

## **TRAINING OF TOURISM PROFESSIONALS AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOUTHERN GREAT PLAIN REGION**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the present study is to thoroughly examine the institutions that provide human resources for the tourism of the Southern Great Plain Region, their geographical location and the relationship between the educational institutions and the local tourist attractions. The 43 tourism related schools are geographically located evenly in the county, as there are 13 schools in Bács-Kiskun County, 15 in Csongrád and 15 in Békés Counties that offer tourism-hospitality, OKJ and higher education qualification - from basic to higher degrees. There is a need for highly qualified experts in the popular destinations of the region (Gyula, Baja, Ópusztaszer, Kiskunmajsa, etc.) or in the big cities (Szeged, Kecskemét, Békéscsaba, etc.). The variety of tourism activities (travelling in and from the region, wide range of tourism supply) gives reason for the training of experts with appropriate knowledge.

**Keywords:** tourism, Southern Great Plain Region, institution, human resource, county

### **Introduction**

The aim of the present study is to thoroughly examine the institutions that provide human resources for the tourism of the Southern Great Plain Region, their geographical location and the relationship between the educational institutions and the local tourist attractions. The study is timely due to the increased tourism related developments of the Hungarian governments in the last 10 years, the increasing significance of the Southern Great Plain Region in the tourism of Hungary and the cross border area, the changes in the OKJ (National Training Register that contains the state accredited trades) examination requirements, the accession of Romania to the European Union (2007) and the abolishment of visa regulations with Serbia.

I have carried out an empirical research that includes my almost one decade carrier as a teacher in various tourism related schools. I have had the opportunity (from basic to university level) to plan and hold courses, participate in examinations and up to a certain level monitor them, as well.

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Furthermore, during the years spent working in tourism and hospitality, I have also participated in the activities of professionals working in the tourism of the region. The bases of my secondary research are the annual handbook representing the schools of tourism of the Southern Great Plain Region, publications and journals on the events and interests of the Hungarian tourism professionals.

### **Relationship between the trends in domestic tourism and human resources**

Nowadays, “tourism” is the attribute of the most popular professions, such as administrator, manager or professional manager. This popularity is not by chance. It is rather the result of the prediction of foreign and Hungarian tourism professionals, namely that following the standstill caused by the economic crisis, the growing of tourism will continue.

About one in 12 jobs is currently supported by tourism, this means 250 million registered employments all around the world (CS. JANDALA 2009, 2010).

In 2005, the share of internal tourism consumption in GDP was at 9%, 10000 billion HUF. Taking into consideration the non-tourism consumption of visitors as well, the share reached 11.9%. Tourism is especially a labor-intensive activity. Nowadays, 400.000 employments are generated by tourism. Taking into consideration also the indirect impacts, 14% of the employments belong to this sector of the economy. Concerning part-time and seasonal employment, one fourth of the Hungarian families receive their income from tourism. In tourism, the satisfaction of higher demands requires bigger specific labor demand, however it involves even higher profit producing ability (ICEG EC 2006).

In Hungary, the national tourism management has shifted to expand quality tourism services, good examples have been the Széchenyi Plan, the New Hungary Development Plan and the New Széchenyi Plan.

Strengthening the training of human resources in tourism within the school system is high priority of the National Tourism Development Strategy (2005-2013). One of the main objectives in the field of teaching tourism, is to shift from quantitative to qualitative considerations, such as the elaboration of a competitive and practical educational system that is in accordance with the market demands. The other main objective is that Hungary becomes the most recognized training center of the Carpathian Basin in the field of tourism education. In higher education the foreign language training is emphasized, which is able to compete with other European institutions (www.itthon.hu, 2005.).

### **Research of the Southern Great Plain Region’s tourism**

The examination of the Great Plain’s and more specifically the Southern Great Plain Region’s tourism can be carried out in several different ways. In the past, László Csordás examined the Great Plain Region’s tourism from 1990 to 1997 (L. CSORDÁS 2003).

