

# **PRO BONO PILOTS IN HUNGARY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE BEESE PROJECT**



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# 1. Introduction

Volunteering has become very popular in Hungary in the last decades. Nearly 30% of the adult population is active in some kind of volunteer activity. Students also know and accept the idea of doing something useful for the community. More and more universities create some kind of voluntary or charity activities for their students. Some of them are coordinated by students themselves, or student associations, while others are done directly by the universities. Most of these programs are new and there are only a few years of experience. Others have just started in recent years. This also means that there are huge opportunities to grow these programs.

Pro bono, which is a special type of volunteering, is not yet a well spread phenomenon in Hungary. There is a growing corporate community that is using it in the framework of their CSR activities and some already incorporated it into business development (employer branding, talent, leadership development activities), but most companies do not have practices that exist for a longer time. In the field of pro bono, multinational companies take the lead, but still a minor percent of them do it regularly.

Pro bono programs are mostly driven by intermediary organisations and a few consultancy and law firms who are early champions in this field. Fortunately, despite the relatively new phenomenon, more and more examples are available and, even slowly, the concept is getting accepted and recognised.

What is worthy of mention is that pro bono is usually not known as a concept by many people (employees and students). However, once they hear about it, most of them are very eager to participate. To enable people, the corporate or university framework has to be developed and in that sense the BEESE project can have an important role.

The biggest challenges are

- leaders often see this as something that implies a lot of time and not as something that contributes to the practical learning of the participants;
- the (student) participants do not have the necessary knowhow / methodology to implement a well functioning pro bono project on their own.

Knowing this was very important to run the 3 pro bono pilots in Hungary as well as to see how students, nonprofit organizations and mentors can cooperate in creating successful joint projects.

We hope that these experiences will contribute to the creation of new student pro bono projects at universities in Hungary and other countries. We strongly believe that it is a good investment and it can contribute to the reputation of the universities, bring valuable practical management and consultancy for students and, most importantly, it can help nonprofit organizations to solve challenges and grow new projects that can serve the community.

The pro bono pilots were created by Volunteering Hungary (ÖKA) and Obuda University (OU). All students were from the Marketing and Communication Department. Thus, all nonprofit pilots were identified around that theme.

To support the students, ÖKA provided general preparation before each pilot and ÖKA has also invited 2 corporate mentors to support the students' preparation and the implementation of the projects. OU was in charge of the selection of the students and followed their programme in the frame of their curriculum.



The second step was to select the nonprofit organisations and mentors (experts of companies) which was the task of ÖKA. In parallel, we - with the help of ÖKA - provided information to students on the essence of the pro bono pilot.

With the help of ÖKA, well targeted nonprofits have been selected.

The NPOs involved in the pilot were:

1. Egyenlő Esélyekért Alapítvány – Home for people with mental disabilities in the city of Csömör (close to Budapest) <http://egyenloeselyekert.hu/en/>
2. InDaHouse Hungary – An association supporting disadvantaged roma communities in the Northeast part of Hungary <https://indahousehungary.hu/>

## b. Recruitment process and number of participants

During the preparation process, the main aim was to fit the pilot into the semester schedule, and we adapted the programme to the range of subjects studied by the students.

Organizations were asked to provide a problem statement and description about their organizational needs related to communication. These descriptions were shared with the students and the mentors prior to the diagnosis meeting that took place at OU a few weeks before the pilot.

In the case of Egyenlő Esélyekért Foundation, the students paid a visit to the organization premises, to better understand their reality and have also met the staff and the clients of the organization.

We could see that the nonprofits were looking for marketing communication solutions, mainly the online platforms' upgrading. Both organizations wanted to have better social media presence and a better functioning website structure.

We finished this phase at the end of September. Total amount of hours on average: 4 hours.

The role of each partner in this phase:

### University:

The main task was to integrate the proper students for the programme. This implied:

- to recruit motivated students;

- to find the targeted volunteer activity (knowledge) that we could use to help the selected nonprofits;
- to support the coordination of the whole pilot;
- to offer the proper infrastructure opportunities;
- to support students, during the whole pilot (providing them with information, knowledge);
- to be an active partner between the company, nonprofit organisations and ÖKA.

#### Mentors:

- to explain, in general, key success factors of consulting;
- to prepare students for successful questioning and general support with the pro bono process;
- to provide consulting opportunities during the entire process;
- to help find solutions on project challenges and dilemmas.

#### Nonprofit intermediary:

- to draft the general framework and steps for each participant;
- to provide knowhow on success elements of pro bono projects;
- to create templates for students (time sheets, list of experiences) as well as for NPOs;
- to provide preparation for NPOs and students;
- to find and inform mentors about the project;
- to keep in touch with NPOs and university partners and provide answers if needed;
- to follow up about the entire project with all parties.

