

Corvinus University of Budapest

# A proposed charter for Corvinus' hybrid governance system

## A discussion paper

In perfect fit with the new government priorities for Hungarian universities, Corvinus has the objective to reach by 2030 the top 50 Financial Times European Business Schools ranking. To help Corvinus achieve this ambitious plan, we would recommend considering keeping a foundation-based governance and adapting it to meet European standards and fully cope with the concerns related to academic freedom and autonomy. This would lead to a new hybrid system, widely used in Europe.

In a nutshell, the University Board (UB) would include 5 members, with 4 being external to the university (including at least 25% of each gender, 3 business / society leaders and 1 international experienced academic leader and scientist) and the Rector. All academic affairs would fall exclusively within the competence of the Senate, and this authority has to be guaranteed by law. Daily operational issues would be under the competence of the Rector and the Executive Committee (EXCO), similar to Corvinus' current practice.

**Bruno VAN POTTELSBERGHE**  
Endorsed by the Executive Committee<sup>1</sup>

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026

---

<sup>1</sup> This proposal has been refined following discussions with several stakeholders, including students, experts and colleagues.

## The Context:

The newly elected Hungarian government has claimed two important objectives regarding the higher education sector.<sup>2</sup> It will tackle Model Change Universities in the short term, implicitly revisiting their governance and funding scheme. It also wants to drastically improve the international reputation and global visibility of its universities in less than ten years.

While the speed and depth of the forthcoming governance reform is under investigation, it seemed appropriate to identify short term risks and put forward an intermediate approach called “the hybrid model”, also frequently called dual system in the European Union.

## Corvinus’ proposal

A compromise can be found between the traditional system and the current “Model Change” system. This new hybrid (or dual) model – which is fully compatible with the EU concerns and active in 14 EU countries - should secure academic freedom, accountability and trust, while keeping operational excellence, innovation and sustainability as a priority.

An effective balance is put forward between professional management (monitored by the University Board, UB) and academic excellence and autonomy (monitored by the Senate).

## Content

1. The proposed hybrid governance charter
2. Corvinus’ motivation: a catch-up imperative
3. Catching up requires an agile operational model
4. University governance models in the EU
5. Governance model of top ranked social sciences universities
6. Corvinus’ recent achievements and imminent risks
7. Tisza party program: some priorities

---

2 The Tisza program is available here: <https://magyartisza.hu/program>. The higher education and university sector priorities are listed in Chapter 7. It includes: “We build a competitive education system that develops skills and competences that can be used on the market and enables lifelong learning”; “We will restore the autonomy of universities, we will abolish the KEKVA model” and “By 2035, we will be at the forefront of the world, the global TOP200”.

# 1. The proposed hybrid governance charter

## Article I: University Board (UB, the Maintainer)

Its role is to ensure financial sustainability, strategic depth and operational agility. UB members are appointed for 5 years, appointments can be asynchronous, renewable once.

**Membership:** The UB would be composed of 5 members, including 4 “external” members and the Rector. The chairman should be an external member, elected by the UB members.

**Selection Criteria:** the UB members would be composed as follows

- 3 should be current or former industry/society leaders, put forward by the wise committee (composed of former Rectors elected by Senate majority), talking with the current UB chair, and coopted by the UB active members (vote).
  - Proposals can be submitted by Corvinus’ International Corporate and Institutional Council (IC<sup>2</sup>) to the wise committee.
- 1 should be an internationally recognized academic (with undisputable academic leadership experience and scientific legitimacy), put forward by the wise committee, talking with the Rector, and validated by the Senate (vote) and UB (vote).
  - Proposals can be submitted by Corvinus’ International Advisory Board (IAB) to the wise committee.
- The 4 external members should include at least 25% of each gender.

**Conflict of Interest Framework:** A formal code of conduct shall prohibit any person holding an active political mandate or executive government role from serving on the UB. In addition, a charter of adherence to the university values and broad vision should be signed by each UB member.

This Charter would include:

- declaration of each trustee’s commitment to uphold the university’s mission, vision and values, strategy and governing documents;
- the declaration of duty to act in the university’s educational, research, and public service mission;
- obligation to prioritize the long-term interests of the university over personal, political, or external interests and to act solely in the best interests of the university;
- respect for academic freedom and excellence, institutional autonomy and integrity;
- non-interference in academic decisions unless explicitly required by law or institutional statutes;
- a commitment to fairness, transparency and constructive oversight as well as the prohibition of corruption, favoritism, or misuse of influence.

## Article II: Leadership and governance

**Unified Executive Leadership:** The University is headed by the Rector, who serves as the chief executive of both academic issues and day-to-day operational areas.

**Executive Committee:** The Rector is supported by a seven-member Executive Committee, ensuring that academic interests (represented by three Vice Rectors) and operational services (represented by three heads of services) are equally represented. The Rector chairs the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee members should be validated by the UB for service area leaders (vote), and by the Senate for academic leaders (vote).

