



# RING

- 32 Discussion about the last two years, present, and future of the student college (szakkollégium)

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*Translated by Eszter Flórián*

*Orsós Anna:* On today's meeting we have many goals. First of all, you all know that our project ends soon. As a matter of fact, the student college will continue to exist from September; however, most of the activities that were available in the course of the project until now will not be accessible for a while. The next student college tender was promised to be announced, but the new tender has to be written. To do so, it is essential to discuss the experiences about the ongoing tender, especially with you, members of the student college, as you were the ones who have participated in this activity for a various period of time. Many of you have taken part in the project since the beginning, and there are some of you who joined now, in the last semester. From February 2013 to February 2015, many students began and finished this project, many of you got into the "circulation" of the student college at different times and through different venues, and we are extremely curious about the experience that you gained from this very important activity. How do you evaluate our work? I prepared four questions for today's occasion, and it is essential for us to get an answer for each of them. On the one hand, it is an important feedback for us, and on the other hand, it is also significant that we preserve this practice to some extent. However, to be able to do so, we need to see and know what you think about our performance.

**My first question is what have this student college given to you, and what are those values, which make you think about the time spent here as a nice memory?**

*Géza Buzás:* For me it is really important that I could belong to a community, where there are primarily Roma university students. Besides, it is also good that we had an opportunity to improve in the student college, for example, in the course of our research. I liked trainings less.

*Mihály Palásti:* For me, the German language course helped a lot.

*István Mihály:* I had a really good time during drama plays and playful tasks. Besides, what was also really good is that I got a math teacher who helped me a lot.

*János Orsós:* For me, it means a lot that I had the opportunity to get acquainted with students who have similar social background as mine. To be honest, this community is an actual safety net, and it feels good that they support me. This is a solid base and community, if I ever had any questions, I could always have asked for help.

*Mihály Palásti:* I would also like to highlight the Sport Days among the trainings, be-

cause I liked that very much. Besides, the Dragon Boat program organized in Orfű was the best one among the weekend programs.

*Mercédesz Fenyvesi:* It is difficult for me to loosen up and relax among people, and I feel that recently I have started to become a socially active member of the community. It posed a great challenge that I am underprivileged and come from a little village, but the financial issues were also settled.

*Angéla Bogdán:* I also have become more open with people, I dare to express myself more, and I dare to share my opinion. I got new friends and acquaintances also among the trainers, and I got along well with my tutor as well.

**Anna Orsós:** There are certain Roma student colleges supported by the Church, where students live together on each and every day of the week. Our student college is not like that. In the beginning, there was much grumbling about the three-day weekends when it was obligatory to stay in the student college once in a month. Do you have any positive or negative experience in connection with this? Would you have preferred if you lived like the students in all the other Roma student colleges?

*Henrietta Kismarci:* I was living in a dormitory for five years with my roommates, and the fact that we had to see each other and hear each other every day and in every minute was the source of many conflicts, because we involuntarily found things in each other that we did not like. This way we might start to miss each other and thus we could put up with these three days and spend time together.

*Anna Orsós:* A really important part of this tender is the system of tutors; it means that each student has a teacher helping them. We consider and considered this to be very positive, but as it is you who experience these relationships every day, I am curious how you see this cooperation.

*Géza Buzás:* For me it was really useful that my tutor had always helped and supported me. Last year was a hard one for me, and if it wasn't for my tutor, I would have collapsed.

*Attila Szederkényi:* I meet my tutor once in a month. My tutor simply always knows what to tell me, my tutor really understands me, and knows what I need even from the slightest gestures.

*Tibor Dobó:* I think this part of the program is absolutely positive and should be in no way omitted. The tutor is a motivational factor for us, particularly if we meet regularly, have effective cooperation, and can discuss anything.

*Joci Balogh:* I had known my tutor even before I got into the university; I was glad that I was allowed to choose myself. My tutor helps me, and even gives two courses: one of them is Political Discrimination, so I can turn to my tutor with any type of questions and we can discuss any issue, which truly helped me a lot.