We started the students' recruitment in the very beginning of the project, in parallel with the recruitment of nonprofits and supervisors, just like we did, in the first pilot.

As to the student involved/calling: as a basic criteria, we have decided to recruit only students who had the necessary knowledge for fulfilling the project. We have considered the results and grades in each of the relevant subjects, as a condition for participation.

The first experience we have conducted was useful and we could filter the candidates very successfully.

The second criteria was about motivation and enough sensitivity and social skills. In our view, there are features and attitudes which were not measurable. In that case, we could take into account our previous experiences with the students (e.g. participation in different university programmes: conferences, workshops, students' programmes, etc.), and we asked for recommendations from our student council as well.

Based on these filters, we could select the proper students. There were no problems with the motivation and commitment of our students. It was also a big advantage that the first pilots' students shared their positive experiences with others, encouraging them to participate in the programme.

As to the encouragement: pro bono projects – their aims, missions – are very close to our faculty's values (corporate creed). That is why we think our students have easily identified with the tasks and mission of pro bono. Thanks to that, there were no problems with either recruiting or encouraging them to complete the task.

The students' recruitment in the university was managed by Monika Fodor (teacher, researcher).

As to the students' motivation, it was much stronger than we expected. We created two rather big groups: 8-7 students per group and we announced 2 tenders for nonprofits in line with this concept.

We could recruit the proper students with success, thanks to the positive feedback of the first pilot. One project leader of the first pilot was a member of the Student Council who was an important opinion-leader. After the first pilot students were asked to share their experiences with others in the frame of lectures at the university.



The students were trained by ÖKA and Obuda University at the same time – following the first pilot's methods. The training was done in person, at first, and then, during the project's execution, via email, phone.

We provided students with the relevant information: aims, tasks, deadlines, competencies, supervisors' contact. All the students received the same training.

ÖKA provided an additional preparation element to this pilot. Lead Creative Director of HPS Communication Group held a session with all participating students about successful communication projects and how to focus on the needs of clients.

The information sent to students before the beginning of the pro bono pilot included:

- all the details of pro bono (managed by ÖKA);
- templates for fulfilling the project (managed by ÖKA);
- deadlines (managed by ÖKA and University);
- contact persons (managed by ÖKA and University);
- who was responsible for what: framework, milestones of the project (managed by ÖKA and University).

15 students started to deal with the pilot and all of them finished it. In both two groups, one student was assigned the role of 'project leader', which meant each was responsible for contacting the supervisors (company representative, ÖKA and university) to manage the fulfillment of the project, coordinate the subtasks, keep the deadlines and manage the teamwork.

As to the selection of the corporate volunteers involved in the programme:

ÖKA asked its partner GE to provide mentors to the project. The company has significant experience in pro bono programmes, so it was relatively easy to find 2 enthusiastic mentors that were following through the entire project. 2 mentors were invited and they participated fully (both on the diagnosis and the marathon event). GE also provided the space for the short term pilot.

The training preparation was done by e-mail and phone. All relevant information and expectations were shared with the 2 mentors and discussed on the phone before the start of the project. These information were:

- Introduction of the BEESE project and pro bono in general;
- Expectations and minimum requirements towards them;
- Description of the nonprofits.

For the physical meetings, we offered the university's facilities to students. In particular, meeting rooms, which were essential for the training. All the teams had a good chance to contact each other personally and the same applied to company volunteers, NPOs and ÖKA. Students could also contact the nonprofit organisations and the corporate mentors personally via phone and email. They could have a visit by NPOs to get primary impressions.

The project partners and our students were also informed by ÖKA on all the necessary details concerning the project.

This phase was finished by the end of September and it took approximately 4 hours in terms of project management.

In this phase, the roles of each partners were as follows:

University:

- recruiting the students;
- preparing the necessary rooms and facilities for training;
- keeping contact with ÖKA, students;
- giving additional information for the project partners.

Mentor: preparing students for successful consulting.

Intermediary: securing the right stat of the programme.

### c. Pro Bono Meeting(s)

The pilot started in September and finished in the middle of November. The facilitation phase started at the beginning of October.

The total number of hours invested by the volunteers (before and during the pro bono pilot) were 8 -20 hours based on their involvement.

There was enough time and opportunities for recruitment and preparation. As there was more time, students could have suggested more communication ideas and help the nonprofit organisation in the implementation. Everyone was aware of the time frame of the project, so that the focus of the pilot had to be very well defined. However, it is true that in a short-term pilot, a limited number of challenges can be solved.

