

As one of the pillars of disaster management, fire departments are responsible for a wide variety of interventions, including fire incidents and technical rescue. The broad range of skills and specialist knowledge that is demanded to perform these interventions is further expanded by certain features of Hungary. Firstly, its location and transport system make it a favourable transit route. Moreover, the high number of foreigners on a short-term or long-term stay in Hungary also increases the likelihood of non-Hungarians getting involved in incidents. The paper elaborates on these features and their potential impact on interventions and identifies those positions within the staff of disaster management who come get in contact with foreigners.

Keywords: disaster management, fire service interventions, internationalism, foreign languages

Introduction

As a result of globalisation, tourism and international transport have gained a lot of momentum, of which Hungary has its share, due to its favourable conditions. However, it places certain demands on the country, such as the need for a higher percentage of foreign language speakers, not only to be able to reap the economic benefits, but also to guarantee the safety of both citizens and foreigners. Protecting them from natural and man-made disasters and fires is the task of disaster management. Efforts to increase the effectiveness of interventions mainly focus on the training of intervention units to develop their skills and on advanced equipment and protective clothing, but due emphasis has to be paid to another crucial factor, that is, gathering as much information as possible to assist decision-making. As the emergency callers, eyewitnesses and surviving victims are sources of information, in incidents involving non-Hungarians, foreign languages might be one of the keys to information. After illustrating the broad spectrum of interventions and the impact of tourism and international transport may have on them, this paper attempts to specify the positions in disaster management that may involve using a foreign language in interventions.

Interventions Performed by Fire Departments

In the field of fire and rescue services, fire brigades are in charge of first response within disaster management. Figure 1 depicts the distribution of fire calls to which fire fighters responded in 2010-2014. [1] The two main groups are fire incidents and technical rescue. In the last two years, the majority of interventions, almost half of them, involved technical rescue. It even outnumbered fire incidents, which is the type of activity most commonly associated with fire brigades. Technical rescue includes a wide range of incidents, such as structural collapse, storm damage or traffic accidents often in the presence of dangerous materials whether on the road or railways, just to give a few examples and illustrate the broad nature of the term “technical rescue” and the wide range of interventions fire service is involved in.

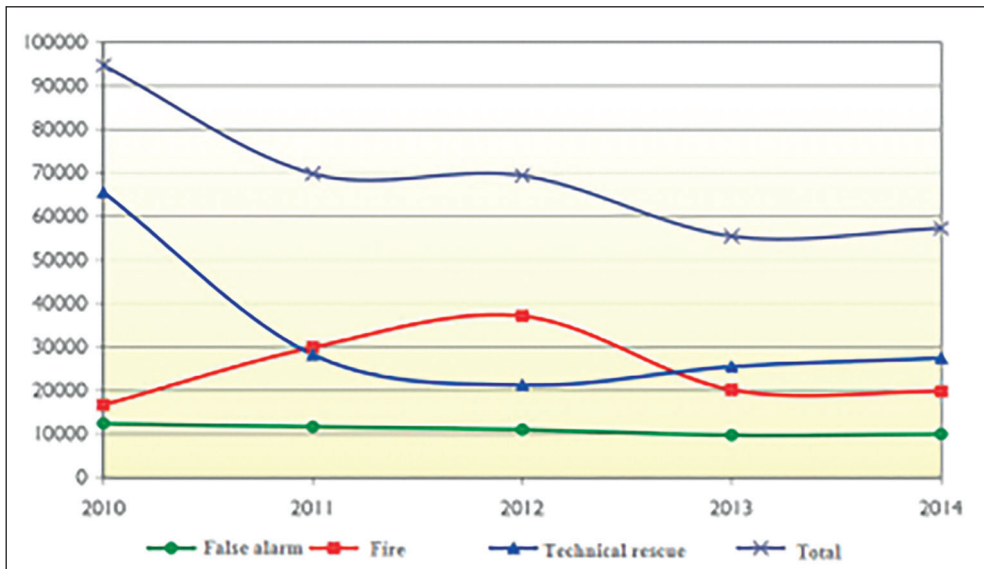


Figure 1 The distribution of fire calls in 2010-2014 [1]

Therefore, the recruitment process of fire fighters considers several skills. They need to pass rigorous examinations that test their medical suitability, physical fitness and psychological readiness. The selected applicants then have to acquire highly specialised and extensive skills and knowledge. [2] There is no doubt that foreign language knowledge ranges at the end of the list of skills needed to perform firefighting interventions, if it really deserves to be on the list at all. However, if we take a look at the environment in which the interventions take place, it becomes apparent that in certain cases foreign language knowledge may contribute to effective interventions.