*Bálint Rigó:* This was one of the best opportunities in the student college, because I do not think that otherwise I would have had the opportunity to form such a relationship with a teacher. I can ask my tutor for help at any time. I am not sure that without this system the teacher or I would have taken steps to make this happen. It does not matter what kind of help I need, I can always turn to my tutor and receive help. First- or second-year students do not necessarily have this opportunity, which I consider a springboard, and it can help a lot in the beginning.

**Anna Orsós:** Parallel to the system of tutors we initiated another element, which we altered many times, as we thought it had needed corrections. It is the system of mentors. At the beginning, there was a tutor and a mentor for each student, but then

somehow neither the mentor nor the student could find each other. So we lowered the number of mentors and their activity also changed. We would have liked this trio – the student, the mentor, and the tutor – to work together effectively, but somehow it did not work out. Does anyone have some kind of comment or experience?

*Géza Buzás:* I do not like the current system. When I got here, there was a mentor for each student and it was good. We had not known then that it was going to change, but for me the mentors helped a lot to fit into the university with ETR<sup>1</sup> and alike.

*Evelin Greksa:* In my opinion, the system of mentors was useful for the first-year students. I had been in the university for three years by then, so I did not need a personal mentor.

*Anna Orsós:* Let's look at another element, volunteering. There was much grumbling about it at the beginning, but then somehow you still managed to accomplish this task. How do you experience all kinds of these expectations that we set for you?

*Lidia Kis-Bogdán:* I might never have volunteered by myself. But this way I have a lot of experience thanks to it.

*Géza Buzás:* In my opinion its label is questionable. There are people with a scientific inclination, who do not feel comfortable in the social sphere. I would simply rename it as internship, for instance, why should an engineer not do an internship that fits his studies. There were always non-governmental organizations in the offers.

**Anna Orsós: The options were much more widespread though, you could have come up with any suggestion, there was no such boundary.**

*Ivetta Horváth:* If I was in charge, I would not make it compulsory, because for me it caused difficulties due to my other activities. I would keep it as a program element, but in my opinion, those should do it, who really make a point of doing so, and not just do it by necessity.

*Anna Orsós:* Something that represented a problem from the beginning, but now seems to be accomplished, is preparing a portfolio. All the activities that you worked on were documented by you, and now are in huge files. Do you think that this is useful and valuable?

*Lilla Laboda:* I think it was useful, because writing things down made me see everything that we have done clearly, and it was documented that we have done all of this. It will be good to look at the whole thing at the end.

*Zoli Orsós:* For me, it is a really good feedback about where I am now, and about all the things I have done this year. I also considered it to be fair that the stipend was proportionate to performance adjusted to the evaluation system.

*Mercédesz Fenyvesi:* The portfolio is useful because if I put down what will happen in the future, I become much more successful. I want to believe that what I write down will be accomplished. Research also prove that such people are much more successful.

*Attila Szederkényi:* In my opinion, it is useful because once we start working, we'll also have to document everything then. This is a good practice to be more attentive.

**Anna Orsós: We are also curious about those things that you missed in the project, that you would have added to it, and what you suggest for us. What do you think would have made the project even better?**

*János Orsós:* I think I would organize more "Terasz" (terrace in Hungarian) programs, be-

1 ETR is acronym for *Egységes Tanulmányi Rendszer* (Unified Education System), a software used in the Hungarian higher education—editors' note.



**Lilla Laboda**  
Romológia BA, WHSZ tag, PTE BTK

For me it was also really good to have a tutor. I really like that my tutor helps me with everything, gets me books, stands up to the task during research, and all of it matters a lot.

cause this way we spend time together not only on weekends, and these programs brighten the life of the student college due to their cultural nature. We should devote time to it.

*Alexandra Gugora:* There should be more programs that enhance Roma identity, like the photography exhibition. I am personally really interested in cultural programs and they would brighten the life of the student college as well.

*Zsanett Petrovics:* As far as I'm concerned, I miss the variety of meeting spots, for instance, one weekend we spend in Gandhi, and next time we meet in Orfű... this could be more exciting.