Facilitating charges were shared: as for the university, it offered the necessary facilities, as well as provided instructions to students. Besides, the students could contact personally, via email and phone, with the academic mentor. As to the representatives of ÖKA, they were fully present at the pro bono meeting and secured its proper implementation.

Both teams created a presentation about their solutions for NPOs. They found some relevant and concrete solutions and guides for NPOs, so that the students could provide NPOs with tangible results, at the end of the project.

The students received a certificate prepared by ÖKA at the end of the pilot. Later on, at the OU conference, nonprofits, company volunteers and students could meet each other and see the results of the project. Both teams could see others' solutions, which we consider to be a great opportunity and moment for knowledge and experience sharing.

Students could exchange this certificate, so they were exempted from the subject which the project assignment related to. The conditions for this were known by the students before participating in the project.

This phase took approximately 4 hours per week.

The role of each partner in this phase was as follows:

University:

- coordinating students' teamwork from an academic point of view: provide them with professional knowledge, methods, etc.;
- preparing the necessary rooms, facilities for meetings, presentations and support the students' teamwork in case of doubts;
- keeping contact with students and ÖKA;
- following the steps of the project and controlling the subtasks;

- giving additional information to the project partners;
- preparing meetings, brainstorming, presentation of opportunities, as well as providing feedback after the subtasks.

#### Mentors:

- keeping in touch and supporting students with their questions;
- fully participating in the meetings.

#### Intermediary:

- constant follow up and contact with OU, nonprofits and students;
- preparing and facilitating the meetings.

## d. Evaluation

We started the evaluation of the pilot at the final presentation, at the end of November. All students were filling a post pilot questionnaire at the end of the meeting, and nonprofit participants and mentors were also asked to fill an evaluation form. This phase took 4 hours in terms of project management.

The role of each partner in this phase was as follows:

#### University:

We organized a conference in cooperation with ÖKA, in order to evaluate the pilot and give the opportunity for final presentations. The teams had the chance to see the others' results, as well as to share their experiences.

#### NPOs, corporate mentors:

They could give feedback to the teams and the other partners of the project directly.

#### Students confirmed the main advantages of the pilot:

- practice oriented, since they were able to use their knowledge and put it in practice;
- a good opportunity to do something for society;
- to get an impression of the nonprofit market;
- to increase their knowledge, and soft skills (project approach, working in a team, analytical ability).

We asked our students to share their experiences with the others (formally: during a marketing conference organized by the university and informally, with the help of the Student Council).

## e. Testimonies and Learnings

The diagnosis was very relevant, from an academic point of view, for many aspects. In particular,

- to understand the main features of the pro bono project: aims, tasks, frameworks;
- to recognize that young people are opened to do something for the social good, and that we can increase their social sensitiveness with the help of well targeted communication and programmes;
- we could realize that many NPOs in Hungary are seeking the knowledge and professional support which we can provide them;
- the diagnosis was a great opportunity to know the partners of pro bono project better;
- to increase students' analytical ability;
- to broaden our corporate relations and practice orientated teaching activity.

In this phase, we have learned to start the recruiting of students and NPOs a little bit earlier and that the meeting deadlines must be much more stricter.

During the recruitment process OU has learned to keep stricter control over the deadlines and to prepare the framework of managing all the processes (milestones, subtasks, sub-deadlines) earlier.

During the facilitation phase, and based on the feedback of students, the main challenges regarded the following topics:

- availability: to contact one of the nonprofit's representative, since there were personal changes and it required a lot of time to find the new contact person;

- harmonization: to find a common point between what the NPO wanted, what the company volunteer suggested and what the students were really able to do;
- timing: because of the summer holidays, part of the pilot was implemented more slowly and it was harder to conduct.

The lessons we learned during this phase included the following:

- short term pilots can be good to solve one challenge of the organisation but teams have to concentrate on the timing so they can finish in the given timeframe;
- to keep stronger control over the deadline;
- to prepare the framework to manage all the process (milestones, subtasks, sub-deadlines) earlier;
- to prepare for unexpected events and difficulties (such as, contact person changing).

Regarding the evaluation process, we - based on our experiences - learned how to properly organize a common meeting (final presentation), where all project partners could participate in a useful way.

Difficulties were felt, regarding finding a proper time that could fit to all partners' agendas.



