

1. The roots

The development of statistics in Hungary – following many other branches of science - can be linked to foreign roots and experiences gained there.

Referring to international experiences, in the 1840s, more and more representatives of Hungarian scientific life recognized the importance of statistics. The establishment of the National Statistical Office was initiated for the first time in 1848. Elek Fényes - the head of the institution at the time - even planned to carry out a population census. However, the plans could not be realized due to the institution's modest staff of only 12 persons and the turbulent political developments in the life of the country.

After the establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1825), the development of statistics was also set as a goal, along with many other disciplines. The first domestic organization of scientific statistics was established within the framework of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in 1860 the Committee on Statistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was established. The Committee on Statistics performed a double task. On the one hand, it tried to create the social framework of domestic scientific statistics, and on the other hand, it also tried to fulfill the role of the domestic official data collector, which was still missing at that time. The implementation of a population census was also included in the program of the Committee on Statistics. In 1863, the Committee also requested the establishment of a statistical office, unfortunately without success.

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise brought a turning point. In 1867, Károly Keleti was asked to prepare a proposal for the establishment of an independent Hungarian Statistical Service. The National Statistical Council was established in 1867. In April 1871, the operational rules of the National Hungarian Royal Statistical Office were approved, the organizational framework of the statistical service was also set up.

The Central Statistical Office was founded in 1867, although only one ministerial department was formed at that time. The independence of the institution in 1871 was based on the work of the ministerial department, continuity was ensured by the person of Károly Keleti.

The Hungarian Economic Association (HEA) was founded in 1894, also in the form of a department. The department played an important role in the preparation of the planned data collections and in the formulation of proposals, which were later used for methodological developments.

2. The establishment of the Hungarian Statistical Association (1922)

- The establishment of the independent Hungarian Statistical Association (HSA) was announced on June 22, 1922 by the founding assembly. The established HSA aimed primarily to develop and popularize statistics. The history of the Association can be divided into three periods; which were not exempt from the political, economic and social processes of the last hundred years.
- In 1949, after 26 years of successful operation, the Association was terminated by the then government for political reasons.

- From 1960 for three decades, statisticians carried out their scientific activities as the Statistics Department of the Hungarian Economic Association.
- The Hungarian Statistical Association became an independent Association again in 1990. The first general assembly took a stand in the continuation of the activities of the Association founded in 1922, and of those of the Statistics Department of the Hungarian Economic Association considering itself its legal successor.

2.1. The Hungarian Statistical Association between 1922 and 1949

(An independent Association was established)

The Association established its operational framework in the twenties. The possible number of members and the operational framework were established by the statutes of the Association. In total, the Association had 208 members in the twenties.

The scientific and organizational activities of the HSA were carried out in the form of various meetings. Annual general assemblies, scientific and ceremonial meetings were held. In the majority of cases, the meetings were held in different towns, in the form of traveling meetings.

A significant event of 1927 was the national conference on the social impact of divorces and suicides.

In 1928, the topics of the lectures mainly concerned the field of economic statistics.

Among the events held in 1933, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Károly Keleti occupied a special place.

In 1934, the lectures analyzed population trends.

The main topic of the 1937 meetings was the methodology of national income statistics. The examination of national income statistics continued in 1938.

During 1944-1945, the Association did not hold meetings – due to the events of the war.

In 1948, the last major event of the Association was a five-day meeting discussing the statistical issues of Hungarian agriculture. The annual general assembly was still held, but no more meetings took place.

As a result of the takeover of power in 1948 and the formation of the party state, in 1949 the operation of the Hungarian Statistical Association essentially ceased.

2.2. The Hungarian Statistical Association between 1960 and 1989

(As Department of the Hungarian Economic Association)

In the 1950s, several attempts were made to reorganize the Hungarian Statistical Association. The draft of the new statutes of the Association and the planned list of participants had been prepared, but the foundation of the Association did not take place.

After 1956, the efforts related to the establishment of the Association were further pushed into the background. The Association could be brought to life only later, within the framework of the Hungarian Economic Association (HEA).

In January 1960, the Statistics Department of the HEA was established with the participation of about 250 statisticians and economists. The backbone of the department's program was the examination of the use of representative surveys.

In June 1961, the Department organized a scientific conference together with the Hungarian Statistical Office. The conference touched on two issues; the compilation of input-output tables and the comparison of the standard of living in Hungary and between countries.

Between 1965 and 1968, 25 conferences were held, at which more than 100 lectures were given. Following the establishment of the Department of the History of Statistics, the Departments of Regional and International Statistics were also created. The topics of the presentations were predominantly macro-statistics, including input-output tables.

In October 1977, together with Eötvös Lóránt University, the 200-year anniversary of Hungarian statistics higher education was celebrated.

In May 1980, the role of statistics in the national economy was discussed (the number of participants was around 400).

In 1984, the foreign market aspects of social statistics, economic statistics and national economy became the focus of the investigations.

In 1987, the theme of the conferences was the expected decrease in the standard of living, the deterioration of the health of the population and the decrease in the number of births.