*Mihály Palásti:* Maybe professional programs were missing for those from other faculties. I had a seminar, Academic Writing, but I think that it is meant rather for students studying humanities. I would gladly attend a lecture on engineering...

*Anna Orsós:* There was opportunity to do so as well, but the programs are not meant for certain faculties, but for student college students. Therefore, Academic Writing is not only for students studying humanities, but for anyone from any faculty. Many students have to write their theses or similar papers. We are open to demands on any other type of service.

*Evelin Greksa:* I think it would have been good to integrate Roma culture even more because it is really important in the case of a Roma student college. There are many people who do not know Roma culture, even I have insufficient knowledge, and I went to this student college.

*Renáta Rózsahegyi:* I also like travelling and language.

**Anna Orsós:** Now we have talked about deficiencies, but in the course of analyzing them, many things have emerged that might actually be thought of as opportunities instead. I am curious about what kind of further opportunities do you consider to be important in order to make this student college project even more successful? Can you think about any other external activities or forces whose inclusion could make this project better?

*Zoli Orsós:* In my opinion when we talked about the drawbacks, we also talked about opportunities. If we change them, they become opportunities.

*Attila Szederkényi:* There was an initiative at the radio station, I do not know how it is now, but I see possibilities in this. By this we can combine professional goals in a way that it is about us. So there could be a radio program about us. As far as I know the operator of

the social forum, Schäffer János, arranged everything with two radio stations and an on-line radio, so they would get a 1-hour program from us. From now on, it's up to us.

**Anna Orsós: What kinds of risks do you see? Do you think there are risks in such student college projects? Do you see any threats that might cause any disadvantage for you as a student college student?**

*Géza Buzás:* For instance, employment... There are many opportunities where a labor contract must be made, but this tender prevents us from doing so, as we cannot be employed due to it. It is a disadvantage for me that I always have to pay attention to the fact that the employment must be terminated after every month and then a new labor contract must be made, as I am not allowed to have an ongoing employment – this is a true hassle. There are people who do not have a stable family background and I cannot live on 35,000 HUF, I must have a job.

*János Orsós:* Even though I have not experienced this yet, but if it comes up that someone is a student college student, and they wonder which student college it is, and the answer is Roma student college, then in the eyes of common people it might seem – although unfounded – that it cannot be an “elite” student college. The fact that it is a Roma student college evokes a negative impression immediately.

*Bálint Rigó:* I experienced that when others got to know that I am a member of Wlislocki [Roma student college—ed.], not all of them took it wholeheartedly. Even though they not always used the word “Roma,” not everyone likes it. It has never bothered me, I personally do not have any problems, I am content this way, I just shared this thought.

*Marcsi Siftár:* I wanted to apply for a catholic scholarship, but then I realized that as a member of the student college I could not.

*Anna Orsós:* It was a specialty of the tender that you should not work hundred hours, but become well-educated intellectuals. To reach this aim you need to spend time on studying. If you have a job, you cannot do so.

*Mercédesz Fenyvesi:* It is not a threat for me, but it upsets me that nowadays when they ask me at the internship, where I am rushing, and I tell them that I am going to volunteering, they just stare at me and ask what it is because they do not understand. I usually go to the internship at seven o'clock in the morning, then I am free to leave at three o'clock, and then I am at the *Faág* [non-profit organization concerned with disadvantaged youth—ed.] until seven o'clock in the evening – it is quite exhausting. They asked me how I can endure all of this, because there was a time when I had to do this from Monday to Friday in order to have the 12-13 compulsory volunteering hours in a month.

*Attila Szederkényi:* For me this question is a bit irritating, if we ask it in this way: what risks does it involve to be a member of this student college. I think everyone should be proud and glad that they can be a part of this, and not present it as something that should make you feel bad. We should show everyone that we are proud to be members of this student college and then they will not think about us the way the majority does.

**Anna Orsós: I thank you very much for your sincere answers to these questions. We hope that all your answers help reach the goal of integrating everything that you have said into our plans if the next student college tender is announced, and thus the next round of the tender and project can turn out even better.**

*The discussion from the final weekend event of the student college was edited and stylized by Tibor Cserti Csapó and Anna Orsós.*