### Article III: The Senate

The Senate shall be the supreme body for all academic matters, it secures the university's autonomy, academic freedom and reputation:

**Binding Veto:** The Senate shall have a voting right over the selection of the Rector (the Senate shall vote on the Rector's appointment prior to the UB final decision), the strategy, the creation of new degree programmes, and the adoption of the Research Strategy (doctoral programmes, new research centers, research incentives within the allocated budget, research support policy within the allocated budget), and validates the appointment of Full Professors and Research Professors.

**Composition:** To maintain academic integrity, 60% of the Senate must consist of elected members (from the students, services area and academic staff). The student body should comprise five representatives from BA/BSc (3) and MA/MSc (2) programmes (HÖK) and two representatives from PhD students (DÖK), amounting to a total of 7 students (incl. PhD students).

### Article IV: Financial Independence & Innovation

The UB oversees university finances, approving the annual budget and the four-year financial plan. It validates the remuneration policy and headcount policy that secures a sustainable operational model. The strategy should be validated by the Senate and the UB. The financial plan is presented for information and discussion to the Senate before the final validation of the UB.

### Article V: Transparency & Accountability

**Open Repository:** The university will maintain an online repository (Jogtár) where all governance regulations, financial reports and UB meeting decisions are accessible to Senate members.

**External Audit:** A regular Academic Quality Audit will be conducted by an independent international body (e.g., AACSB, EFMD). The independent auditor's report shall be validated by the Ministry in charge of supervising higher education institutions. In line with current practice, both the annual public benefit report and the annual financial report shall be made publicly available on Corvinus' official website.

#### Why is this hybrid model needed for Corvinus?

- Because the University has a Catch-up imperative (Chapter 2)
- Because it is an agile and effective operational model (Chapter 3)
- Because it fits with the models adopted in 14 EU countries (Chapter 4)
- Because it fits with the governance of top ranked social science universities (Chapter 5)
- Because Corvinus has made significant progress and faces several risks (Chapter 6)
- Because it fits with the new government priorities (Chapter 7)

## Synthesis table of key insights

<b>Category</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Impact</b>
	The current KEKVA model	Hybrid governance model	
<b>Name of the Board</b>	Board of Trustees, BOT	University Board, UB	Symbolic change
<b>Composition of the Board</b>	5 external members, coopted	Rector International Academic leader/scientist 3 external members	Increased role of the Senate (2 members)
<b>Board members appointment</b>	BOT cooptation	New role of “Wise Committee” (two former Rectors voted by Senate majority) to make proposal following discussion with the Rector (for academic member) and the UB Chair (for the external). IC <sup>2</sup> and IAB invited to make proposals.	Clearer scope for academic freedom/ autonomy
<b>Board members ethics and role</b>	No charter No exclusion rule No gender balance	Charter of ethical conduct Exclusion rule included At least 25% of each gender International membership secured	Clearer scope for academic freedom / autonomy
<b>Duration of Board’s mandate</b>	Infinite	5 years, renewable once	Limited duration of mandate
<b>Transparency</b>	No BOT decisions available Annual report published	UB decisions available to Senate members Annual report published	More transparent communication of results and way of working
<b>Frequency of Board meetings</b>	10-11 per academic year	6 per academic year	Clearer scope for academic freedom/ autonomy

