

Supporting talent management and career paths for women at the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE)

Press Release: For Immediate Release

Date: 09 October 2024

A roundtable discussion on talent management in higher education took place at the Hungarian University of Agricultural and Life Sciences (MATE), with a special focus on talent management and support for women's career paths.

During the event, Zsófia Nagy-Vargha, Deputy State Secretary for Youth at the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, emphasised the importance of supporting talents. Csilla Fuszek, Director of the Budapest European Talent Centre, Dr Tamás Weiszbürg, President of the National Council of Student Research Societies, OTDT (in Hungarian: Országos Tudományos Diákköri Tanács), and Enikő Szakos, an educational researcher at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium Foundation, provided insights into the various forms and opportunities of talent management in higher education and through preparatory programs.

Dr Katalin Posta, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, opened the event and emphasised the institution's commitment to nurturing talents. The university provides teaching and research support, and has a talent council system to assist research students. Dr Katalin Szabó, Associate Professor, Head of the Future Leadership Programme and Dr Zoltán Kovács, Professor, Head of the Research Excellence Programme, presented the new excellence programmes on behalf of MATE.

The round table discussion – organised as a hybrid event to support the participation of employees and students from all campuses of MATE- focused on talent management, particularly addressing the needs of different age groups and disciplines in higher education and preparation programs. They also sought answers on how universities, from a broader perspective, can better support women's career paths and increase the proportion of women in university teaching, research, and agribusiness.

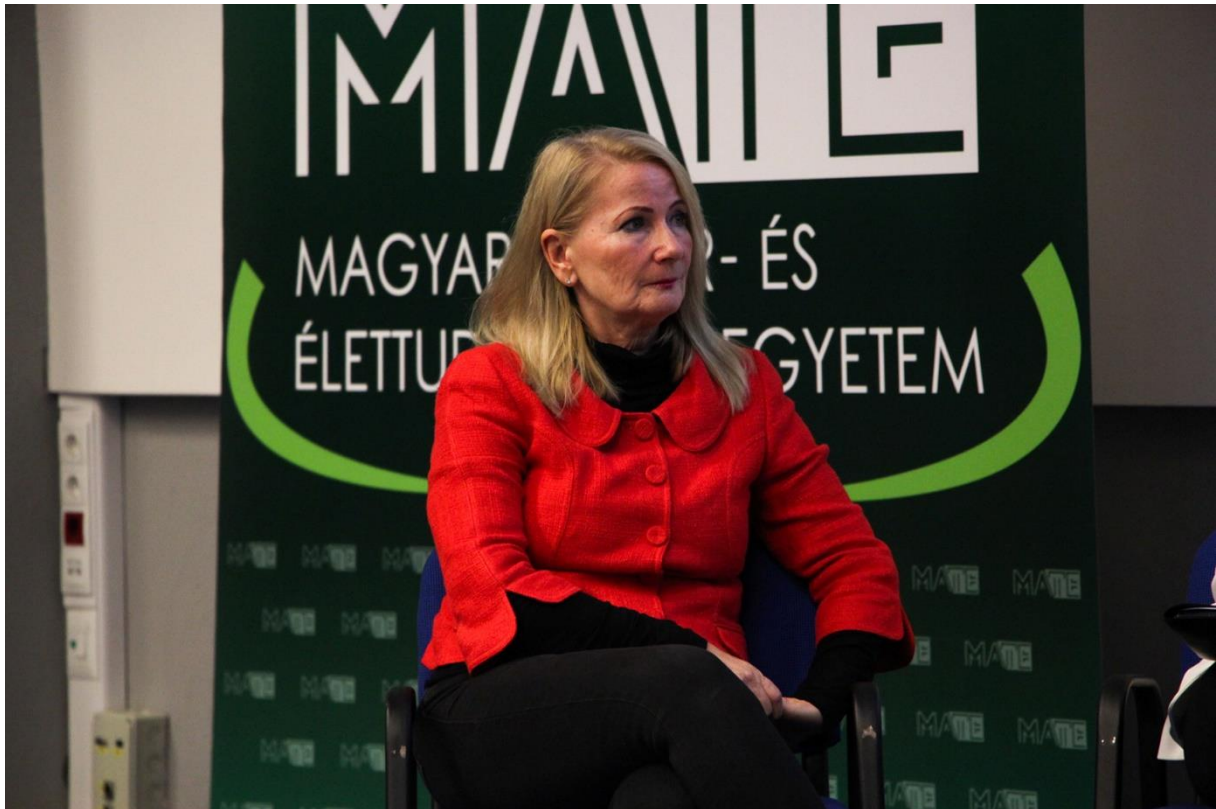
The discussion was led by Dr Julianna Kobolák, the project coordinator of the AGRIGEP Horizon Europe project. Participants concluded that efficient talent management is a key element for the future of Hungarian higher education, but it currently faces many challenges. However, Zsófia Nagy-Vargha mentioned that this year, a record amount of 1% tax donations was collected for the National Talent Programme, indicating a growing need for talent support in Hungary. The Deputy State Secretary for Youth also emphasised the importance of digitalisation, as the fast-paced labour market is adding to the challenge of identifying and supporting talented students. The National Talent Map of the National Talent Programme aims to help with this task by identifying and tracking young Hungarian talent. Its goal is to bring together talented young people at the national level and provide them with the tools and resources they need to develop through mentoring and support programs.

Dr Tamás Weiszburg talked about the National Student Research Conference, or OTDK, which is the largest scientific event in Hungary, presenting and evaluating the scientific and artistic achievements and research projects of the most outstanding students. The 16 disciplinary sections of the bi-annual conference are open to those students who have achieved the best results at the institutional TDK conferences, as judged by a professional jury. Hungarian students from abroad and outstanding secondary school students also have the opportunity to present themselves and participate in the competition. The significance and uniqueness of the TDK and the OTDK is not only that it is a voluntary commitment and engagement (for both students and teachers participating), but also that it is the first entry point for students into academia, even the first milestone in a research career.

The roundtable also focused on additional efforts to support higher education, such as mobility programs, research grants, and various funding opportunities. In this instance, the goal is to engage secondary school students, explicitly emphasising secondary school girls. Research indicates that an even higher percentage of girls/young women require more intensive mentoring in their academic pursuits. Although the existing systems, such as TDK and OTDK, are very efficient and unique in the Hungarian higher education, further support would be needed to provide opportunities for those not part of the TDK system. Although mentoring programs and coaching opportunities are available in different sources, the main question is whether the talents are identified and receive the appropriate support 'in time' in their development. In this sense, the participants agreed on the need to focus on and coordinate talent support projects and develop programs to help teachers build their capacities to identify and mentor talents.

Several points were discussed regarding supporting women's career paths. The consensus was that advocacy for women can take various forms. Mentoring programs are crucial, providing women the chance to advance their careers and tackle professional challenges with support. There should also be a focus on developing leadership skills to increase the number of women in leadership roles in the future. Additionally, the program aims to offer flexible education and training opportunities that consider women's family responsibilities. This can be achieved by effectively balancing career and personal responsibilities.

The news reached stakeholders through all national press releases.



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**Funded by
the European Union**

This project has received funding from the European Union's HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01 programme under grant agreement no. 101094158.