The success of the intervention, which means that there is no casualty and financial loss is minimised, is heavily dependent on the information the intervention team has on the nature and circumstances of the incident. The more is known, the more reliable decisions can be made.

Hungary as a Tourist Destination and a Transit Country

According to the figures of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the annual number of foreign visitors to Hungary was close to 46 million [3]. The number of foreign residents residing in Hungary was between 139,700 and 206,909 in the past ten years [4]. Even if we suppose that a small part of them, especially those who spend a longer period in Hungary, acquire a basic level of Hungarian, the majority of them will continue to use their native language or a common foreign language such as English for communication. Although no relevant figures are available, the considerable amount of tourists and foreign residents in Hungary suggest that it is highly probable that they become involved in incidents requiring firefighting interventions, either as victims or as eyewitnesses who can provide valuable information on the circumstances.

In addition to the considerable number of foreigners, another predisposing factor for interventions involving non-Hungarians is the fact that Hungary can be considered a transit country for freight transportation due to various characteristics that give us competitive advantage over other countries. Located in Central and Eastern Europe, it serves as a connecting link between Western and Eastern Europe, or by widening our perspective, between Europe and Asia. In addition to its location, its terrain is also well-suited for transportation with predominantly plain areas as opposed to the mountainous regions of the neighbouring countries. Moreover, Hungary boasts an extensive transport network that basically covers the whole country and provides connections to international networks. Among these networks, our road, railway and inland waterway networks are worth mentioning.

Railway network

Hungary is a member of numerous international organisations that aim to facilitate, advance and coordinate international freight transportation by rail, the most important ones being the Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation (CCTT), the International Association, Organisation for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD) and RailNetEurope (RNE). [5] The two former organisations deal with intercontinental railway transportation involving Asia and Europe, while the latter one attempts to harmonise

it within Europe. CCTT held its 22nd conference in Budapest in 2013, where Hungary was able to express its aspirations to become a key transit country between the East and the West. These plans will also be supported by various domestic investments, for example the planned V0 railway ring around Budapest to quicken railway transport across the country [6].

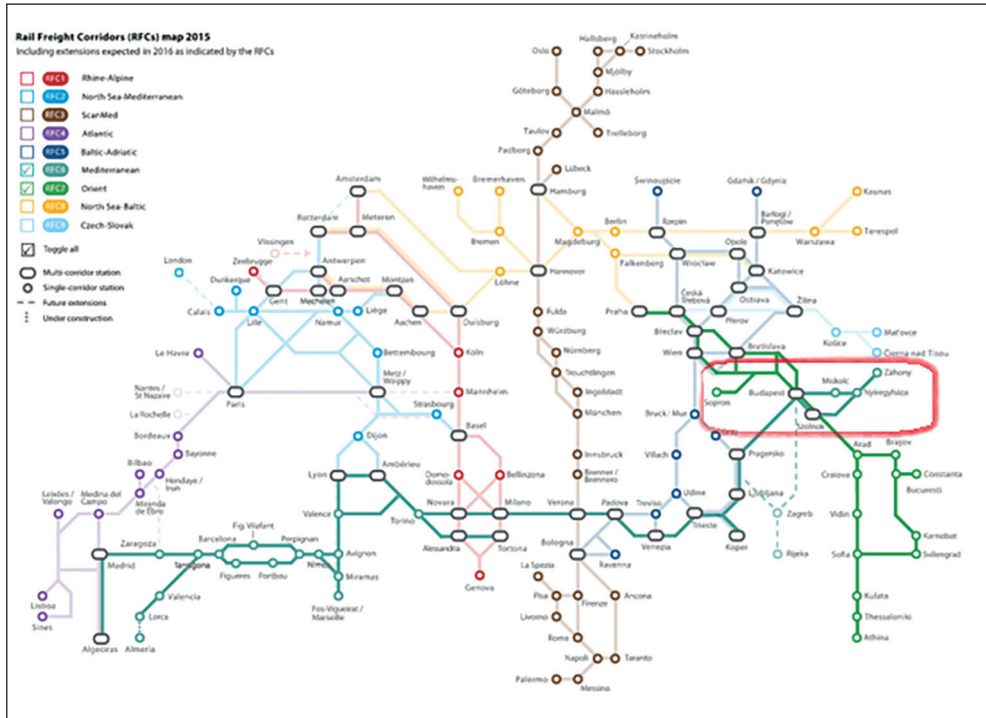


Figure 2 Hungary's involvement in the Rail Freight Corridors in Europe [7]