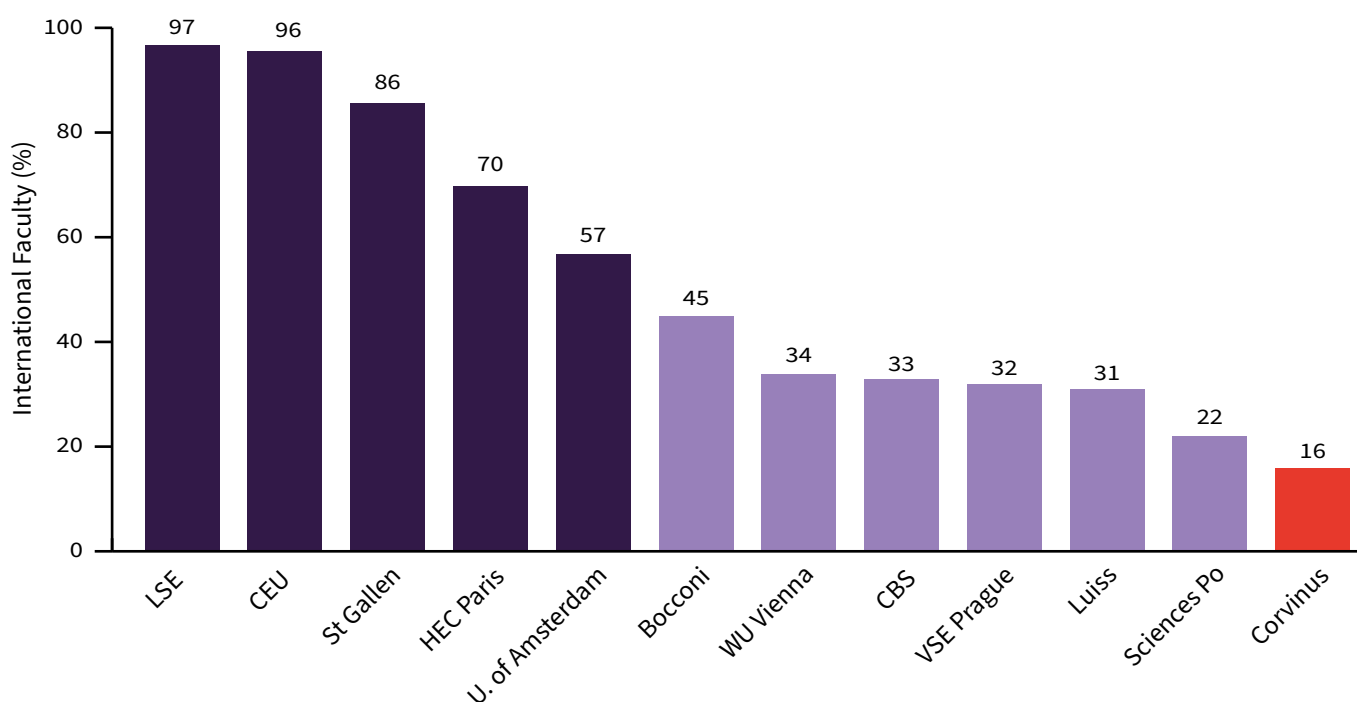
<b>Category</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Impact</b>
	The current KEKVA model	Hybrid governance model	
<b>Senate composition and voting rights</b>	Share of elected members (with students): 66%. The representative of the Trade Union may not exercise its right to vote in many cases. The representative of the Corvinus Employee Council is not a permanent invitee at the Senate.	Share of elected members (with students): 68%. The representative of the Trade Union shall have a right to vote in all cases subject to vote. The representative of the Corvinus Employee Council will be a permanent invitee at the Senate.	Stronger representation of the student body, the Trade Union and Corvinus Employee Council
<b>Rector's appointment</b>	The Foundation verifies applications for formal compliance, after which a Senate-elected committee assesses the candidates. Appointed by BOT, after Senate vote. Application process is launched by the BOT.	Application process launched by the UB. A Senate-elected committee verifies applications for formal compliance, after which it assesses the candidates. Appointed by UB, conditional on majority vote by Senate.	Increased role of the Senate
<b>Vice Rectors</b>	Validated by BOT	Validated by Senate	Increased role of the Senate
<b>Strategy</b>	Validated by the Senate and BOT	Validated by the Senate and the UB	In line with current practice
<b>Finance/budget</b>	Validated by the BOT	Validated by the UB, presented at the Senate	In line with current practice
<b>OOP (Organisational and Operational Procedures)</b>	Validated by the Senate and BOT	Joint validation and approval by the Senate and the UB	In line with current practice
<b>Academic files (promotion, recruitment, termination, student and faculty issues)</b>	Some issues tackled by the BOT	Exclusively tackled by the Senate and University committees and leadership.	Increased role of the Senate and other university committees, and university leadership

## 2. Corvinus' motivation: a catch-up imperative

The main motivation of the model change is to drastically improve the international reputation of Corvinus, its attractiveness to talented Hungarian and European students (limiting brain-drain<sup>3</sup>) and its perceived performance (rankings) in a relatively short period of time.

In rankings, Corvinus performed poorly, relative to other European countries' flagship universities. This is partly due to the poor internationalization of its stakeholders (students, and especially faculty), and relatively low research performance. See the chart below to see how Corvinus compares to flagship social science universities in Europe. These international universities are where Hungarian students go for their studies.

**1. Figure** – Share of international faculty in top social science universities of Europe, 2025 (%)



While Corvinus has made significant progress over the past two years, further improvements are necessary to strengthen its ranking performance and close the gap with Europe's leading universities.

### Why boost academic excellence?

- To retain talented Hungarian students at home, thanks to inspirational researchers & professors appointed exclusively on academic excellence criteria.
- To attract talented faculty in Hungary, who collaborate with the current colleagues for teaching and research.
- To multiply start-up creation and tech transfer opportunities.
- To bring new funding, via research grants.
- To contribute to international ranking via top level publications.

---

3 18K Hungarian students currently study abroad, mainly in Western Europe, because, amongst others: Better job opportunities with international degree (36%); higher quality of foreign universities (33%) and dislike of Hungarian teaching/learning methods (30%); See data source [here](#). In Corvinus, 19% of accepted students (Felvi.hu system) do not join the university, witnessing a clear international brain-drain.