Gábor Michalkó introduced the relationship between tourism and retail trade on the basis of data collected in the Southern Great Plain Region, and the infrastructure of shopping tourism and its role in the tourism of Hungary (G. MICHALKÓ 2000).

*The Southern Great Plain Region’s Tourism Handbook* was published at the turn of the millennium, which besides introducing the tourism of the region, # also dealt with the management of tourism entrepreneurs, the characteristics of the sector and the characteristics of certain tourism entrepreneurs (A. ALBEL 2000).

The *City Image Top List 2007* research was carried out by Image Factory-Observer Budapest Médiafigyelő. On the list of cities with county rights, Szeged was ranked number

two, while Hódmezővásárhely was ranked number nine. Among the cities Baja came fifth, while among small towns Kalocsa came sixth as a town from the Southern Great Plain Region.

The changes of tourism in the Great Plain Region from 1998 to 2005 were examined - using statistical data - by Péter Gulyás (P. GULYÁS 2007).

The Southern Great Plain Region has borders with two countries that have significant tourism potentials (effective demand, strong willingness to travel, requisition of high-quality services) and it is also part of the DKMT Euroregion. The Region's cross-border tourism relationships have been analyzed by Péter Gulyás (P. GULYÁS 2010).

The comparison of the regions is made annually. The development of certain regions between 1999 and 2008 and their comparison was carried out by Judit Polgár and Magdolna Babarcsi (J. POLGÁR – M. BABARCZI 2010).

The list of the top tourist destinations is compiled by the Hungarian National Tourist Office on the basis of data provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. In 2005, Szeged was among the top 10 tourist destinations with 271.111 guest nights. In 2008, taking domestic visitor number in account, Gyula occupied the tenth position with 207.686 guest nights (KSH, MT Zrt, 2009).

### **Examination of training in tourism**

At the end of the 1990s a survey was carried out by Sándor Réti on secondary and higher level tourism training institutions, on the subjects taught in those schools and the different forms of practical training (S. RÉTHI 2000).

The study on fresh graduates approached the problems of tourism training from a completely new aspect (F. FELEKI 2000).

The proportion of tourism in Hungarian higher education is constantly growing. The Educational Centre of Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences in Orosháza was founded at the end of the last decade (A. AUBERT 2006).

Current issues are the studies on the situation and problems of tourism related higher education and the relationship between the Bologna Process and tourism (CS. JANDALA 2010, Á. NIKLAI 2010).

The changes in labor market have direct impact on the organization of education. After 2000, several people have dealt with the problems of the labor market in the Great Plain (B. BARANYI 2007, P. BALCSÓK 2007).

### **Qualifications related to the OKJ hospitality-tourism trade groups**

The 1993. LXXVI. Law on vocational education has been modified several times, and it introduced the National Training Register (OKJ), that contains the state accredited trades. The OKJ is published annually by the Minister responsible for vocational and adult education. Since 1996, OKJ contains the system of training levels in accordance with ISCED. The introduction of the levels is based on the European standard, and resulted in the publishing of a clear and systematized training register. Since 2001, the OKJ has had a system of trade groups ([www.nive.hu](http://www.nive.hu)). The first table contains the tourism trades belonging to the hospitality trade group.