These projects happened partly virtually, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## a. Selection of the nonprofit beneficiary

As the offered knowledge was marketing/communication, ÖKA was searching for organizations that were seeking support in these fields. Both the contacted organizations immediately accepted the help we offered them. Name of the nonprofit beneficiaries involved:

**Perinatus Alapítvány** is a foundation that focuses on important topics related to family, such as managing a child's birth, coping with post-birth stress, arguments in the family, handling PTSD etc. (<http://perinatus.hu/>)

The other nonprofit was **Menedékház Alapítvány** which is a foundation that focuses on three basic areas of intervention: helps homeless families to stay together by ensuring a temporary accommodation and finding a new home; helps homeless people spending nights in a warm shelter, and helps them get medical and health care. (<https://menedekhaz.hu/>)

We have created a list of important questions to be asked before the diagnosis session.

The diagnosis phase was conducted through online communication platforms, since Covid-19 had made it impossible to hold personal meetings. Our first meeting with the organization was 3 hours long and its purpose was to gather the information needed in order to develop a solution for their problems.

After the diagnosis, we have held several other meetings in the online space and discussed important topics related to the foundations' key problems. The total number of hours invested in this phase was approximately 6 hours.

In the case of the Perinatus Foundation, the needs of the foundation were complex, since many different cofactors were at stake, like the sensitivity of the Hungarian society to issues like these.

In the case of Menedékház Foundation, the needs were complex as well, because of the fact that COVID-19 closed people in the foundation's places.

The main goal was to improve online communication, to build awareness and to create a more sensitive and more accepting environment in Hungary. That's why we searched for a new group of IT people who could help create a new website



for Menedékház Foundation. The pilot version can be reached here: <https://www.tgweb.hu/menedekhaz/>

The Foundation was also in need of more funds, in order to operate more efficiently. Therefore, fundraising was also one of the goals to achieve. They lacked donations as well, so that later on, our team developed a strategic plan to achieve those goals.

This phase was finished at the end of June. In terms of project management, it took us (total amount of hours on average): 4 hours.

The roles of each partner in this phase were:

#### University:

The main task was to integrate the proper students for the pilot:

- to recruit the most motivated students;
- to find the targeted volunteer activity (knowledge) that we can help the selected nonprofits with;
- to support the coordination of the whole project from the academic part;
- to offer the proper infrastructure opportunities;
- to support students during the whole project (providing them with information, knowledge, etc.);
- to be an active partner and intermediary between the company, NPOs and ÖKA.

#### Mentors:

- to explain key success factors of consulting in general;
- to prepare students for successful questioning and to support the pro bono process in general;
- to provide consulting opportunity during the entire process;
- to help find solutions for project challenges and dilemmas.

#### Intermediary:

- to draft the general project framework and the steps conducted by each participant;
- to provide knowhow on success elements of pro bono projects;
- to create templates for students (time sheets, list of experiences) and NPOs;

- to prepare and deliver the preparation of both nonprofits and students;
- to find and inform mentors about the project;
- to keep in touch with NPOs and university partners and provide answers if needed;
- to follow up about the entire project with all parties.

## b. Recruitment process and number of participants

OU started the students' recruitment in the very beginning of the project in parallel with the recruitment of nonprofits and supervisors, just like in the first pilot.

As a basic criterion, we opted for only recruiting students who had the necessary knowledge for fulfilling the project. In order to appreciate that, we have considered their exam grades, as a condition of participation in the pilot. The first experiences we had were very useful and we could filter the candidates with success.

The second criterion revolved around their motivation and enough sensitivity for social issues. Nevertheless, there are features and attitudes which were not measurable. In that case, we took into account our previous experiences with the students (e.g. participation in different university programs, conferences, workshops, students' programs etc.), and we asked for recommendations from our student council as well.

Based on these filters, we could select the proper students. We didn't feel any problems regarding the motivation and commitment of our students. It was also a big advantage that the first pilots' students shared their positive experience with others, encouraging them to participate in the program.

As to the encouragement, since the pro bono pilot as well as its aims and mission are very close to our faculty's values (corporate creed), we think our students could easily identify with the tasks and mission of pro bono. Thanks to that, no problems were felt regarding either recruiting or commitment to complete the task.

The recruitment of students has been managed by Monika Fodor (teacher, researcher).

As to the students' motivation, it was much stronger than we expected. We created two big groups: 8-7 students per group and we announced 2 tenders for NPOs, in line with this concept.

The students were trained by ÖKA and the university at the same time – following the first pilot's methods – at first, personally and during the project, via e-mail, phone. All the students received the same training. We provided the students with the relevant information, including the project's aims, tasks, deadlines, competencies, supervisors' contact, etc.

Before the beginning of the pro bono pilot, we sent the students the following information:

- all details of pro bono (managed by ÖKA);
- templates for fulfilling the project (managed by ÖKA);
- deadlines (managed by ÖKA and university);
- contact persons (managed by ÖKA and university);
- who was responsible for what: framework; milestones of the project (managed by ÖKA and university);
- description of the organizations and their problem statement.

