

*Entrepreneurship Education Questions and Good Practices in Hungary and  
Central and Eastern European Countries*

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**Abstract**

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economy as the majority of jobs and produced goods are created by small and medium enterprises all over the world. This process highlights the need and importance of entrepreneurship education. Different issues could motivate being an entrepreneur: freedom, higher self-esteem and a greater sense of control over own lives, and it may have different roots in personal character, family background or even in business opportunities. Education of future entrepreneurs should cover different fields, financial knowledge, managerial studies, planning methods, behavior patterns and special entrepreneurial skills.

Our research focuses on the need for reconstructing entrepreneurship education at higher education institutions, based on the findings of an international research on the economic awareness and entrepreneurial attitudes of university students in Hungary and other CEE countries.

Research results indicated that entrepreneurial attitudes of Hungarian students are very strong: not only in business-type courses, but also at courses of agricultural, engineering, human resource and pedagogical studies. On the other hand, our findings called attention for the different economic knowledge level of students with various specialization, which should be considered during the development of teaching materials and curricula.

In the course of entrepreneurship education, the main task of educators is to strengthen the economic knowledge of students by learning-by-doing and practice-oriented methods as well as by introducing good practices together with representatives of the entrepreneurial sphere. Our paper summarizes the main findings of our research and their applications in the remodeling of entrepreneurship education methods.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, higher education, economic awareness, entrepreneurial attitude, Hungary, CEE countries, entrepreneurial ecosystem

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays, the importance of entrepreneurship education is increasing and it should be considered as a key topic of contemporary educational issues all over the world, but it has an increased importance in Central and Eastern European countries. As entrepreneurship and the formation of new enterprises are among the a main accelerators of national economies all over the world, it is very important to explore those tasks which educators of different educational institutions shall fulfill in order to prepare the young generation for this possible path of their future.

The general issues of economic awareness of the young generation, the entrepreneurial attitudes of the students of higher educational institutions are discussed through different international and Hungarian researches, for example researches by Otter (1991), Sieger et al. (2011), Veciana, J.M., Aponte, M. and Urbano, D. (2005), Szerb and Márkus (2007), Farkas and S. Gubik (2013), Dunay et al. (2015); Szerb and Trumbull (2015).

The need for entrepreneurship education was described by numerous authors, research results and good practices. Based on literature sources and previously conducted own researches three main pillars of entrepreneurship education can be differentiated in higher education: (1) educators (professors and lecturers), (2) students and (3) the representatives of the business sphere (entrepreneurs, owners and managers of existing enterprises who, in many cases, are representing the given school's alumni members). The success of entrepreneurship education is determined by the synergic collaboration of these players and groups.

Of course, the level and the depth of education may vary in different educational programs and specializations, the requirements and engagement of students at different course types (business and non-business types) shall be considered. Based on the wide range of literature sources one can find that there is a strong need for obtaining a basic knowledge of business studies (Csapó, 2010; Vecsenyi, 2011; Acs, Autio and Szerb, 2014; Daróczy és Illés 2014; Imreh-Tóth, 2014; Fetters et al., 2010; Gibcus et al. 2012), and most of the researchers agree that business should be learnt through practical issues and learning-by-doing methods.

The aim of this paper is to describe the entrepreneurial ecosystem, where entrepreneurship education might be implemented successfully and to describe the need for entrepreneurship education in the CEE countries based on the results of an international survey. Finally, the authors wish to summarize the good practices which are in use at different study programs of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the Szent István University, Gödöllő, Hungary.

## **Entrepreneurial ecosystem**

Different authors agree (Csapó, 2010; Nathusius, 2013; Ferrets at al. 2010, Thorp and Goldstein, 2010, Shattock, 2005, Barnett, 2005, Galloway and Brown, 2002) that entrepreneurship education should be based on well-built connections between entrepreneurs and professors or lecturers of the universities. These connections may derive from the scientific and professional network of the university staff, the alumni system and of course from other relations and acquaintances from the business sphere.