*Table 1: Hospitality – tourism qualifications*

<b>Name of profession</b>	<b>Prerequisite</b>	<b>Hospitality/Tourism</b>	<b>Language exam requirements</b>	<b>Qualification level</b>
Confectioner (1993)	Primary	Hospitality	Professional language knowledge used at the exam	Basic
Catering Manager (1993)	Secondary	Hospitality	-	Intermediate
Hostess (2006)	Secondary	Tourism	-	Intermediate
Tourist Guide (1997)	Secondary	Tourism	Intermediate C (written and oral)	Post-secondary
Rural Host (1995)	Primary	Hospitality	Foreign language communication in the exam	Basic
Waiter/Waitress (1993)	Primary	Hospitality	Foreign language communication in the exam	Basic
Protocol and Travel Assistant (2006)	Secondary	Tourism	Elementary C (written and oral)	Post-secondary
Cook (1993)	Primary	Hospitality	-	Basic
Receptionist (1993)	Secondary	Tourism	Professional language knowledge used at the exam	Post-secondary
Hospitality Manager (1997)	Secondary	Hospitality	Foreign language communication in the exam	Higher level
Tourism Manager (1997)	Secondary	Tourism	Foreign language communication in the exam	Higher level
Inn-keeper (2006)	Secondary	Hospitality	-	Intermediate

*Source: [https://www.nive.hu/index\\_sec.php](https://www.nive.hu/index_sec.php) (Table by Péter Mihály)*

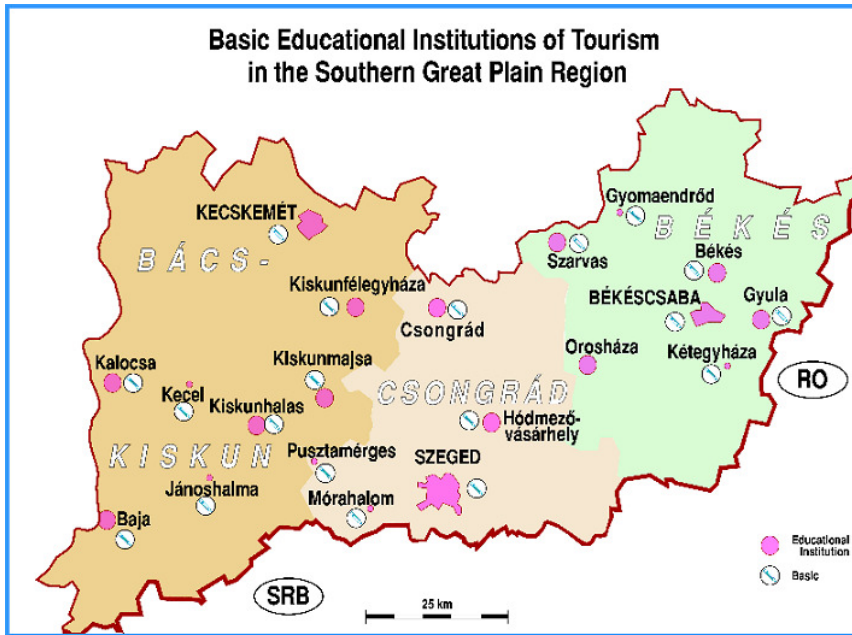
### **Institutions in the Southern Great Plain Region that provide qualification in tourism**

#### ***Educational institutions in the Southern Great Plain Region that provide basic level qualification in tourism***

Students, who completed primary school or who has accomplished less than eight grades of the primary school but have participated in a remedial program, are able to choose the hospitality–tourism trainings of technical, vocational and vocational secondary schools in the region.