15 students started to deal with the pilot and all of them finished it. In both groups, one student had the role of project leader, which meant that they were responsible for contacting the supervisors (corporate mentor, ÖKA and university) to manage the fulfilment of the project, coordinating the subtasks, keeping the deadlines and managing the teamwork.

ÖKA invited 2 mentors from Mastercard as corporate mentors in the pilot. Mastercard is very strong in consultation and marketing/communication areas. It turned out to be a very good decision, since, due to the virtual execution of the pilot, much support was needed. The corporate mentors were trained by email and conference calls. ÖKA discussed with both mentors the goals and expectations and they have both received the same training. Both volunteers followed the pilot till the very end.

Before the beginning of the pro bono pilot, the corporate mentors were given the following information:

- introduction to the BEESE project;

- information about pro bono in general;
- expectations towards them;
- minimum requirements;
- description of the nonprofits.

Since ÖKA had a record of great and previous cooperation with Mastercard, it was easy to find two very committed colleagues for this project that have managed to participate, even being very busy at their work. The activity area of the project was also a factor of motivation.

The whole project took place virtually. OU offered Microsoft Teams accounts and students were in charge of setting up meetings. Only the first mentor-student meeting was coordinated by ÖKA. All the teams had a good chance to contact each other personally. It was the same in the case of the corporate mentors, NPOs and ÖKA. Students could also contact the nonprofits and company mentors/representatives personally via phone and email. Students could visit the nonprofits' facilities, to get primary impressions.

This phase finished at the end of September. In terms of project management, it took approximately 14 hours. The roles of each partner in this phase were as follows:

#### University:

- recruiting the students;
- keeping contact with ÖKA and students;
- giving additional information for the project partners.

#### Mentor:

Preparing students to create the right questions and to be able to go through the consulting program.

#### Intermediary:

Securing the right management of the program.

### c. Pro Bono Meeting(s)

The Facilitation phase started at the beginning of April and finished at the end of June. In total, the pilot started in April and finished at the end of June (10-12 weeks). Normally, this program should have been shorter but virtual implementation rendered it longer.

The total number of hours invested by the volunteers (before and during the pro bono) was approximately 35-40 hours.

The virtual implementation brought some management challenges but at the same time it provided the possibility to finish each element and to create a program that is really useful for the NPOs.

OU and ÖKA provided facilitation in the beginning, but then students were in charge of leading the project. Students could contact the academic mentor personally, via email and phone.

Both teams created a presentation with their solutions for the nonprofits and students gave usable results at the end of the project. The organizations were extremely happy with the outcomes and actually sent us 'thank you letters'.

The students received a certificate. They were exempted from the subject to which the project assignment related. The conditions for this were known by the students before participating in the project.

In terms of project management, it took approximately 4 hours per week. The roles of each partner were as follows:

#### University:

- coordinating students' teamwork from an academic point of view: provide them with professional knowledge, methods, etc.;
- preparing the necessary rooms, facilities for meetings, presentations and support the students' teamwork in case of questions;
- keeping contact with students and ÖKA;
- following the steps of the projects and controlling the subtasks;
- giving additional information to the project partners;
- preparing meetings, brainstorming, presentation of opportunities, as well as giving feedback after the subtasks.

### Mentors:

- keep in touch and support students preparing the scope and the consulting process.

### Intermediary:

- constant follow up and contact with OU, NPOs and students.

## d. Evaluation

Post pilot and evaluation sheets were sent out to participants in July. The evaluation phase took 14 hours in terms of project management.

It is hard to get the feedback of students and this is probably influenced by the project's virtual implementation. We know from the nonprofits that they were very active. However, their lack of knowledge of the students in consultation was obvious and mentors had to assist and initiate preparation of the project. ÖKA conducted a longer interview with the 2 Mastercard mentors, which was published on the BEESE website.

The roles of each partner and some of the values for them were:

### University:

- the teams had the chance to see the others' results and to share their experiences;
- NPOs and corporate mentors could give feedback to the teams and the other partners of the project directly.

Students confirmed advantages of the project like practice oriented work, doing good for society, getting an inner view of the nonprofit market, increasing their knowledge and soft skills. We asked our students to share their experiences with the others, with the help of the student council.

### Mentors:

They gave feedback to ÖKA and answered several questions regarding the project in an interview.

### ÖKA:

- management of the entire evaluation process with students/nonprofits/mentors.