In the second half of the 1980s, the officials of the Department were more and more openly concerned with the reorganization of the independent Statistical Association. The members of the Department emphasized that during the past 3 decades, HEA had functioned as a very good umbrella organization, for which the Association remains forever grateful.

2.3. The Hungarian Statistical Association between 1990 and 2020

(as an independent Association again)

The independent Hungarian Statistical Association, founded again in 1990, considered itself the legal successor of the Association founded in 1922.

The majority of the Association's officers and members come from the HCSO. From time to time, the close personal and institutional relations between the two organizations have been reconsidered, but no substantive changes have taken place. The strengthening of the civic character arose mostly in the last third of the period.

In 1990, the Association put the statistical investigation of economic and social problems on its agenda. The statistical challenges of the transition to a market economy and the methodology of statistical data production were the priority.

In 1992, the Association took an active role in celebrating the 125th anniversary of the independent Hungarian Official Statistical Service.

In 1993 and 1994, the events focused on employment statistics, regional processes and regional development.

In 1996 - in preparation to the access to the European Union - the topic covered the statistical challenges of European integration processes.

In 1998, the Association was admitted to the Register of National Interest Representations and Social Organizations, according to which the Association received the right to comment on statistical issues arising during the legislative process.

In 2004, the Committee on Statistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences asked the Hungarian Statistical Association to develop the Hungarian Statistical Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics was adopted by the Association's General Assembly in 2006 as well as a Board of Ethics was set up. Unfortunately, the application of the Code of Ethics caused more conflicts than results. Unfortunately, some people, the society are not yet prepared, mature enough to apply Statistical Ethics (statistical culture?), accept the principles of Statistical Ethics. We guess, statistical knowledge, statistical thinking must be improved as well as taught.

In the mid-2000s, the HSA developed and launched the Association's website, it introduced digital operations, and a quarterly newsletter was sent to members. During this period, the HSA counted the highest number of members, exceeding 700 people.

In 2005, at the initiative of the HSA, six national statistical societies (Hungarian, Austrian, Slovenian, Czech, Slovak, Romanian ~ V6) signed a cooperation agreement in Visegrád.

In 2012, the HSA and the HCSO welcomed with a joint event the 90-year-old HSA and the 90-year-old Statistical Review.

In 2013 (during the International Year of Statistics), the HSA launched a series of programs. The AGRYA (Hungarian Association of Young Farmers), the HSA and the HCSO Library organized an all-day program in the OpenAir Museum of Szentendre. Visitors to the Museum were introduced to the world of statistics in the framework of varied and colorful family programs. Since that time, the popular programs have been organized annually.

In 2013, the HSA joined FENStatS (Federation of European National Statistical Societies), the aim of which was cooperation at the European level. FENStatS launched the biannual CESS conference series, the first conference was held in Rome in 2014, and the second in Budapest in 2016.

In July 2016, the HSA held a joint, two-day conference with Partium University in Nagyvárad (Romania) under the title "From Elek Fényes to the European Statistical System". The conference papers were published by the HSA in a study volume.

In August 2017, the Hungarian group of the IFCS (Federation of Classification Societies) presented itself at the IFCS conference in Tokyo in the framework of a Hungarian Section. In September 2017, HSA and Óbuda University organized a joint conference. From the second half of the 2010s, the joint annual conferences of the HSA with universities and other educational institutions became regular (how to fall in love with statistics, statistics interwoven into our lives etc.).

In December 2017, a joint conference of HSA and the Faculty of Law and Political Science of József Eötvös University was held, where they commemorated the 240th anniversary of Hungarian statistic education in Law and Political Sciences.

Between 2017 and 2019, the Association intensively participated in international statistical life. HSA members gave presentations at the conferences of the Croatian Statistical Society, cooperation with FENStatS and IFCS continued. The V6-7 published joint statements on timely issues annually.

The HSA organized commemorative events in honor of several famous Hungarian statisticians, and initiated the compilation and publication of commemorative study volumes.

2.4. The Departments of the Hungarian Statistical Association

The departments of the MST were established between 1963 and 2005 as follows:

- History of Statistics (1963)
- Regional Statistics (1966)
- International Statistics (1967)
- Economic Statistics (1968)
- Demographic Statistics (1988)
- Social Statistics (1988)
- Public Administration, Justice and Legal Informatics (1990)
- Education of Statistics (2005)

Woman in Statistics headed the Departments of Economic Statistics, Demographic Statistics and Public Administration, Justice and Legal Informatics in 2020.

3. What makes the Hungarian Statistician?

In Hungary nowadays, statistics are taught in all universities of economics, law- and agriculture, of course with different content in the faculties of natural sciences, technology and social sciences. The teaching of statistics plays a central role in economics higher studies, and its weight in the curriculum is the greatest in this field.

The changes of the social and economic system that occurred in Hungary in the 1990s changed the background and conditions of statistical education. The main characteristic of the market changes was that sectoral statistics were abolished, and statistics based on mathematical bases became predominant. Digital, technological developments have also presented new challenges to statisticians.