The main players of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Figure 1.) can be distinguished as external players (green boxes) and internal players (white boxes). External players – such as players of the product and services markets and financial markets, state organizations and NGOs, existing companies – may contribute to create the financial background, technical support and may provide external tuition activities for the internal players. Internal players are the students, professors and those entrepreneurs, who take part in education. Professors and entrepreneurs – in close cooperation – will transform (i.e. teach and guide) the students to be nascent entrepreneurs, who may access into the entrepreneurial sphere in the future as young companies, which will be able to work as an accelerator of the national economies.

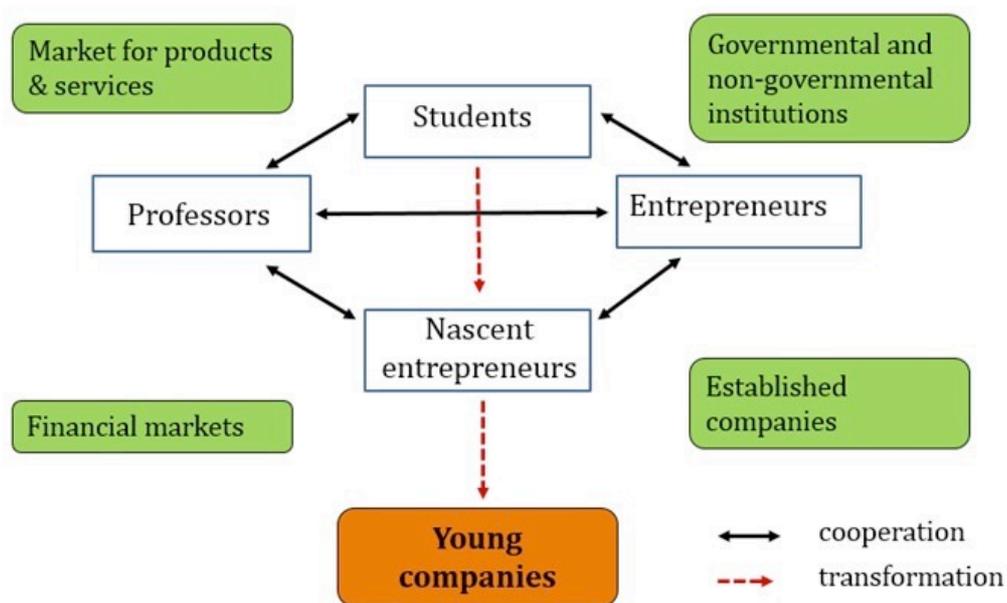


Figure 1: Players of the entrepreneurial ecosystem  
Source: own construction based on Nathusius (2013)

Analyzing this structure, several questions may arise. What are the main values and preferences of the generation of university students? What are their preferences and ideas about their future work? Are students interested in entrepreneurship? Do they have entrepreneurial attitudes? Do they need any special knowledge? To find the answers for these questions, an international survey was conducted in four Central and Eastern European countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The main findings of this research contributed to find new perspectives for educators to develop and implement new methods in education.

What is the role of educators in this system? This is a very complex question. Firstly, educators (university professors and lecturers) shall provide a strong theoretical knowledge for the students, which could give a good base for the further practice-oriented education. These theoretical bases should be taught in the first semesters. Later on, the focus should be moved towards a practical approach, where lecturers shall prefer learning-by-doing methods. These methods will need a mixture of individual and team-work, by which the students may be prepared for the real life,

where they shall make individual decisions and also they shall work in teams. Finally, entrepreneurship education should be built on examples from the real life, i.e. educators and institutions should invite the representatives of the business sphere for collaboration, which needs extra efforts from both parties.

### **Research background, material and methods**

Entrepreneurs and enterprises are main pillars of national economies. The existence of enterprises has undergone through fundamental changes in the previous decades, particularly in the Central and Eastern European countries. In the former socialist countries, there is still something like the “heritage” of past, when companies have lost the traditional business partners and trade market positions due to the political and economic changes. This heritage strongly determines the entrepreneurial attitudes and motivations in most CEE countries (Illés, Dunay and Jelonek, 2015; Illés et al, 2011; Zozulak and Zozulakova, 2015). Small businesses have to face the problem of the relatively small internal market and the difficulties of entering into the international market, moreover, the preferences of middle aged employees are traditionally represented by the dominance of state-owned or large companies or by the public sphere, the entrepreneurial attitudes are relatively less popular (Swadzba and Cekiara, 2015).