Hungary participates in European railway transport with two of the rail freight corridors running through the country of the altogether nine RNE corridors. One is the Orient Corridor that starts from the Czech Republic and ends in Greece, while the other is the Mediterranean Corridor that starts in Spain and ends in Záhony, at the Eastern border of Hungary. [7]

Road network

The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), whose goal is to establish and develop the integrated European transport system, evaluated Hungary in a National Peer Review a decade ago when EU accession was round the corner. They were satis-

fied with the density of the railway network, which was well above the average in OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). However, they surpassed the Hungarian network in terms of quality. The same applied to our road network, as in the total length of paved roads Hungary ranked high, yet if we narrow down the range to focus only on motorways, Hungary was well below the average in Western Europe. [8] Since then, over the last decade, the length of motorways has almost tripled [9]. EU accession and the resulting aspirations to be a part of the motorway network of Europe triggered a boost in the extension of the motorway system. Basically, the capital city serves as the focal point of the motorways and from this hub all neighbouring countries are accessible, as the motorways reach the borders.

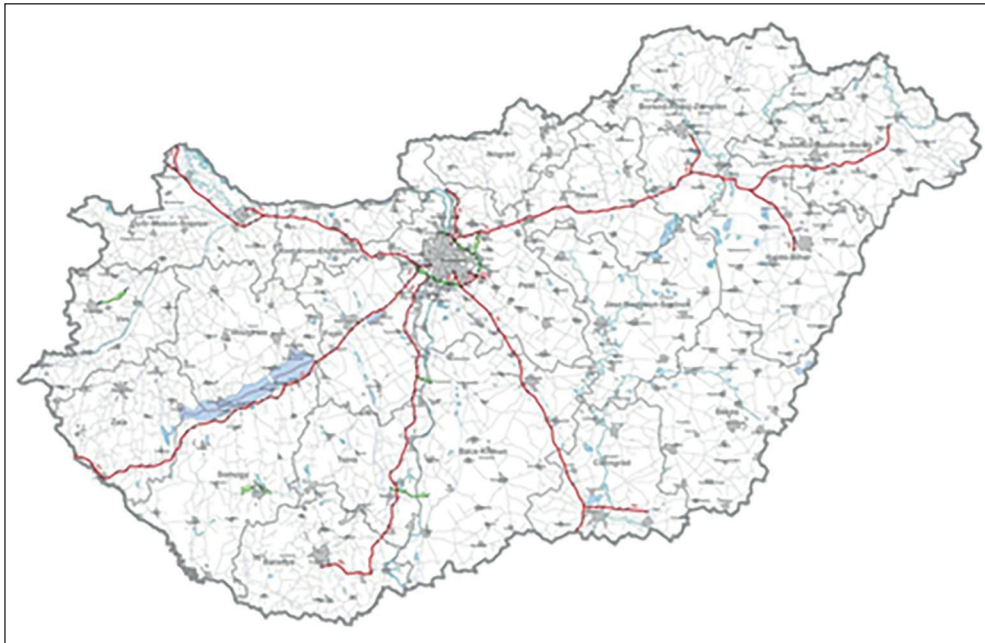


Figure 3 Hungary's motorway network [10]

Waterway

Although Hungary is landlocked, it participates in water transportation with its 1368 km of navigable waterways, out of which 530 km is of international importance [11]. The main waterway is the Danube, through which Hungary has access to Germany, Austria, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and finally to the Black Sea.

To sum up, Hungary's location and transportation facilities are assets that prove to be attractive to freight companies. It results in an increased volume of traffic, which may

give rise to a higher number of accidents potentially involving hazardous materials. Fortunately, it has been long recognised that the transportation of hazardous materials needs to be internationally regulated and harmonised. For this purpose, various European agreements were signed concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by different transportation methods, namely ADR¹ by road, RID² by rail, ADN³ by inland waterways and ICAO TI⁴ or IATA DGR⁵ by air. Standardised pictograms and UN numbers help identify dangerous materials without having to completely rely on the driver who may or may not be able to provide information on the circumstances and who may or may not speak the intervention unit's mother tongue.

Positions at the Fire Service Requiring Foreign Language Skills

All the above factors prove that we need to be prepared for the possibility that not only Hungarian is used in an intervention, whether it is a fire incident or technical rescue, to gather information or to communicate with the victims. Hungary's involvement in international traffic and transport and the high annual number of visitors to Hungary and foreign residents living in Hungary increase the possibility of incidents when foreign language knowledge may contribute to a more targeted and effective intervention. Intervention units are aware that they may encounter circumstances on the fire ground or on the scene which are unexpected and they need to make quick decisions accordingly. However, foreign languages may be a tool to gain as much information as possible to support decision making.