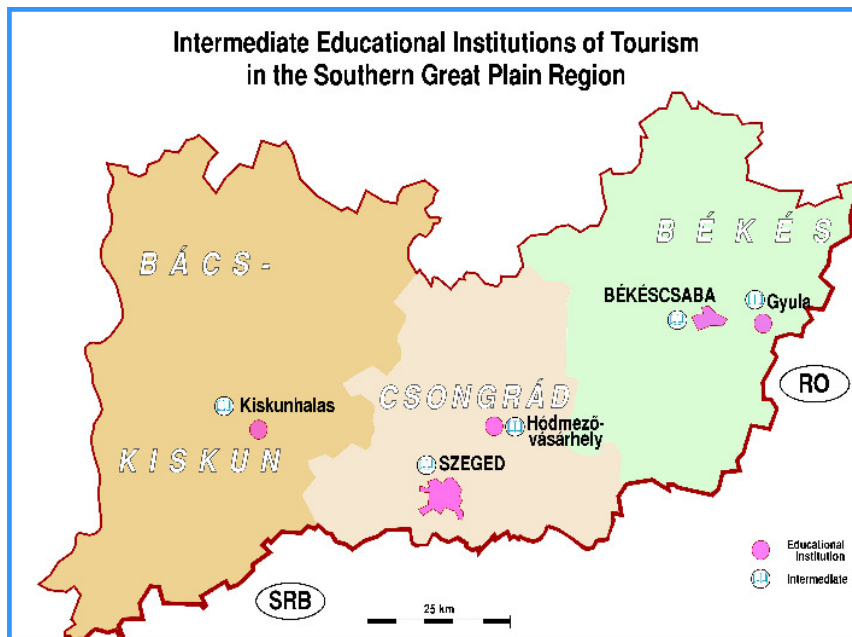
At this training level the institutions offer basically the same hospitality related trades (Inn-keeper, Guesthouse Owner, Cook, Waiter/Waitress, Confectioner). In some schools the trade of Kitchen Auxiliary is also part of hospitality–tourism trade group training. The region’s basic tourism related schools are located evenly in the counties. There are eight such schools in Bács-Kiskun County, seven in Békés County and five in Csongrád County (Map 1).

Map 1. Basic Educational Institutions of Tourism in the Southern Great Plain Region



Source: I. Szabó 2009 (map created by Peter Mihaly)

Map 2. Intermediate Educational Institutions of Tourism in the Southern Great Plain Region



Source: I. Szabó 2009 (map created by Peter Mihaly)

***Educational institutions in the Southern Great Plain Region that provide intermediate or post-secondary qualification in tourism***

The intermediate tourism training can be accomplished in vocational secondary schools, high schools or vocational schools. Following the hospitality-tourism trainings of the regular school-system, schools offer opportunities to learn OKJ trades: Travel Agency Administrator, Tourist Guide, Protocol and Travel Assistant. The geographic distribution of intermediate professional schools is balanced.

Intermediate educational institutions include high schools that provide bilingual training with curriculum comprising the optional course of tourism. Those high schools offer basic knowledge for future, high level trainings in tourism.

***Educational institutions in the Southern Great Plain Region that provide post-secondary and high level qualification in tourism***

Tourism Manager is the most popular trade among post-secondary and higher level tourism trainings, while the Hospitality Manager, which is in indirect connection with tourism, is ranked ninth among the most popular trades. The timeliness of OKJ trades is confirmed by the trades of the upcoming list, as well (Table 2). It can be stated, that the professionals qualified in one of these trades are able to fill in the manpower shortage in the areas of commerce, finances and information technology.