### 3. Catching up needs a new agile and effective operational model

#### **Academic freedom is a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve academic excellence.**

Academic excellence cannot be achieved without academic freedom, but the latter does not automatically lead to excellence. What is needed is a strong will to perform more research towards international standards and secure better pedagogical services.

“Traditional academic collegiality” is less effective when substantial changes are needed. The government expects sharp increases in the global academic reputation (see Chapter 7) of universities by 2035. This ambition requires much more than higher budgets or academic freedom. It demands a drastic and fast change in the way universities operate, securing professional services and improving academic excellence simultaneously. The traditional model has the following drawbacks:

1. **Complexity and unclear governance/responsibilities:**  
The regulation of traditional universities illustrates this complexity. For instance, in the former or traditional model, having a Chancellor appointed by the Ministry (the Maintainer) and overseeing all operational decisions and financial planning, as opposed to the Rector who is elected by the Senate (also in charge of services area), introduces complexity and weak follow-up processes.
2. **Consigned interests may also occur in a democratically elected Senate:**  
the rule of the larger network prevails when tough decisions must be taken on i) headcount reduction (systemic resistance by elected peers); ii) wage increase (systemic pressure for higher wages); iii) expected publication and teaching load (systematic request to reduce the expected workload).

Procedural biases take time to be adjusted. There is a need for long term efforts and monitoring, strong support from the leadership and the maintainer, and the ability to take decisions that are exclusively based on scientific excellence and operational efficiency.

# 4. University governance models in the EU

(key ref: cf. EUA, *Participation in Institutional Governance Evolving models of university governance, 2025*, accessible here: <https://eua.eu/publications/briefings/participation-in-institutional-governance.html>)

University governance in Europe falls into two primary structural categories: the more frequent one is the dual structure, with a Board and a Senate, like the one presented in Chapter 1 on the proposed hybrid governance model.

## 1. Dual Structure (Bicameral)

This is the common model across the EU.

**The Board (or Council):** A smaller, often strategic body responsible for long-term planning, budgeting, financial sustainability and selecting the Rector.

**The Senate:** A larger, more representative body of the academic community (professors, staff and students) that handles academic affairs, including curricula and degrees.

Used in countries like Germany, Finland, France, Poland, and Italy. Within the EU, 11 countries include less than 50% of external members in their Boards; while 14 include more than 50% - and 3 of these countries rely on 100% of external members.

## 2. Unitary Structure (Unicameral)

In this model, a single main decision-making body is responsible for both strategic and academic oversight.

**Board-based Unitary:** Prevalent in Nordic countries (except Finland), Belgium, and Portugal. These boards often have a majority of external members (as in Denmark and Sweden) or a minority (as in Iceland and Norway).

**Senate-based Unitary:** A single body, often called the Senate, handles all major decisions. Not only was the senate-based unitary model historically found in a minority of European systems, but it has also been gradually discontinued. Estonia and Poland, where this model was previously in place, underwent governance reforms and switched to dual models. Senate-based Unitary models do not include external members.

**Managerial Shift:** Many EU states (e.g., Austria, Netherlands, Denmark) have moved toward New Public Management (NPM), which introduces private-sector tools, performance-based funding and stronger executive power for the Rector.

**Southern Europe:** Historically, countries like Italy and Spain had very large, highly representative governing bodies, though recent reforms have aimed to make them smaller and more agile.

**Central and Eastern Europe (CEE):** Countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia traditionally used a “republic of scholars” model but are increasingly adopting “stakeholder” boards with external members.

### EUA recommendations

The Autonomy Scorecard analysis shows that the Hungarian 'foundation university' model displays a combination of features that is not found elsewhere in Europe and fails to find a balance between the institution's accountability to society and the state through the involvement of external members and the university's self-governance. The following recommendations are intended to help incorporate lessons learned from other systems that can restore this balance while ensuring the modernisation of the system in the context of international trends.

- Recognise the specificity of higher education institutions compared to other foundation-run organisations in society, notably in a context where most of the university sector is expected to move to that status (contrary to European practice elsewhere).
- Set regulations for a limited term of office of the members of the board of trustees: this does not mean prescribing an exact mandate duration in law but including provisions requiring that a term of office is set, with a maximum allowed duration, as well as provisions regarding the possibility to renew.
- Involve the university in the selection of the members of the board of trustees in a formal way. Currently, the university is just one of the stakeholders consulted in the selection process. As mentioned before, if board members have no limited term of office, they are selected by university bodies, not by government.

- Re-design the balance of powers in university governance. If the board of trustees is externally appointed, then it should not be possible to revise the balance of powers between the board of trustees and the university senate. Rather, there should be a clear distinction of competences and guarantees that the university senate can rule on academic matters, which should not be subject to a derogation clause in the law.