According to the classical theories of entrepreneurship by Schumpeter (1980), the three main motivations of entrepreneurs are the desire for creating their own life, the desire to gain in competition and the creativity for achieving something new. Freedom, the higher self-esteem, a greater sense of control over own lives are also among the main motivations of being entrepreneur (Drucker, 1992). In addition to motivations and attitudes special knowledge and skills (e.g. financial knowledge, literacy and skills in managerial studies, planning methods, behavior patterns and special entrepreneurial skills) are also inevitable.

To explore the current situation of entrepreneurship education and the need for such knowledge, an international survey was conducted by an international group of experts representing CEE countries. The project was finalized by the collaboration of four partner universities: the University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland, the Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia and the Szent István Egyetem, Gödöllő, Hungary. The economic awareness and entrepreneurial knowledge and attitudes of the university students were surveyed by questionnaire method with mostly closed questions. The same questionnaire was used in all the four countries, which allowed the full international comparison. The research topics focused on the following topics: the economic awareness of the young generation, the general system of values of the university students and the entrepreneurial attitudes of this generation.

The sample of the survey covered nearly 1600 students of the four countries, all research groups surveyed almost 400-400 respondents from the different faculties of their universities (Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Economics, Engineering, Social Sciences, Pedagogy and Technology), i.e. students of business and non-business type courses were examined.

## **Entrepreneurial attitudes of the young generation in CEE countries**

As a first step, the general system of values of the students was explored. Different authors discussed the role and influence of the general values of the young generation (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart, Basanez and Moreno, 1998; Hartley, 1991; Bendit, 2006; Pompa, 2016). They agreed that the values of the young generation are strongly determined by their families, the society and the culture in which they have been raised, and were/are also characterized by the challenges of our days, like the political transitions, globalization, and the development process that is simultaneously bringing people closer together and widening the division between them. Meanwhile, young people today (especially in the CEE countries) shall face a very uncertain future as a result the economic crisis and the recession, government spending cuts and structural problems such as high cost of housing, low incomes and especially lack of job opportunities (Dolphin, 2012).

In the survey, university students were asked to evaluate the importance of work, family, money, education, religion, health, friends & acquaintances in their lives. Students could mark their answer on a five-grade Likert scale. Based on the research results, the hierarchy of the important values was the same in all countries (of course, the frequencies of the answers varied). All students without exceptions, consider family and health and work as the most important values, the next important values were friends. Education and money were at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> places in the rank, while religion (7<sup>th</sup>) was regarded as least important in all countries. Based on the answers it was observed that students realized the economic problems of our times, but they are quite self-confident, open-minded and are unafraid of taking risks, they know they are responsible for their future life.

The opinion of the students about entrepreneurial life was different in different countries. For example more than 53% of Hungarian students would prefer to run an own company and only 9% would work in state-owned workplace, while in Slovakia 16% of the respondents would prefer working in the public sphere and less than 40% would run own company. In each countries, nearly 20% of the students indicated that they would work abroad, so this is a warning sign for the policymakers: losing such high proportion of the young people would bring unpredictable consequences in the future. These findings are confirmed by the observations of other authors (Vinogradov, Fekete-Farkas and Tóth-Naár, 2015; Krawczyk, 2014; Joensen, 2009).

## **Entrepreneurial attitudes of Hungarian students**

The survey was conducted at the Szent István University, one of Hungary's largest institutions of higher education. The education programs cover all three levels of the Bologna system: the university provides a wide range of bachelor and master courses and it has eight doctoral schools. Most of the courses have both full time and part time educational programs and some bachelor, master and PhD level programs are taught in English, for foreign students.

The questionnaire survey was conducted at the Gödöllő and Budapest Campuses, among full time and part time students at bachelor and master courses with a wide variety of courses and specializations. Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences provides courses in agricultural engineering, wildlife conservation,

biotechnology, crop science, animal science, animal nutrition and feed science. Faculty of Mechanical Engineering has courses on mechanical engineering, mechatronics, agricultural and food processing engineering food, facility manager and technical manager studies. The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences runs different business-type courses: management and business administration, marketing, finance, logistics, tourism, management and leadership, international economics, and different non-business type courses: for example agricultural economics, rural development, human resource management, andragogy courses.