## e. Testimonies and Learnings

As the mid-term pilot was the last one, we were able to leverage the knowledge and experience gained from the previous two pilots. Also, our recommendations concerning the implementation in the university framework are the following:

- to fit the pilot into the university's schedules and the proper teachers / professors to manage the project;
- to find proper and adequate topics for the pilot, in line with the subjects or curricula that students learn;
- to clarify the conditions for participation: what subject and what 'exemption' the student may receive in exchange for participating in the project;
- to find nonprofits and companies with whom the cooperation can be longer;
- create a checklist of logistical requirements: what kind of facilities are required during the pilot and who will be responsible for managing these;
- to prepare for unexpected events and difficulties (contact person changing, summer holidays);
- to increase the pilot feedback;
- to consider the advantages, the disadvantages and the possible risks of a virtual implementation.

It is always important to keep in mind that while students can be enthusiastic, this doesn't necessarily mean that they have the experience needed or the skills to manage a full consultation process.

## 4. Long-Term Pro Bono Pilot



The first pilot in the case of Hungary (OU and ÖKA) was the long-term one.

During the preparing process, the main aim was to fit the pilot into the semester schedule. It means that OU and ÖKA started to discuss and prepare the implementation, in the beginning of March 2019. Staff members of ÖKA and OU met and consulted each other about the ideal steps of the pro bono pilots. It was very important to set dates, tasks and agree on who would do what. It was crucial to describe and introduce pro bono projects to OU, which was new in this field and had no earlier experience in involving students into such activities. Despite the limited time assigned to it, the preparation was smooth and minor corrections had to be made during the implementation. The main agreement was that OU would be in charge of the selection and enrolment of the students and ÖKA would invite and prepare the nonprofits. As ÖKA had several years of experience in the field of pro bono, it had a sufficient database and overview on NPOs' needs. This way, the agreement was not to create an open call for NPOs and not to extend the project's timeframe with the selection.



ÖKA prepared a description and guideline about the program and the offer one could provide to NPOs (what kind of knowledge we had to offer). The second step was to select the nonprofits and the mentors (experts from the corporate side) by ÖKA. In parallel, OU provided information to students on the essence and the framework of the pro bono project.

This was a very important phase, regarding the need to increase students' social sensitivity and motivation, as well as explaining clearly what pro bono is and the framework of the project (given that OU students haven't had such experience before). We consciously chose 2nd grade Marketing and Communication students, as we wanted them to have a minimum level of knowledge and experience. All students were in the course of Mónika Fodor, who is in the project team of OU. This has made communication and task distribution much easier. This way, students engaged in the pro bono teams, could have been rewarded and exempted from one essay obligation that normal students had to present.

## a. Selection of the nonprofit beneficiary

In the first pilot, ÖKA and OU wanted to choose organizations that were close to the teams and that could secure a good partnership. One team was the Friends of the Elderly Program of ÖKA and the other was a smaller environmental association from Nagykovácsi, in which an OU staff member was active as a volunteer.

Both organizations had to fill a simple problem statement application form. The main questions revolved around seeking information about the mission of the organization, the challenges to be solved and the results aimed at through the partnership. These forms were shared with the OU students and the mentors of each team.

### **1. Friend of the Elderly** [www.idosekbaratai.hu](http://www.idosekbaratai.hu)

The program is about selecting volunteers to visit, take care and spend time with lonely old people.

### **2. NATE** [www.nate.hu](http://www.nate.hu)

This is a local environmental protection association in Nagykovácsi.

We have asked students to consult with their mentors first (they were employees of Accenture in the case of the long-term projects) so that they could prepare well for the pro bono challenge.

Students and NPOs were asked to find time by themselves for the diagnosis meeting and further consultations. This created some entropy, as some team leaders were not eager enough. In the case of NATE, there were basic problems with the communication. (This shows that students and nonprofits without proper consulting experience are not properly capable of creating a well-functioning partnership, so that support from the university, and the intermediation of mentors can be essential).

The NPOs' goals were to find and prepare strategic plans and their relevant target markets. They wanted to know what kind of opportunities they had to achieve their goals, through communication activities.

Since teams were working remotely, we did not have a full overview on how the scoping and task definition was conducted. Given the final evaluation, we could see that they were able to define the goals, but it was to measure the needed time for the given tasks. As a result, there were several delays in the project implementation.

At the end of March, we had finalized the project's scope and problem definition. In this phase, the total amount of hours was, on average, 10 hours.

The roles of each partner in this phase were as follows:

University:

The main task was to integrate the proper students and the targeted activity for the project. We had to support the students during the whole process.

Mentors:

The main role was to prepare students for successful questioning and to support the pro bono process in general and it was very helpful to provide consulting opportunities about the entire process.