In the absence of the actions described above, the current model only offers an appearance of greater autonomy but can be likened to a creative restructuring of higher education granting further and long-term control to the current government on the sector as a whole.

University Autonomy in Europe IV: The Scorecard 2023 is available at [www.eua.eu](http://www.eua.eu)

## 5. Governance model of top ranked social sciences universities

TOP ranked social sciences universities all have UB-LIKE body with more than 50% of external members, in charge of Rector's appointment, budget, finance and strategy. These universities attract a significant number of Hungarian students.

	<b>Who Appoints the Rector/Director?</b>	<b>Role of UB/BOT</b>	<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Who Appoints Board Members?</b>
<b>Sciences Po Paris</b>	Selection by UB & Senate; appointed by French president	Strat. Budget Finance Assets	25 members >50% external Student elect yes Faculty elect yes Gov. Reps yes	Co-optation by the board, plus elections for internal staff/students
<b>St. Gallen (HSG)</b>	By UB (approved by Cantonal Gov.)	Strat.	11 members >50% external 1 from Gov.	Cantonal Council of St. Gallen, government
<b>CBS (Copenhagen BS)</b>	By UB	Strat. Finance Rector	11 members >50% external (6) Student elect 2 Faculty elect 2 Service elect 1	Appointment Committee for external; internal members are elected
<b>WU Vienna</b>	UB, shortlist of 3 proposed by Senate	Strat. Budget Vice rectors	5 members 100% external	2 by Gov, 2 by university, 1 joint member
<b>Bocconi</b>	by UB		19 members >50% external Students yes Faculty yes Rector yes	Bocconi appoints the majority
<b>Luiss</b>	by UB, on the proposal of the President	Strat Finance Budget Asset Rector	20+ members >50% external Rector yes COO yes	ALUISS (Promoting Association) and Confindustria [Previous Turn]
<b>LSE</b>	UB/Council		Max 18 members >50% external Staff yes Student yes	Council itself, upon advice from the Governance Committee

# 6. Corvinus' recent achievements and imminent risks

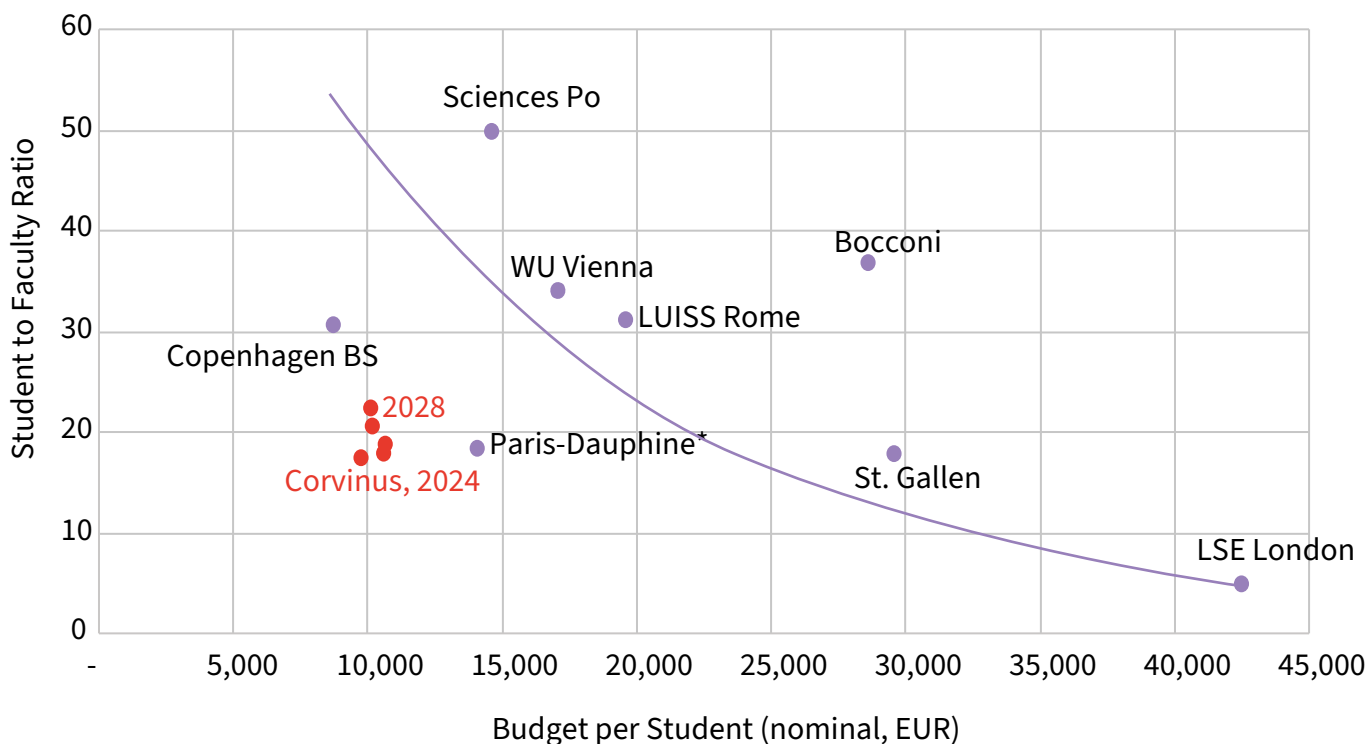
Corvinus vision, adopted in July 2025 by most Senate members and all BOT members.