Business-type courses (economics/management) are the most popular and have the greatest share of students. The sample of students represents a large area of Hungary because the university is a well-known state owned university, with long traditions and good reputation. The sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic features and educational information on students in the sample

<b>Features</b>		<b>Respondents (%)</b>
Gender	Female	59,0
	Male	41,0
Level of education	Bachelor	84,5
	Master	15,5
Mode of study	Daily (full time students)	83,3
	Week-end (part time students)	16,7
Field of study	Agricultural and engineering**	29,3
	Economics/Management*	47,1
	Social**	23,6
Settlement type	Village	23,6
	Town to 20 thousand	18,2
	Town 20-100 thousand	20,7
	City 101 thousand and more-	37,5

Note: \*Business type courses: 47%, \*\*Non-business type courses in total: 53%

*Source: own research*

The assessment of the students' opinion on the current conditions for enterprise development in Hungary was one of the initial questions, and later we analyzed the entrepreneurial experiences, the entrepreneurial attitudes and the entrepreneurial skills of the respondents were analyzed. Most of the students have a negative opinion about the current situation of enterprises in Hungary, and only one-fourth of the respondents think that the economic environment for enterprises is good, according to the vast majority (66%) the current economic situation in Hungary is unfavorable or bad. Analyzing the family experiences in entrepreneurship, it turned out that 56% of the students have someone running their own business in their close family (grandparents, father, mother, brother, sister), while 44% have no own-business experiences within the family.

One of the questions of the questionnaire was related to the plans of the respondents about their opinion and experiences on entrepreneurship (where only one answer could be selected from the 8 options). Based on the answers the respondents were divided into three groups: with positive, negative and neutral attitudes. The results are shown in Table 2. It can be seen that a relatively high share of the respondents

showed interest in running own business, and only 18,9% rejected the idea of owning a business in the future.

Table 2: Opinion about having own business

<b>Statement</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
I already own (co-own) a private company	3,5	positive
I want to soon start my own company	7,3	
I'm thinking of starting my own business in the future	27,2	
I have thought about it, but have not decided	41,0	neutral
I have never given it much thought	5,4	negative
I do not take this into account in my plans for life	13,0	
I had my own company and do not intend to assume the next	0,5	
Other answers	1,9	
<i>Total</i>	<i>100,0</i>	

Source: own calculations

Another question was related to possessing the abilities necessary for self-employment, i.e. being an entrepreneur, based on one's own knowledge, skills, experiences, motivations. Almost 15% of the respondents missed this answer or selected a neutral answer ("Hard to say"). From those who could give a definite answer, 80% was positive, while 20% negative. This means that the majority of the responding students think that they have the qualities allowing them to be entrepreneurs in the future. Of course, the answers that were ambivalent might have been so because of the young age or lack of knowledge, skills, experiences etc. of the students in the sample. This result shall remind the educators to be more conscious about teaching and training and trying to build well-based knowledge for the students

In connection with entrepreneurship and being self-employed, our results verify the general entrepreneurial spirit and activity of the Hungarian students. We have formulated an interesting observation based on the results of cross table analyses, namely, the greatest share (62,8%) of those respondents who would like to run their own company live in villages This result may be caused by shortage of jobs in the places they come from, but this correspondence is worthy of further analyses.

A significant difference could be detected between entrepreneurial attitudes and the family background (Chi-square test:  $p < 0,001$ , Cross tabulation). It has been proven by statistical methods, that 48% of those who came from families with entrepreneurial background have positive entrepreneurial attitudes, while only 26,9% of those who came from non-entrepreneurial background have positive attitude towards running a business (Table 3).

Table 3: Relations between the family's entrepreneurial background and entrepreneurial attitudes

		<b>Entrepreneurial attitudes</b>		
		<b>Negative</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Positive</b>
Business in close family	<b>No</b>	31,2%	41,9%	26,9%
	<b>Yes</b>	10,0%	42,0%	48,0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,4%</b>	<b>41,9%</b>	<b>38,6%</b>

*Source: own calculations*

The strong significance of the Chi-square test ( $p < 0,01$ ) proves that the relation between entrepreneurial attitudes and own entrepreneurial skills could be verified by statistical methods. Students who think that they do have positive entrepreneurial attitudes and knowledge were more opened for starting an enterprise and being self-employed (50,4%), while 14,5% of those respondents, who consider that they do not have enough knowledge and abilities for being self-employed indicated positive entrepreneurial attitudes (Table 4). These observations highlight the need for improving entrepreneurial knowledge and skills through special courses on entrepreneurship education.

