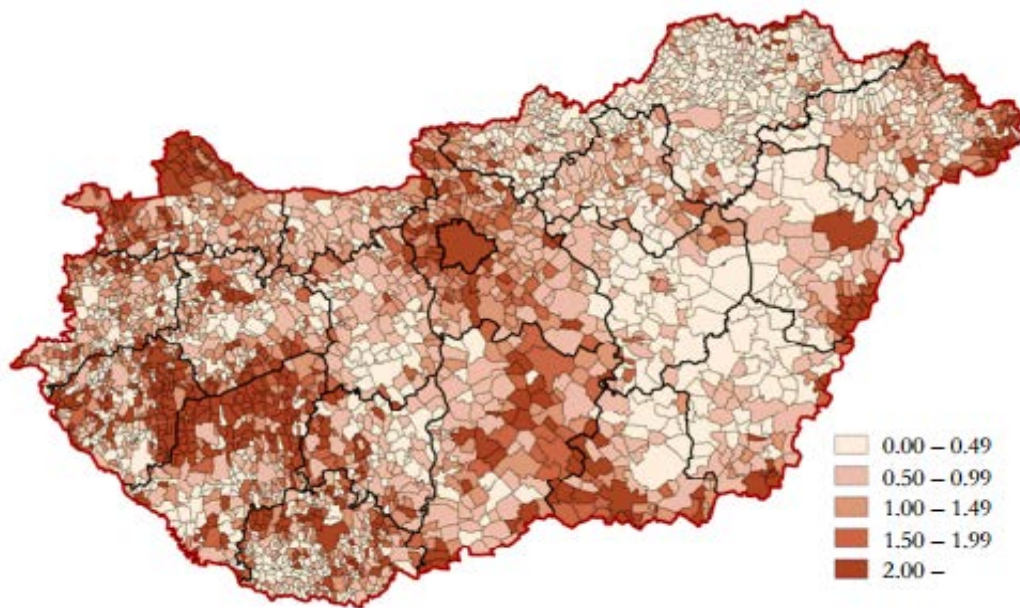
Table 1: Changes in number of applicants for permanent resident status

Purpose of residence	2015	Total in %	2016	Total in %	Change	Change in %
paid activity	12,650	31.35%	14,500	34.56%	1,850	14.62%
studying	12,576	31.17%	14,103	33.61%	1,527	12.14%
family reunification	6,984	17.31%	5,740	13.68%	-1,244	-17.81%
other purposes	5,895	14.61%	5,254	12.52%	-641	-10.87%
official	1,742	4.32%	1,843	4.39%	101	5.80%
other purposes	499	1.24%	515	1.23%	16	3.21%
<b>total</b>	<b>40,346</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>41,955</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1,609</b>	<b>3.99%</b>

Source: Annual statistics 2015-2016, Immigration and Asylum Office, [http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en](http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en)

More than 55% of migrants are men but there are differences between the sending countries. The proportion of men is really high (67-70%) in the case of Romanians, Serbs and Italians, while among Russians, Poles and Slovaks the proportion of women is higher (55-68%). With regard to age, more than half of the migrants of both genders are between 20-39 years old, but after joining the EU, many pensioners came to Hungary mostly from Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. The territorial preferences of immigrants are different depending on the sending countries. The proportion of Chinese immigrants was extremely high (89%) in Budapest (2013). The Romanians mostly settle in Central Hungary, while people from other neighbouring countries settle near the border (Gödri 2015)

Diagram 1: Proportion of foreigners per 100 people, 2011



Source: Kincses (2015)

## LABOUR MIGRANT POPULATION

The employment rate in general was higher among migrants (neighbouring countries – men: 79.3%, women: 63.8%; other foreigners – men: 78.7%, women: 6.9%) than among Hungarians (men: 67.1%, women: 55.7%) in 2011 (Blaskó and Fazekas 2016). But compared to other European countries, working-age non-EU citizens are more likely to not be employed, or undergoing education or training (37% in total, 1/4 of men and 1/2 of women). These high rates are comparable to GR/IT/ES, Baltics, and are not far from the EU average (1/3) (Huddleston et al. 2015).

Table 2: The labour market indicators of foreign citizens, the foreign-born and the total population aged 15–64 (per cent)

Population	Economic activity					Activity rate	Unemployment rate
	employed	unemployed	inactive	dependent	total		
<b>Foreign citizens</b>							
EU-27 citizen	62.9	4.8	14.6	17.6	100	67.7	7.1
Third-country citizen	61.7	3.6	11.8	23.0	100	65.2	5.5
Total	62.4	4.3	13.4	19.9	100	66.7	6.5
<b>Foreign-born</b>							
In EU-27 member states	66.7	6.5	14.4	12.3	100	73.2	8.9
In third-countries	63.0	5.6	12.5	18.9	100	68.6	8.1
Total	65.5	6.2	13.8	14.5	100	71.7	8.7
Total population	57.0	8.3	19.7	15.0	100	65.3	12.7

Source: Blaskó and Fazekas (2016)

The most relevant information about migrant's position in the labour market is included in the database about issued work permits. In 2016, altogether 6,303 permits were issued for foreign citizens. Compared to 2015, the number of issued permits increased in all age groups except in the under 19 age cohort. In 2016, most work permits (35.9%) were issued to people with a graduate degree, but the share of migrants with

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lower levels of education was also considerable (26.4%). More than 60% of the work permits were issued in Central Hungary (53% Budapest and 7% in other parts of the region). The largest sector is the manufacturing industry with 27.7% of the total number of permits, but the information, communication (14.6%) and commerce and services (10.3%) sectors are highly represented as well (Putnoki 2017).