*As a historic national champion, we aim to be an internationally recognized university committed to address the challenges of our times.*

Corvinus' most striking challenge is to develop a sustainable operational model, attract 40% of international stakeholders (students, staff, faculty), perform much better in the rankings (the most influential one being the Financial Times), and drastically increase the diversification of funding through research grants and through executive education.

The Bridge Strategy was adopted to achieve Corvinus' vision, it is associated with a new managerial tool endorsed by both the Senate and the BOT: the student-to-faculty ratio has to increase from 17 to 30 by 2030. Indeed, the figure below illustrates Corvinus' situation: a relatively small budget per student, and a too high number of faculty.

**2. Figure** – Student-to-Faculty Ratio and Budget per Student – Benchmark Institutions

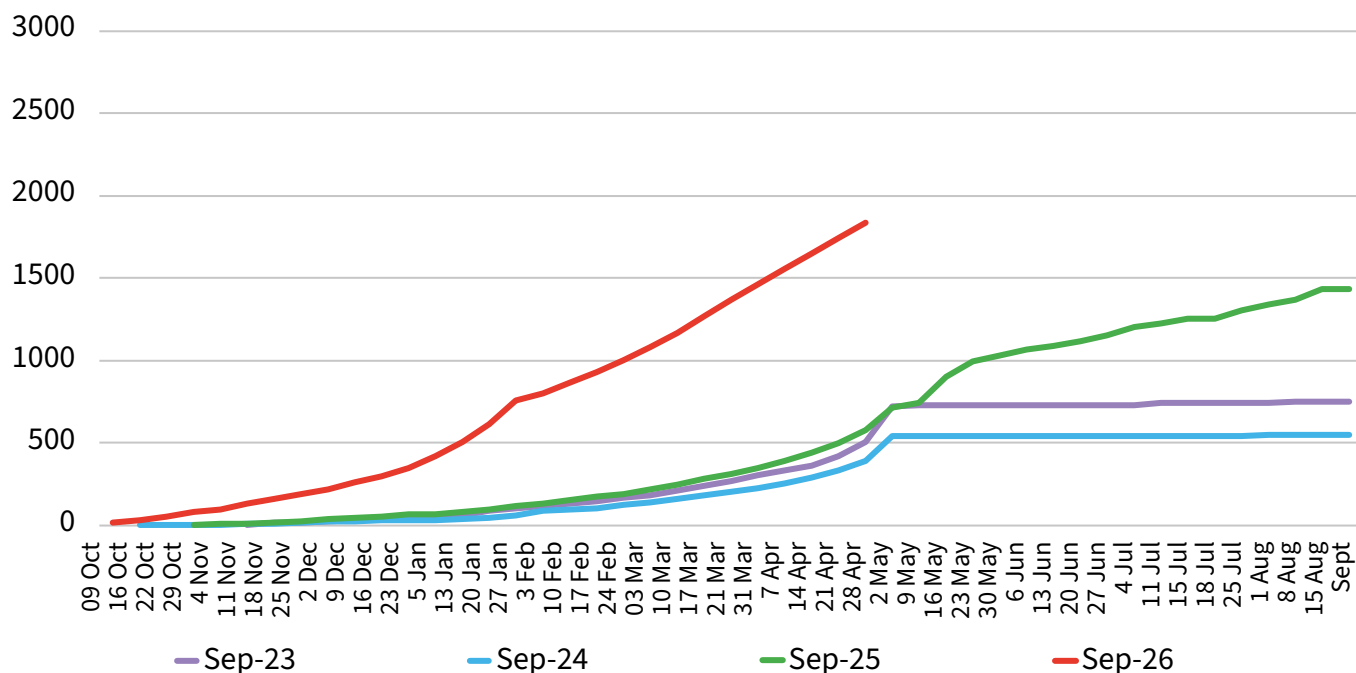


### Recent achievements:

- Adoption of the Bridge Strategy, 2025-2028, endorsed by BOT and Senate.
- 5 Palms were granted by EdUniversal in late 2025, exclusively for universities with global impact, becoming the sole university in Hungary with 5 Palmes.
- Silver palms granted, placing Corvinus number two in the CEE Region, after Prague.
- Largest ever number of international fee-paying students, thanks to a new branding and social network communication policy, reaching 23% of international students.