Table 4: Relations between own entrepreneurial knowledge & skills and entrepreneurial attitudes

		<b>Entrepreneurial attitudes</b>		
		<b>Negative</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Positive</b>
Opinion about abilities predisposing for self-employment	<b>No</b>	48,4%	37,1%	14,5%
	<b>Yes</b>	8,1%	41,5%	50,4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16,2%</b>	<b>40,6%</b>	<b>43,2%</b>

*Source: own calculations*

Our research findings underlined that the role of educators is very important in entrepreneurship education, as many of the students – both at business type and non-business type courses will require a strong economic and management knowledge.

### **Practice-oriented education and entrepreneurial approach at Szent István University**

The authors are not intended to provide a comprehensive summary about the general questions of entrepreneurship education and will not formulate rules or requirements of entrepreneurship education courses, but will show the experiences of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, of the Szent István University as a summary of a good practice in use.

#### ***Lectures and seminars***

At the Szent István University, there are not special entrepreneurship courses in the curricula, but the content of the professional subjects fully covers this field. In this paper the Management and Business Administration bachelor course is described, where the study program focuses on practice-oriented education, which means the

increased share of seminars. Not only basic subjects (microeconomics and macroeconomics, mathematics, statistics and financial subjects) but also professional subjects (e.g. business economics, management of SMEs, project management, business planning, change- and crisis management) are taught with high number of seminars.

In addition to the practical-type seminars, where the students must perform individual tasks and team-work projects, the lectures also have practical features by the involvement of entrepreneurs and the representatives of the business sphere as invited lecturers. As an average, 30% of the lectures are held by invited lecturers.

### ***Involvement of entrepreneurs and the business sphere in the education process***

As it was described in Figure 1, entrepreneurs are key players of the educational process in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Entrepreneurs may support students in different ways, such as:

- knowledge and experience sharing (as invited lecturers or at company visits)
- donations and grants (for example at students scientific and learning contests)
- internship partners and supervisors
- thesis supervisors, reviewers
- membership in exam boards.

An important question is that how can universities invite entrepreneurs into education. In general, it could be done in an official and an unofficial way. Official way means the cooperation through different educational and internship agreements between the two parties, while unofficial way is connected to the network system and professional or business connections of the professors and other educator colleagues. Another opportunity is building on the alumni system, as it is common at universities in the USA or England, but at the present, this system is not so well-based in our university.

According to our experiences at the Management and Business Administration bachelor program, the bridge between professors and entrepreneurs are mostly built on the individual networks and professional contacts of educators. An important and special character of these relations is that entrepreneurs will do voluntary work, without any financial benefits.

Due to the wide range of educational programs, it is possible to use the experiences of former and present students, who are representing the entrepreneurial world: for example, executive MBA students are often asked for keeping lectures, or hosting company visits. This situation may improve in the close future because of the present technical development of the alumni database.

The World Economic Forum defined 8 main pillars of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which components are displayed in Table 5. Based on this classification, educators should take part as mentors, trainers and promoters of entrepreneurship, and should support the personal development of the students in different ways.

Table 5: Entrepreneurial ecosystem pillars and their components

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Components</b>
Accessible markets	Domestic market and foreign market: Large/medium/small companies as customers, governments as customer
Human capital/workforce	Management talent, technical talent, entrepreneurial company experience, outsourcing availability,
Funding & finance	Friends and family, angel investors, private equity, venture capital, access to debt
Government & regulatory framework	Ease of starting a business, tax incentives, business-friendly legislation/policies, access to basic infrastructure, access to telecommunications/broadband, access to transport
Support systems / mentors	Mentors/advisors, professional services, incubators/accelerators, networks of entrepreneurial peers
Education & training	Available workforce with pre-university education, available workforce with university education, entrepreneur-specific training
Major universities as catalysts	Promoting a culture of respect for entrepreneurship, playing a key role in idea-formation for new companies, playing a key role in providing graduates to new companies
Cultural support	Tolerance for risk and failure, preference for self-employment, success stories/role models, research culture, positive image of entrepreneurship, celebration of innovation

Source: World Economic Forum, 2013, pp. 6-7.

