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BERDE, Eva

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**Abstract**

This study uses data summaries and interviews to analyse changes in Hungarian higher education since 1989. The first part of the article relies on statistical data and puts the Hungarian higher education system into the international context. It focuses on enrolment changes, spending patterns and the number and quality of teaching personnel. Available data suggest a dramatic increase in enrolment, coupled with declining or stagnant resources. The second part of the study focuses on micro-level activities of selected universities and departments, with special emphasis on research, teaching, administration and institutional change. The study argues that the creation of a stable, performance-oriented, well-financed higher education system in ex-socialist Hungary has been achieved imperfectly. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)