In general, EU citizens (and in some specific cases third-country citizens) do not have to apply for a work permit, since registration by the employer is enough. In 2016, 10,553 registrations of foreign employees were made, which is 6.3% less than the previous year. Just as the work permits, more than half of the registrations were made in Central Hungary (53.7%). The largest sector is the administrative and legal assistance sector (19.5%) and agriculture, while forestry, fishery (19.9%) and the machinery industry (15.2%) are also important sectors for the employment of people with the right of free movement and residence (Putnoki 2017).



## **POLICIES AND APPROACHES TO (LABOUR) MIGRANTS**

The new Hungarian Fundamental Law states the basic rules and principles regarding the organization of asylum and migration policies in Hungary. The rights set down in the Fundamental Law, such as the right to asylum, the freedom of movement, etc., and Act I of 2007 (Free Movement Act) regulate the entry and stay of persons enjoying the right to free movement and of their family members, and Act II of 2007 regulates the entry and stay of third-country nationals. The Act on Asylum, Act LXXX of 2007, sets down the basic principles and the most important guidelines to follow in the area of asylum, in line with the relevant EU directives. There are several provisions on integration in various sectoral legal instruments.

Particularly linked with asylum and migration is the educational policy (in which cases schooling is mandatory for migrants), employment policy (with a number of foreign nationals entering the labour market), housing policy (especially regarding the accommodation of asylum seekers and housing subsidies for refugees and persons enjoying free movement), health care system (with health insurance mandatory for people with long-term residence permits and basic health care eligible for all), and development policy.

With regard to the employment of foreign citizens, the basic relevant legal instrument is the Act IV of 1991 on Job Assistance and Unemployment Benefits, which states that a foreigner has to have a work permit or single permit (work and residence permit combined) to be employed. But there is no need for a permit in the case of refugees, persons admitted for subsidiary protection or persons enjoying temporary protection, and persons with a residence permit or with the right of free movement. In this situation, the employer has to inform the government office of the employment relationship (i.e. registration).

When applying for a work permit, the employer should announce the demand for workforce and submit the application for a work permit with the same content (salary, place of work, etc.). If there is no employable labour force among Hungarian citizens, the Public Employment Service will give permission to employ a foreign citizen (so called "investigation of the labour market". If the employer wants to prolong the employment after the first permit expires, this can be done for two additional years without checking for employable persons among Hungarian citizens. In case of employment in a scientific, research, artistic or educational setting, no "investigation of the labour market is needed". This applies also to third-country citizens who have been living for a minimum of five years with a third-country national who has been employed in Hungary for at least eight years, or foreign citizens living in Hungary for at least eight years.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Last year, a dialogue was started between the government and associations of employers about how the migrant labour force could solve the workforce shortage problems in Hungary. There was talk of increasing the number of immigrants from supposedly culturally similar countries (e.g. Ukraine, Serbia), but no significant measure has been introduced so far.

## OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS

Generally speaking, there is a lack of public information services for migrants, but there are some important institutions in the field. [The Immigration and Asylum Office](#) is the most important public body, which provides information about visas, residence and work permits, naturalization and asylum. Its webpage is available in English and German, and it has an office in every county.

In the field of work and employment the relevant institution is the [Public Employment Service](#), National Labour Office. Although the organization has a webpage in English, the available information is much more limited than in the Hungarian language. Regarding taxation and the relevant rules, the [National Tax and Customs Administration](#) provides information in the English and Chinese language. There is also a possibility to get information about employment and conduct general administration processes at government offices, but these institutions may offer limited information in English, so additional help from a Hungarian speaker might be necessary.

Besides public institutions, the NGOs play an important role in providing adequate information to migrants. The [Menedék](#) (English: Shelter) association operates a counselling service for migrants, as well as offers support when dealing with Hungarian official institutions. The [Jövőkerék](#) (English: Wheel of Future) foundation participates in several projects in connection with integration, and within the frameworks of these projects provides information for migrants mostly concerning employment. [Migszol](#) (English: Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary) also provides information on its webpage, while also being present at the border and transit zones. All of these associations have a webpage in English and the employees and volunteers speak at least English. [The Hungarian Helsinki Committee](#) and the [Társaság a Szabadságjogokért](#) (English: Hungarian Civil Liberties Union) provide legal counselling service and assistance to vulnerable groups and protection of human rights in general and in individual cases as well.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS (STATE/INTERNATIONAL/NGO SECTOR)

### Public institutions:

- Immigration and Asylum Office, <http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?lang=en>
- List of government offices, <http://www.kormanyhivatal.hu/hu/elerhetosegek>
- National Tax and Customs Administration, <http://nav.gov.hu/>
- Public Employment Service, National Labour Office, <https://eu.munka.hu/home>

### NGOs:

- Hungarian Helsinki Committee, [http://www.helsinki.hu/en/about\\_us/](http://www.helsinki.hu/en/about_us/)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM), HUNGARY, <http://iom.hu/>
- Jövőkerék közhasznú alapítvány (English: Wheel of Future non-profit organization), <http://jovokerek.hu/skillsandjobs/>
- Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organization, <http://www.gandhi.hu/index.php?lang=en>
- Menedék – Migránsokat segítő egyesület (Shelter – Association for Helping Migrants), <http://menedek.hu/en>
- Társaság a szabadságjogokért (English: Hungarian Civil Liberties Union), <https://tasz.hu/en/focus-areas>

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