Intermediary:

- to draft the general project framework and steps for each participant;
- to provide knowhow on success elements of pro bono projects;

- to create templates for students (time sheets, list of experiences) and for NPOs;
- to provide preparation for the NPOs and for the students;
- to find and inform mentors about the project;
- to keep in touch with NPOs and university partners and provide answers if needed;
- to follow up about the entire project with all parties.

## b. Recruitment process and number of participants

We started the students' recruitment in the very beginning of the project, in parallel with the recruitment of nonprofits and supervisors.

The recruitment of the students has been managed by Monika Fodor (teacher, researcher).

We decided not to create a big team at first. That is why there were 4 students engaged, 2 for each project. We announced 2 tenders for NPOs in line with this concept. Our students were trained by ÖKA and the university at the same time, at first, personally and, during the project, via email, phone. We provided the students with the necessary information, regarding aims, tasks, deadlines, competencies and the supervisors' contact.

All the students received the same training. It was a 90-minute briefing at the OU by ÖKA staff.

4 students started to deal with the pilot and all of them finished it. In both groups, one student was nominated as 'project leader', which means that she or he was responsible for contacting the mentors and other parties (NPO, ÖKA, OU), as well as to manage the fulfilment of the project, coordinate the subtasks, keep the deadlines and manage the teamwork.

There was one corporate mentor dedicated to each team. ÖKA contacted Accenture and their contact person sent an internal call for which we received answers. There was no personal meeting between ÖKA and the two Accenture mentors, due to limited time availability. The 2 mentors selected have both participated in 2 meetings with the students.

We trained the mentors by sending a very detailed explanatory email about the project and our expectations. In most cases, corporate mentors and team

leaders are very well prepared. In some cases, ÖKA provides 1-1,5 hours preparation for corporate team leaders.

All corporate volunteers received the same training. The information we sent them before the beginning of the pro bono included the introduction of the BEESE project and pro bono in general, the expectations and minimum requirements; also the description of the NPOs.

It was easy to find the correct corporate mentors as ÖKA had contacts with many companies, otherwise, even if there is great interest from corporate volunteers to support such projects, finding the right connection could have been hard.

As to the students, we could recruit the proper students with success even though the brand-new program and the pilot version. The main reason for such success and smooth implementation relates, as mentioned before, to the fact that the mission of the project requires a very similar set of values to those that the university represents. On the other hand, we used a multidimensional criteria system to find the best prepared students for the pilot.

OU offered the university's facilities to students, including meeting rooms for the training. All the teams had a good chance to contact each other personally. The same applied to corporate mentors, NPOs and ÖKA. Students could also contact the NPOs and corporate mentors / representatives personally, via phone and email. Students could also visit NPOs' premises, to get primary impressions. Students and NPOs met in different locations, according to their availability and agendas.

The project partners and our students were also informed of all the necessary details concerning the project by ÖKA.

This projects' phase was finished at the end of March, and it took approximately 10 hours.

During the recruitment process the roles of each partner were as follows:

University:

- recruiting the students;
- preparing the necessary rooms and facilities for training;
- keeping contact with ÖKA, students;

- giving additional information to the project partners.

Mentor:

- preparing students to create the right questions and be able to go through the consulting program.

Intermediary:

- securing the whole management of the project.

### c. Pro Bono Meeting(s)

The projects which were conducted have both started in March and ended at the end of November. The project duration was 9 months (March-November) in total, and the number of hours invested by the volunteers (before and during the pro bono) were above 100.

This kind of pro bono was enough to meet the NPO needs. Since it was a long-term pilot, we had enough time and opportunities to understand the requirements (needs of the nonprofits) and try to find and draw targeted solutions for them. We think the time is of value, since we can realize more precise solutions for NPOs.

The university offered the necessary rooms, facilities, as well as gave instructions so that students could successfully complete the projects. The team leader's role was played by one student from each team.

Both teams created a presentation about their solutions for NPOs, so they could see the others' solutions, which was a great opportunity for knowledge and experiences sharing. They found some relevant and concrete solutions, guides for NPOs. In short, students gave usable results for the nonprofits at the end of the pilot.

Students were exempted from the subject (market research) to which the project assignment related. The conditions for this were known by the students before participating in the project.

This phase took approximately 8 hours per week in terms of project management. The roles of each partner were the same as in the previous parts mentioned.

## d. Evaluation

We started the evaluation of the pilot at the final presentation, at the end of November. It took 4 hours in terms of project management.

The project was a very important experience for the students. For most of them, this was the first ever consulting experience and for others, the first time working on an NPO project. It was great for them to learn about social challenges and how the NPOs work in general.