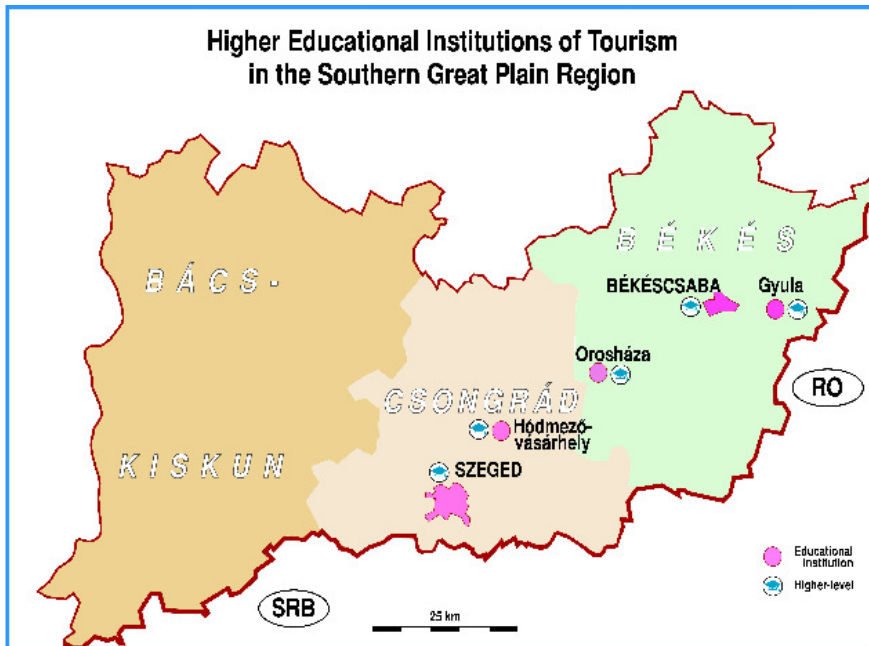
The Tourism Manager trade has been present in the National Training Register since 1997. In the Southern Great Plain Region, ten institutions deal with manager training. The region's basic tourism related schools are distributed geographically unevenly in the region, as there is one school in Bács-Kiskun County, there are four schools in Békés and five in Csongrád County.

*Table 2: The top ten OKJ trades*

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Trade</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Tourism manager</b>
2.	Legal Assistant
3.	Financial Administrator
4.	Commercial Manager
5.	Institutional Communicator
6.	Bank Administrator
7.	Public Accountancy Administrator
8.	Informatics Statistic and Economic Planner
<b>9.</b>	<b>Hospitality Manager</b>
10.	Technical Informatics Engineer Assistant

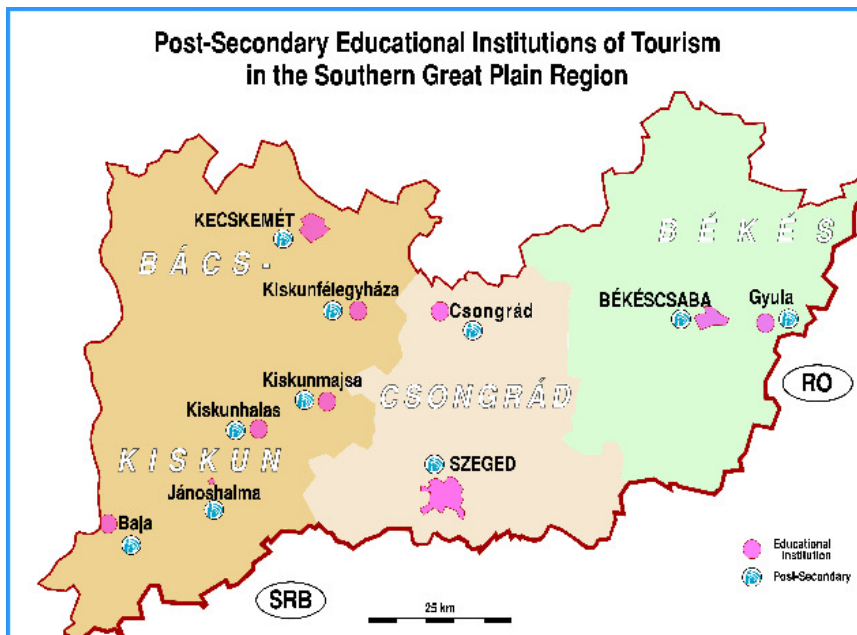
*Source: I. Balassa Sediviné 2008*

Map 3. Higher Educational Institutions of Tourism in the Southern Great Plain Region



Source: I. Szabó 2009 (map created by Peter Mihaly)

Map 4. Post-Secondary Educational Institutions of Tourism in the Southern Great Plain Region



Source: I. Szabó 2009 and on the basis of the data by Southern Plain Region Marketing Management 2010 (map created by Peter Mihaly)