How can students benefit from the cooperation between entrepreneurs and educators? They get practical experiences and they may start to build their own network. Another important and interesting question is that how can students support entrepreneurs in this system. Students may participate at different business processes (for example in business planning, market researches) or they can offer their special up-to-date knowledge (for example their proficiency in social media tools).

Based on the findings of our researches, it shall be underlined that there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit among the university students of the Szent István University, and not only in business-type study courses, but also in non-business type courses (agriculture, engineering, social studies). Students are interested in entrepreneurial studies, and they would prefer a more practice-oriented education, with creative tasks and work, so the practice-oriented management subject should be added into their curricula.

## **Conclusions**

The importance of entrepreneurship and its emerging role in national economies is a well-known phenomenon of our time. The entrepreneurial attitudes, motivations and ambitions of the young generation play a key role of the future economic circumstances of every nations, and it plays an increasingly important role in Central Eastern European countries. Although more than two decades passed after the political transition of the 1990s, many of these countries are still lagging behind the well-developed Western EU member states, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem is not stable enough.

Nevertheless, there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit among the young people, which was confirmed by the results of an international survey conducted in four CEE countries. The results showed that university students have the intentions to be self-employed; they are attracted by the opportunities and the creativeness of being an entrepreneur. Their attitudes and inspirations shall be supported by educational institutions by well-built courses, which provide appropriate knowledge and practical education for the students with different background.

As a summary, modern university education – besides using the academic and theoretical approach – should be built on professional network connections, where the triangle of students–professors–entrepreneurs shall represent a live collaboration from which all parties may obtain benefits. An important part of entrepreneurial education is the formation of a well-built entrepreneurial ecosystem (Figure 2.), where the connections between the players of the ecosystem are mutual.

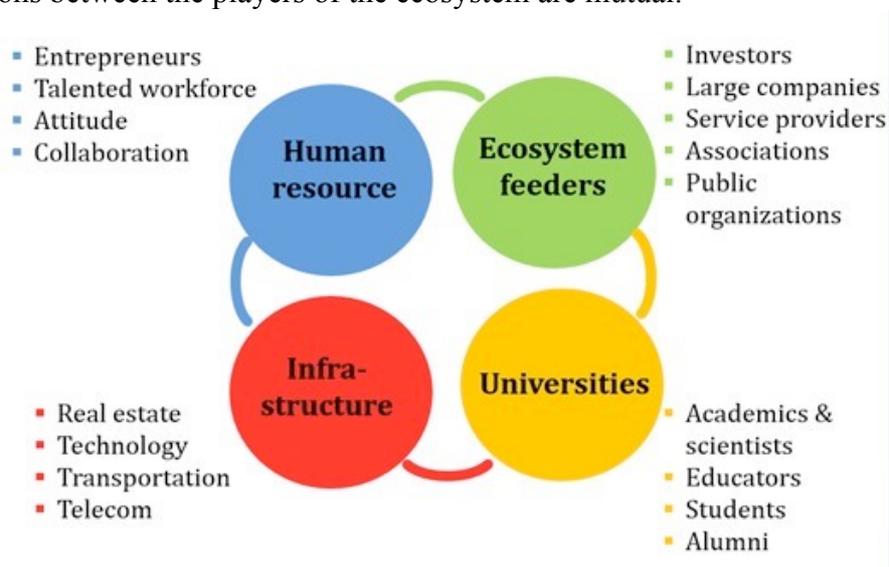


Figure 2: Entrepreneurial ecosystem  
Source: own

In Hungary, it is not easy to invite ecosystem feeders into this circle, but based on the personal professional and business connections of the educators, supporters might be invited more successfully into this process. The appropriate infrastructure is also very important, because by using the latest technology and tools, students might be more attracted.

The most important task of educators is to organize the background for entrepreneurial studies, by inviting and introducing the representatives of the business sphere, and to provide a theoretically based, but practice-oriented education.

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