The nonprofits valued the energy and the enthusiasm of the students, but missed a stronger guidance about the professional steps and framework. Also management of timing and respect of milestones is crucial from both sides, so that was the part of the pilot where coordination needs to be improved.

In this phase the roles of each partner were as listed below:

### University:

Organized a conference in cooperation with ÖKA, in order to evaluate the pilot and allow the presentation of the outputs. The teams had a chance to see the others' results, as well as to share their experiences.

NPOs and corporate mentors could give feedback to the teams and the other partners of the project directly as well. In addition, in the frame of an in-personal and informal meeting, we talked with the students about their main experiences.

Students confirmed the main advantages of the project as mentioned in the first pilot, which they shared with the others (formal: during a marketing conference organized by university and informal with the help of Student Council).

### Mentors:

Mentors filled the evaluation sheets. Additionally, an interview was conducted with one of the Accenture mentors.

<https://beeseprobono.eu/interview-to-a-volunteer-mentor-of-campus-pro-bono/>

### ÖKA:

ÖKA provided a presentation on experiences with corporate volunteering and pro bono at the OU Conference. Also, the post pilot evaluation forms were collected and experiences of students were analysed. ÖKA consulted with

participating NPOs and experiences were collected through phone calls and evaluation sheets.

## e. Testimonies and Learnings

Through the diagnosis, it is very important to constantly monitor and support students, as well as to set fixed timing/milestones, in particular, because in a long-term pilot, it is very hard to keep the focus of the students, among many other obligations. We have to acknowledge that students have knowhow about some specific fields, but almost no experience in consulting. This presents a huge risk in this type of project, since quite often NPOs expect them to act like experts. For us this is one of the biggest challenges for students in pro bono projects. If students cannot prepare well for these projects, it will be hard to provide the valuable outputs for the organizations, without which, the project can be put at risk and consist of a pure waste of time.

One crucial element is the alignment of aims, goals and the expected results of the project by all players. It can be important to harmonize these and agree on them, at the beginning as well as to check it at main milestones. This can be very time consuming, but could greatly benefit the project's overall success.

During the recruitment process, we found it necessary to keep stronger control over the deadline and to earlier prepare the framework for managing the whole process (milestones, subtasks, sub-deadlines).

In facilitating, in some cases, the entire methodology of the project might have to be checked or reviewed. Ideally, students would be able to lead the project. However, additional professional (methodological) support has to be provided (by the intermediary or the university in case students need it).

We learned to keep stronger control over the deadlines as well as to prepare the framework earlier. It is very important to prepare for unexpected events and difficulties (contact person changing, summer holidays).

In the evaluation phase, it can be important to set targets and milestones for the entire project as well as to try to keep them effective, as much as possible. A long-term pilot can suffer from many externalities that can 'redirect' it towards other paths. To manage such a project is time consuming. Thus agreement of partners on the project's management is very important, and good cooperation is essential for its success.

For the next partners, we would recommend keeping much more attention to the timing, controlling and feedback-giving system. Set milestones and check if targets were met. Do not leave the teams' members unattended for a longer period of time. Ask for feedback and regular reports. However, keep in mind that it is important not to overload the students with too many extra tasks.

For the university, we should clarify, from the very first moment, the framework of the project. To be conscious of the fact that parties (NPOs and students) are not professionals and that they might need extra support or guidance by the intermediary partner or the university is crucial.



## 5. Conclusions

The pro bono project provided a lot of new experience and insights both for Obuda University and Volunteering in Hungary. It is clear that pro bono projects can provide great experience for all participants. To make it successful, many elements have to be considered and find their right places. A good amount of coordination and time has to be allocated to these projects, as participants will need constant support.

The university has to master the selection as well as the student's preparation. Also, the university has to provide the academic / learning framework and guarantee that it fits into the curriculum of students.

The work of the intermediary was essential in the case of Hungary, as ÖKA provided the link to the nonprofit organizations, as well as the general pro bono managements framework and, finally, brought in the mentors who were very important in securing the good implementation of the project.

A university can actually run the project without an intermediary, but for that, it will have to have the necessary connections, management overview and links to businesses that are open to pro bono mentoring opportunities. We believe that an agreement with an intermediary is a good option for all universities rolling out a student pro bono program. It can bring and share useful learning that may contribute to the development of the students' participation in the society as well as of their ability to get practical management experiences. Through the encounters with nonprofits, the students can meet, understand and work on real life challenges that can contribute to their skills set and practical experiences. In case universities want to support these learnings, pro bono projects are one of the best solutions, only if structure and its framework are clear. It is also important to nominate an internal coordinator who is in charge of keeping in touch with all players and also preparing forms and other documents needed for the successful implementation of the project.