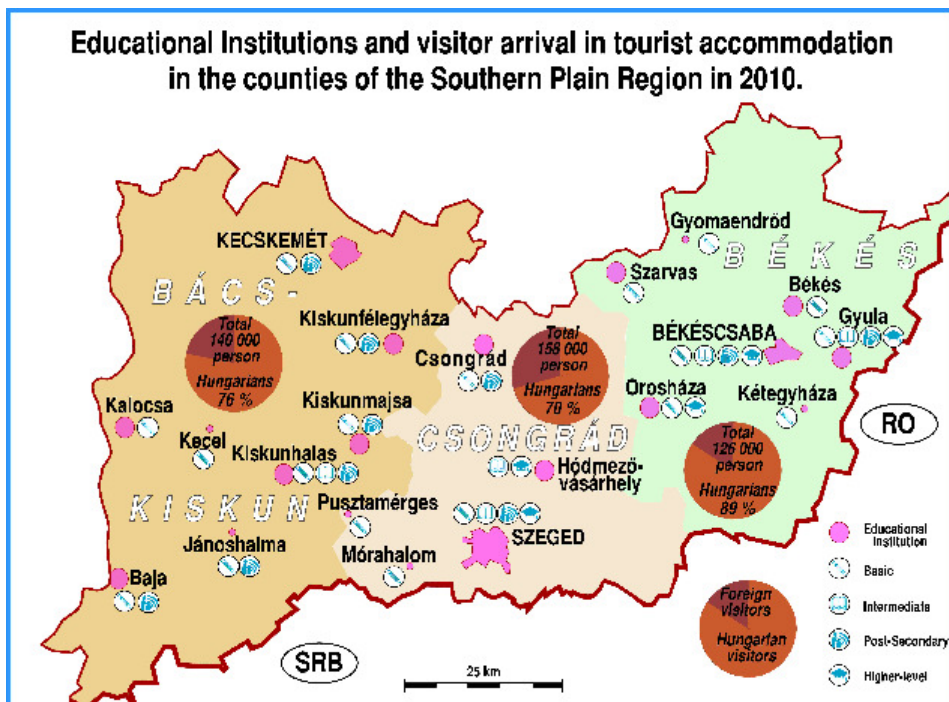
There are two institutions of higher education in the Southern Great Plain Region that offer Tourism Manager trainings. This course is available at University of Szeged (SZTE) Gyula Juhász Faculty of Education, Center for Vocational Training Distance Learning and Further Education and it is also offered by the Educational Centre of Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences in Orosháza. The other institutions of the region are vocational schools and some of them are integrated in the national vocational training network.

The geographical distribution of basic, intermediate and higher institutions involved in tourism education is uneven. In the Southern Great Plain Region, the majority of schools offering OKJ trainings are located in Szeged (eight institutions). There are six tourism related schools in Békéscsaba, and three in Kecskemét.

**Relationship between tourism expert training and higher education in the Southern Great Plain Region**

In 2009, 39 educational institutions provided tourism and tourism-hospitality trainings. The highest level of tourism expert training is available at universities and colleges. Courses in can be chosen at two institutions of higher education.

*Map 5: Educational Institutions and tourist arrivals at accommodation facilities in the counties of the Southern Great Plain Region in 2010*



Source: I. Szabó 2009 (map created by Peter Mihaly)



University of Szeged Faculty of Science and Informatics has been offering Tourism specialization within the training of geographers since 2001.

In Békés County, the Educational Centre of Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences in Orosháza was founded in 2004. In this institution Tourism Manager trainings have been available since 2004, while the Economist Tourism–Hospitality bachelor’s degree course was accredited in 2006.

The Institute of Health Care and Environmental Sanitation Studies of Szent István University in Gyula was the first in Hungary and was among the first ones in Europe to start its seven-semester Health Care Manager BA course with specialization in Health Tourism Manager.