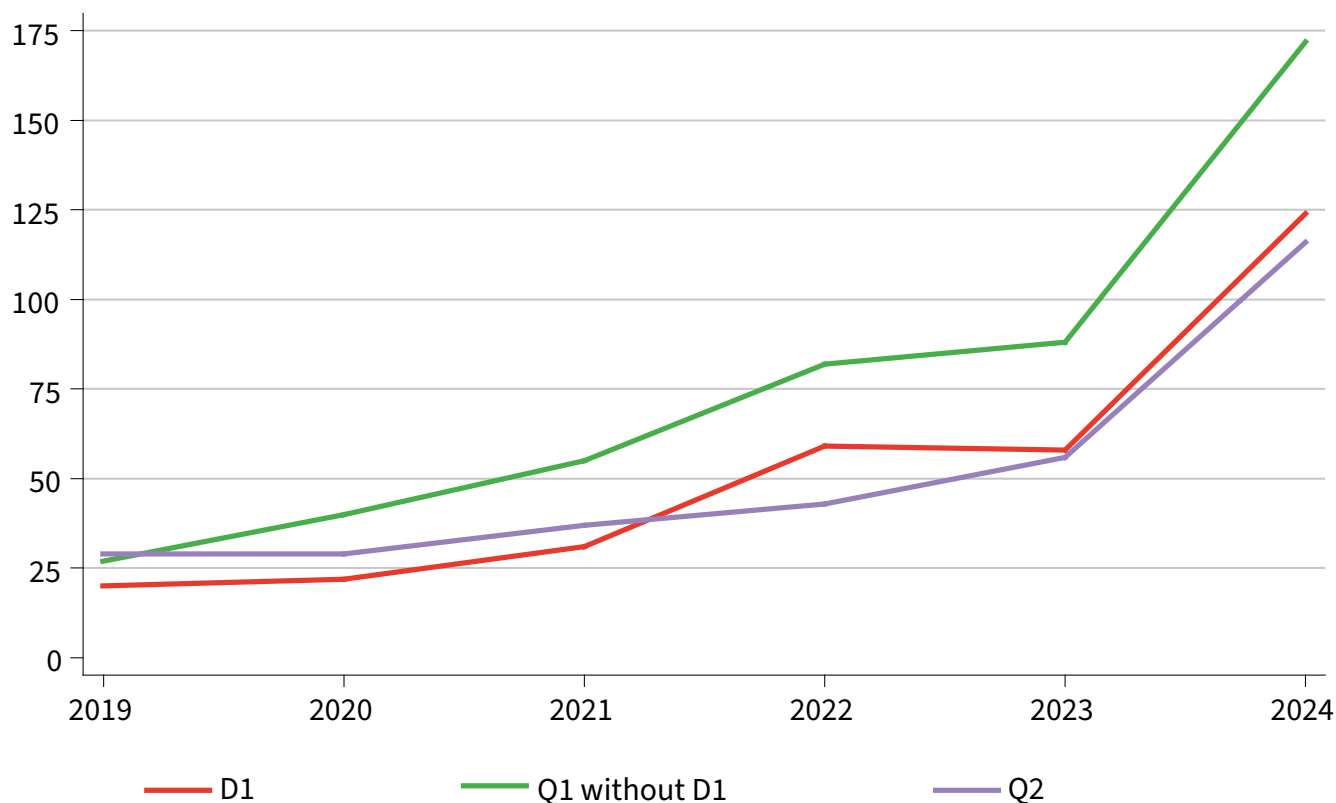
- 1<sup>st</sup> historic appearance in the Financial Times Ranking for the master's in finance (MiF), as number 69<sup>th</sup>, globally.
- Number of international student applications is increasing (see figure below), with the April figure of 2026 being equal to the final applications in August 2025.

### 3. Figure – Self-funded international applicants



- SEED integration as a department of Corvinus. Since January 2026, Corvinus has integrated SEED, becoming the first and biggest academic-based services of executive education in the CEE region called Corvinus-SEED.
- Development of approximately 10 double-degree (DD) programmes, with five additional programmes in the pipeline, including partnerships with University College London, Maastricht University, Católica Porto, KEDGE Business School, and the University of Glasgow.
- Significant increase in the number of international D1, Q1 and Q2 journal articles (see figure below) amounting to around 175 Q1 (without D1) and 125 D1 journal articles.

**4. Figure** – International journal articles, 2019-2024



- Nearly 100 students from over 40 countries will attend the Corvinus Summer University of 2026.
- Strategic Monitoring Indicators (SMIs) were created to help drive and measure the Bridge Strategy 2025-2028's goals in key strategic areas across all pillars (see table below).

