

## CEEPUS EXPERIENCE: HUNGARIAN STUDENTS ARE AMONG THE HIGHEST

BALÁZS SÁRVÁRI

*During its first intensive week Dr. Fran Galetić visited the Corvinus University of Budapest as a guest professor through the CEEPUS program. On that occasion Dr. Galetić gave an interview to Dr. Balázs Sárvári, the International Education Program Coordinator at the Corvinus School of Economics.*

*Dr. Galetić is an assistant professor and the deputy head of Department for Economic Theory at the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Zagreb. He held lectures on different topics such as the optimization in consumer choice; company operating in different market structure; the concentration of EU banking markets; the process of enlarging and the future of the EU with focus on Croatia's membership.*

**BS:** *You have an interesting and wide experience of teaching abroad. How do you see the specialities of teaching in Hungary? How is the classroom environment in Hungary compared to Croatia?*

**FG:** I have had the opportunity to teach in various countries, from Sweden to Bulgaria and from Ukraine to Mexico, and each country is different and somehow unique. Starting from the teaching rooms and number of students in a group, to the different levels of knowledge acquired by the students. From my experience of teaching in Hungary, I could accentuate some of the main advantages that I have met there. The size of the groups is about 40 students, which is much less than in Croatia, where our lecture groups consist of 120, and seminar groups of 60 students. Smaller groups enable more interactivity with students and gives them more space to discuss and express their opinion. What I also noticed is the readiness of the students to participate in discussion. On all my discussion questions I have received at least 5-6 different answers and viewpoints, and students were always happy to share their attitude. The level of knowledge and the width of interest of Hungarian students are among the highest, compared to all other students I had the opportunity to work with. Of course there are many similarities between Hungary and Croatia, such as teaching program, course structure or literature.

**BS:** *How much the Croatian students focus on economic theory rather than business related issues? May you say there is a trend leading more attention to one of these or rather there is a stable balance regarding the students' interest for business and economics?*

**FG:** On the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, we offer two complete programs: economics and business. The interest of students is very much orientated on business. Talking about the exact numbers, the share of students on economics is less than 10%, all others choose business. But I must mention here that in Croatia economics and business are always taught together on one faculty, so there is no other faculty orientated on economics nor business at University of Zagreb. The number of students on economics and on business programs is stable, although there is an increasing interest for business and a decreasing interest for economics.

**BS: What do you see the most relevant outcome of teacher exchange programs?**

**FG:** Short-term exchange programs for teaching staff are an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with a university, teaching programs, students, professors, but as well with new culture and customs in a foreign country. As the majority of university teachers has teaching duties at the home university, the absence from it is possible only for a week, and not longer. Because of this, short-term exchange mobility is the only opportunity for many of them to visit other universities and hold lectures there. It is a great way of establishing new contacts and arranging possible future cooperation.

**BS: What do you see the main trend of the CEEPUS program: the teachers „export” ideas, methods or they rather import back to their home institutions?**

**FG:** CEEPUS program is specific program because it is orientated to a specific area of Central Europe, with an extension to the South-Eastern Europe. The main advantage of CEEPUS is the fact that the contacts between universities have already been established, so there are contact persons on every university and this facilitates the application process. Unfortunately, the scholarships in CEEPUS programs are not high enough to cover all the costs of visiting the host university, and this additional payment that has to be covered from the own resources is probably the reason why there are not so many applicants. Regarding the transfer of ideas, I think that every teacher both exports and imports ideas and methods, giving the best from his own practise, and taking the best of that what he has seen and experienced during the stay on the host university.

**BS: How would you define the main issues regarding economic theory at the University of Zagreb? What are the main disputed topics among professors?**

**FG:** At the University of Zagreb, we mostly dispute the role of economic theory in the education process and in the economic practice. Our Department of Economic Theory performs two main courses in the first year of study for all students on the Faculty of Economics and Business: Principles of Economics and Microeconomics. These are 2 out of all together 4 courses that have 9 ECTS points at our faculty. I must mention here that few years ago I have initiated the introduction of courses in German, besides the whole program in Croatian and English, which we already have. And I am very proud of Mikroökonomie, a course under my guidance which is the first and only course in German for now, and on which I currently have 30 students. This is not only a pleasure for me, but also a pride for our department and for our faculty. We plan to introduce more courses in German, as well as on other languages as French, Spanish and Italian.

**BS: Do you see a clear path for modernising the teaching of economic theory? Is there a Western/European/US dominated path or a regional direction is more visible in Croatia?**

**FG:** Economic theory is generally the field that is not changed quickly, and where the whole process of modernization is very slow. The last radical modernization in the teaching of economic theory was at the beginning of 1990's, with the transition to market economy. After that, all other changes are gradual and much smaller. Currently the dominant path of economic theory at the Faculty of Economics and Business in Zagreb is the US one. The most widely used books are the ones from Samuelson and Nordhaus as well as Pindyck and Rubinfeld. Besides that, in Microeconomics we also use domestic literature which fills the existing gap.

**BS:** *The recently translated books, the recently launched courses, specializations may express these paths. What concrete steps may you highlight from the last years?*

**FG:** As I have already mentioned, on our two main courses we use the American books, which have been translated to Croatian. At the moment we are preparing our own book and exercise book for the course Principles of Economics, which are being written by the group of authors from our department. The aim of this project is to first supplement and then substitute the existing American book. Similar to this, we already have our own exercise book for Microeconomics, which was written by my colleague and me some five years ago. So there are lots of ideas to realize, and in my personal opinion we should find a balance between economic theory coming from the West, from the East and of course from Croatia.