In 2009, the Tessedik Sámuel College of Békéscsaba was integrated into the Szent István University. The former college of Békéscsaba became an off-site training center of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Gödöllő University. The Hospitality-Tourism bachelor’s degree course was launched in the same year with Hotel Animator/ Organizer Manager and Conference Organizer Manager specializations.

In September 2011 – on the basis of the cooperation agreement signed earlier – the Budapest College of Communication and Business founded the Regional Knowledge Centre in Hódmezővásárhely and introduced Tourism-Hospitality bachelor’s degree course. Additionally, the college started Tourism and Hospitality Manager training (Map 4).

### **Relationship between tourism and tourism related educational institutions of the Southern Great Plain Region**

On the basis of Map 5 it can be stated that the geographical distribution of tourism related schools is balanced in the county, as there are 13 schools in Bács-Kiskun County and 15 in Csongrád and Békés Counties that offer Tourism-Hospitality OKJ qualification and higher education degree - from basic to higher level. In the 20 cities of the region, the geographical distribution of 43 institutions is uneven as compared by counties. In Bács-Kiskun and Békés Counties there are 7, while in Csongrád County there are only 5 cities offering tourism and hospitality related trainings.

Szeged has a significant role in the tourism training of Southern Great Plain Region. From OKJ level training to the Tourism specialization of Geography BSc at SZTE TTIK, the city offers the widest range of tourism related trainings. The students are motivated by the rich tourism supply and the growing number of job opportunities in tourism and tourism developments.

The other two county seats (Kecskemét, Békéscsaba) are tourism training centers. Besides these cities the tourism supply is also significant in Baja (Bács-Kiskun County) and Gyula (Békés County).

When planning a longer period of stay, in Kiskunmajsa, Gyula, Orosháza, Mórahalom and Szeged basic Pension Owner and Rural Inn-keeper courses started. In the internationally known spa town Gyula, Health Care Manager BA course was launched.

Basic OKJ Hospitality-Tourism trainings are available in the smaller towns and villages, such as Pusztamérgecs. In the Southern Great Plain Region there are several towns with less than 30.000 inhabitants that offer such trainings. On the basis of the KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) data from 2006, the number of approved rural guesthouses is the highest in Pusztamérgecs and Mórahalom (accommodation available for 76 and 50 tourists) where Rural Hospitality and Guesthouse Owner courses have been carried out.

The main locations of higher level tourism training are situated along Road 47, which the road from Szeged to the northeast: beside Szeged there are tourism related trainings at universities or colleges in Hódmezővásárhely and – close to the Romanian border in Békés County – in Orosháza and Békéscsaba. Gyula is also located near the Romanian border, where higher level Health Care Manager courses are available with Health Tourism Manager specialization, related to the thermal and medicinal baths of the city.

## Conclusion

According to the present study, there is a wide range of tourism related training possibilities in Hungary, as from basic OKJ courses to university-level and PhD degrees, several fields and trades can be chosen by the students. It can be stated that the weakness of the trainings is the lack of appropriate foreign language requirements. The solution for the present situation would be to restore the requirement that students should accomplish adequate level of language examinations that provide an objective evaluation of one's language skills.

Nowadays, the geographical location of the Southern Great Plain Region has become more advantageous, as Serbian, Romanian and transit Russian visitors consider the region as a destination, or at least an agreeable place to stay for several days.

To improve local tourism and expand its supply, human resources in tourism should be developed not only in quantity but also in quality. This goal is attainable since personal and material conditions, as well as local tourism infrastructure are present and available.

As a result of the tourism's multiplying effect, the old and new tourist visits and visitors' impressions on the region will hopefully have a positive impact on the economic development of the region and on the education of human resources as well. There is a need for highly qualified experts in the popular destinations of the region (such as Gyula, Baja, Ópusztaszer, Kiskunmajsa) and in the big cities (including Szeged, Kecskemét, Békéscsaba). The great variety of tourism activities (travelling in and from the region, wide range of tourism supply) gives reason for the training of experts with appropriate knowledge.