1 European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road

2 Regulations concerning the International Railway Transport of Dangerous Goods

3 European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways

4 The International Civil Aviation Organization Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air

5 Provisions concerning Transport of Dangerous Goods in the International Air Transport

Local level	County level
<i>squad leader</i>	<i>fire operations clerks</i> perform basic tasks related to operations and their administration, but a high school diploma is sufficient for this position, a degree (thus, a language certificate) is not required
<i>shift commander</i>	<i>on-duty fire operations officers</i> and <i>chief communications officer</i> , who receive fire emergency calls or the calls are redirected to them
<i>fire chief and his deputy</i> in case of a major fire (2nd-alarm fire at least) or perhaps a <i>technical safety officer</i>	<i>leader of the Disaster Management Operations Unit and his deputy</i> (who respond to 2nd or higher-alarm fires)
<i>head of the disaster management branch office</i> in case of a 3rd -alarm fire	
<i>county management</i> takes over the operation in case of 4th or 5th-alarm fire	

Figure 4 Positions at the Fire Service that might require foreign language skills in interventions (Source: Authors' compilation)

Therefore, it is necessary to identify those segments of the organisation of disaster management who are in frequent contact with victims – who might not be speakers of Hungarian. Figure 4 below is a compilation of officers, categorised according to the level where their workplace is situated in the organisation of disaster management, yielding two groups for the purposes of the paper, local and county levels.

As the jobs above the thick line in Figure 4 require shifts, it is essential that foreign language speakers are available in each shift. Altogether, there are three teams or platoons of firefighters, A, B and C, which work on a rotating shift schedule. One platoon is on-duty for 24 hours and off-duty for 48 hours. This system guarantees that fire fighters with similar preparedness and qualifications can be deployed at all times. Each unit includes a shift commander with higher education qualification, which means that three such officers are required to continuously fulfil this position. In case of absence (training, vacation, sick leave) they are always replaced by a subordinate, for example the squad leader, who is an officer as well. At fire stations there are considerably fewer officers with higher education qualification, resulting in a lower number of foreign language speakers.

Act XLII of 2015 on the Service Status of Professional Members of Armed Forces [12] – similarly to the previous act – sets out that a degree is required to advance to an officer rank (from second lieutenant), whose prerequisite is, in turn, a language exam certificate.

At the Institute of Disaster Management, National University of Public Service students acquire specialist knowledge in the field of disaster management. [13] [14] In addition, due emphasis is placed on foreign language acquisition. During the three-year bachelor's programme, the foreign language course lasts for five terms with 300 lessons. The main goal of the course is to prepare students for the language exam, which is among the degree requirements. An additional aim is to equip them with the terminology of disaster management so that foreign language will not hinder them from widening their perspectives in their profession. In this sense, the system of teaching foreign languages for military purposes sets an example worth following. As human interoperability is at the core of NATO needs, the common training systems are preceded by national military education and training as well as language training, which may be later supplemented by the NATO Staff Officers' Military Terminology Course. [15]

Conclusion

The article has shown that certain features of Hungary, its location, terrain and extensive transport system facilitate tourism and international transport, which raises the number of non-Hungarian speakers present in the country. The authors focus on its impact on fire service interventions and in response to these needs, they present a true and fair view on positions which might require foreign language knowledge to contribute to the effectiveness of interventions by ensuring access to more information in interventions involving non-Hungarian speakers. Finally, it is demonstrated that these requirements are incorporated into the curriculum at the Institute of Disaster Management, National University of Public Service to prepare future officers for the challenges they might face in their profession.

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Idegen nyelv ismereti követelmények a tűzoltóság beavatkozásainál

KUK ENIKŐ – PÁNTYA PÉTER

A katasztrófavédelem egyik pilléréként a tűzoltóságok különféle beavatkozásokért felelősek, beleértve a tűzoltást és a műszaki mentést. Magyarország az elhelyezkedésének és a közlekedési hálózatának köszönhetően kedvező tranzitútvonalnak számít. Továbbá a rövid vagy hosszú tartózkodásra Magyarországra látogató külföldiek magas száma növeli annak az esélyét, hogy nem magyar anyanyelvűek káresetek résztvevői lehetnek. A cikk részletezi ezen jellemzőket, a beavatkozásokra kifejtett hatásukat, valamint azonosítja azokat a katasztrófavédelmi beosztásokat, amelyek munkájuk során kapcsolatba kerülhetnek külföldiekkel.

Kulcsszavak: katasztrófavédelem, tűzoltói beavatkozások, nemzetköziesség, idegen nyelv