Area	Pillar	Strategic Monitoring Indicator (SMI)	2025	2028
General	IC	Women among students (S), %	48	>40
	IC	Women among faculty (F), %	39	>40
	Flight6	International students (S), %	23	>25
	Flight6	International faculty (F), %	16	>25
Students	Op.Ex.	Fee-paying students, %	40	>40
	Tram2	BA/MA students in non-business areas, %	28	>30
	IC	Non-Budapest students among Hungarian students, %	60	>60
	IC	Students with underprivileged background, %	6	≥7,5
	Op. Ex.	Share of first-choice Hungarian BA applicants (≥340/400), %	68	40
	Flight6	Average admission score – international BA students	TBA	≥85

Area	Pillar	Strategic Monitoring Indicator (SMI)	2025	2028
Programmes	Tram2	Sustainability knowledge score (Sulitest; BA, 0–100)	47,7	50
	Tram2	Sustainability knowledge score (Sulitest; MA, 0–100)	54,9	56
	Tram2	Students enrolled in AI-related courses, %	TBA	70
	Op. Ex.	MyView average performance indicator (BA/MA) (Scale: 1-5)	TBA	>4
	Op. Ex.	Aggregate NPS (BA)	0	30
	Op. Ex.	Aggregate NPS (MA)	9	50
Faculty	Op. Ex.	Student-to-faculty ratio	18	22
	Flight6	Faculty with >2 years' experience abroad, %	TBA	>50
Research	Ring	PhD students teaching/ acting as Tas (number)	0	60
	Ring	External funding for R&D&I and research fellowships (€m/year)	5,6	10
	Ring	Published D1 journal articles (number)	191	175
	Ring	Scopus citations (net yearly increase)	21 201	>18 000
Corporate links & lifelong learning	Op. Ex.	Sales of executive education training services (m EUR/year)		5
	Op. Ex.	Sales of corporate partnerships (m EUR/year)	1.3	3
Reputation	Op. Ex.	Alumni registered in Corvinus Alumni Club (thousand)	17	30
	Flight6	FT European Business School Ranking	n.a.	TOP 80
	Flight6	QS World University Ranking (overall)	1 001–1 200	TOP 800
	Flight6	QS by Subject (Social Sciences & Management)	350	250-300
	Flight6	QS by Subject (Economics & Econometrics)	350	250-300

### Selection and appointment of international leaders (besides the Rector):

Head of accreditation processes and quality monitoring (from India), Head of Institute of Global Studies (from Germany, former associate dean at Kent University, UK), Dean of postgraduate degree programmes, from India, head of international student recruitment (from the UK and HU, with 15 years of experience in London).

See Corvinus annual report here:

<https://www.uni-corvinus.hu/downloads/cvow.7bdnw7/corvinus-annual-report-2024-25.pdf>

## **Imminent risks induced by the complete closure of Corvinus' current governance structure:**

- Failed EQUIS Accreditation (peer review visit in late May 2025), hence no “triple crown status for several years)
- Stop the launch of several innovative projects that are currently under development (AI4B – AI for Business or Start Up Lab)
- Stop many projects included in the strategic plan (IDP2026-2028)
- Stop ongoing international recruitments (3 ongoing) due to uncertainty (Corvinus cannot appoint international talents if they have to leave in a few months)

# 7. Tisza party program: some priorities

The whole program is available here: <https://magyartisza.hu/program>

## **We align education and training with the goals of economic development**

- We build a competitive education system that develops skills and competences that can be used on the market and enables lifelong learning.
- We launch fast, workable, short training (data management, artificial intelligence), with targeted adult training support.

## **We focus on the industries and services of the future.**

- Our target is for R&D expenditure to reach 2% of GDP and then approach 3% by 2030; for this, we provide simple, transparent tax incentives and fast-paced university technology transfer.

## **We achieve the widest possible access to universities, participation in higher education and the proportion of graduates reaching the EU average.**

## **We will restore the autonomy of universities, we will abolish the KEKVA model.**

- By 2035, we will be at the forefront of the world, the global TOP200,
- We carry out wage settlement in the field of higher education teachers and researchers, as well as in the field of PhD training.
- We ensure that Hungarian university students are able to participate in Erasmus programmes again.
- We will again allow Hungarian universities, research institutes and researchers to participate in the Erasmus and Horizon programmes.

TISZA sees science as one of the foundations of our national future, where independent institutions operate, with predictable funding and tailor-made thinking. Because where you can learn, think and create, there is a future. And Hungary needs it next year.

## **Higher education - Problems**

The proportion of graduates is one of the lowest in our country.

The share of graduates aged 25-34 is 29.4%, one of the lowest in the European Union (EU: 43.1%, 2030 target: 45%)