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## TURISZTIKAI SZAKMAI KÉPZÉSEK ÉS ELHELYEZKEDÉSÜK A DÉL-ALFÖLDI RÉGIÓBAN

MIHÁLY Péter<sup>1</sup>

### Összefoglaló

A jelen tanulmány céljai között szerepelt, hogy részletesen megvizsgálja a Dél-alföldi Régió idegenforgalmának humán erőforrást biztosító helyszíneit, azoknak térbeli elhelyezkedését, valamint az oktatási intézmények és a helyi idegenforgalmi vonzerők közötti kapcsolatot. A vizsgálat aktualitását a magyar kormányok elmúlt tíz évben felfokozott turizmusfejlesztési tevékenységei, a Dél-alföldi Régió Magyarország és a határ menti turizmusban betöltött egyre növekvő szerepe, az OKJ-s vizsgakövetelmények változ(tat)ása, Románia európai uniós csatlakozása (2007) és hazánk Szerbiával szembeni vízumkényszer feloldása indokolták.

A Dél-alföldi Régióban az idegenforgalmi iskolák megyei szintű megoszlása egyenletes, hiszen Bács-Kiskun megyében 13, Csongrád és Békés megyében 15 oktatási intézmény kínál idegenforgalmi-vendéglátó, OKJ, valamint felsőoktatási diplomát – az alapfoktól a magasabb szintű képzések felé haladva. A régió 20 településén a 43 intézet térbeli megoszlása – megyénket összehasonlítva – egyenlőtlen, ugyanis míg Bács-Kiskun megyében nyolc, Békés megyében hét, addig Csongrád megyében öt településen folyik idegenforgalomhoz és vendéglátáshoz kapcsolódó képzés.

A Dél-alföldi régió idegenforgalmi képzésében domináns szerepet játszik Szeged. A hazai idegenforgalmi oktatás kínálata széleskörű, hiszen alapfokú OKJ-s képzéstől egészen egyetemi Ph.D-s turisztikai szakemberképzésig számos szak és szakma közül választhat a leendő tanuló.

Megállapítható, hogy a képzések gyenge pontja a nyelvtudási kritériumok alacsony szintjében rejlik. A jelenlegi helyzetre megoldást – a korábbi jól működő – nyelvtudásról objektív képet adó nyelvvizsga bizonyítvány megszerzése jelentené.

Napjainkra a Dél-alföldi Régió földrajzi fekvése felértékelődött, ugyanis szerbiai és romániai, de újabban az átutazó orosz vendégek is desztinációt, vagy legalább egy-, kétnapos program lehetőséget látnak az ország déli régiójában.

A helyi turizmus fejlődése és kínálatának bővítése érdekében az idegenforgalmi munkaerőbázist nem csak kvantitatív, hanem kvalitatív mértékben is fejleszteni kell. Erre minden személyi és tárgyi adottság valamint a helyi idegenforgalmi infrastruktúra is rendelkezésre áll a régióban.

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Remélhetőleg a régi és az új vendégek látogatása és régióról alkotott benyomásuk serkentőleg hatnak – a turizmus multiplikátor hatására – a régió gazdasági fejlődésére és ezzel a humán erőforrás képzésére. A magasan kvalifikált munkaerőre a régió népszerű idegenforgalmi desztinációiban (Gyula, Baja, Ópusztaszer, Kiskunmajsa stb.) szükség van, emellett a nagyvárosokban (Szeged, Kecskemét, Békéscsaba stb.) a széleskörű idegenforgalmi aktivitás (be- és kiutaztatás, idegenforgalmi kínálat széles választéka) indokolja a szerteágazó tudással rendelkező szakemberek képzését.

**Kulcsszavak:** régió, idegenforgalom, humán erőforrás, Dél-alföldi Régió, Országos Szakmai Jegyzék (OKJ)