Today, one of the main negative aspects of statistical education in Hungary is that - unlike in several European countries - the concept and practice of developing a statistical approach starting at the level of elementary schools and ending in higher education, has not been developed. The lack of solid foundations causes serious difficulties in the process of becoming an advanced statistician, but also in the development of statistical culture.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of statisticians in Hungary came from professionals in geography. Nowadays, the majority of statisticians possess economics degrees. If a statistician has a different professional degree, he/she must complete additional statistical courses. In the 1980s, those who were employed at the Central Statistical Office and did not have a degree in economics had to follow compulsory courses in statistics. Over time, this former requirement became gradually obsolete, and we can say with some exaggeration that the acquisition of statistical knowledge has become mainly dependent on personal professional aspirations.

3.4. Women in Statistics in Hungary

Tracking the role of women in Statistics - especially in the perspective of a hundred years - is a very difficult task, because over the decades, the role of women in society, their possibilities in education and employment have changed significantly.

On March 8, 2023 (Women's Day), a conference was held in Budapest in celebration of women. The speakers mentioned that only 1 out of 10 top managers in Hungary is a woman. Their salary is 18 percent lower than the salary of men in similar positions. The proportion of women in the Hungarian parliament is 14 percent, which is the lowest in the European Union. In the case of middle managers, the proportion of women already reaches 50 percent.

According to the available documents, in 1884 only 135 employees worked in the Hungarian Statistical Office, not a single woman among them. It is true that at that time it did not even occur to a woman to work in a state institution. According to our colleagues dealing with the history of statistics and the history of the HCSO, this was the situation for about half a century. After that, the number of women among Statisticians began to increase slowly, thanks to the openness of higher education and employment.

Currently, the proportion of women in statistical institutions ranges between 70-80 percent. Of course, these rates apply to the employees of the institutions and the members of the HSA.

Another question is the proportion of women assuming and performing leadership roles in the Statistical Office and the HSA. Until now two women have been appointed president of the Hungarian Statistical Office, Vera Nyitrai (1979-1989) and Gabriella Vukovich (2010-2023).

I don't know how well known it is that Denise Lievesley (English) was the first woman elected President of the ISI (2007-2009). Of course, there are big differences between continents and countries.

In Hungary - since most of the members of the HSA come from the HCSO - the proportion of women in the Association also ranges between 70-80 percent.

Before 2016, the HSA did not have woman president until my election to the post of president of the Association in 2016. Before that, I was the Secretary General of the HSA for several terms.

Currently, HSA has 8 Departments, of which only 3 Departments (Department of Economic Statistics, Demographic Department, Department of Public Administration, Justice and Legal Informatics) are chaired by women. In the case of secretaries and vice-presidents, the ratio is better (around a half-half).

Another interesting question refers to the fields where women have been most active. In the case of HSA, women prefer to organize meetings where personal relations and a lot of communication are required. Good examples of this are the family programs organized in the Szentendre Open Air Museum.

The organization of the programs held jointly with the University of Obuda - dealing with statistical culture – was also mainly based on the active participation of women.

Traditionally, women edit jubilee volumes and methodological publications. In these cases, thorough, precise work is expected.

A counter example is that not a single woman participated in the elaboration of the Hungarian Statistical Code of Ethics.

In 2005, the presidents of the statistical associations who signed the V6 cooperation were all gentlemen. Later, the election of women presidents in Austria and Slovakia improved the proportion of women.

Motto:

Happiness is not the secret of success. But if you are happy or successful. If you love what you do, you are successful and happy.

(Albert Schweitzer)

Acknowledgment

I thank two Women in Statistics; Blagica Novskovska and Ksenija Domicic, with whom I have been working for years in international conferences, programs. It was a great pleasure for me to join to their IPS. I guess, our joint work to be carried out in the Section will further strengthen our cooperation and friendship in our region.

REFERENCES

BOKOR G. (1896): *A magyar hivatalos statisztika fejlődése és szervezete (Development and organization of the Hungarian official statistics)*. Pesti Könyvnyomda Rt., Budapest.

DÁNYI D.–NYITRAI F. (1998): *Tanulmányok a magyar statisztikai szolgálat történetéből (Studies from the history of the Hungarian statistical service)*. KSH, Budapest.

GYULAY F. (1990): A Magyar Statisztikai Társaság története 1922–1949 (*History of the Hungarian Statistical Association*). *Statisztikai Szemle*. 68 (10): 769–789.

HALM T. (szerkesztő) (1994): *Százéves a Magyar Közgazdasági Társaság (The Hungarian Economic Society is 100 years old)*. MKT, Budapest.

LACZKA E.–SZABÓ I. (szerkesztő) (2016): *Fényes Elektől az Európai Statisztikai Rendszerekig (From Elek Fenyés to the European Statistical Systems)*, KSH, Budapest

LENGYEL L. (1967): *Adalékok a Magyar Statisztikai Társaság történetéhez (Notes to the history of the Hungarian Statistical Association)*, KSH, Budapest

DÁNYI D.–GYULAY F.–HUSZÁR I. (1967): *A magyar hivatalos statisztika történetéből. (From the history of Hungarian official statistics)*. *Statisztikai Szemle*, 68 (10): 353–361.

THIRRING G. (1927): *Akadémiánk és a hazai statisztika. Székfoglaló értekezés (Our Academy and the domestic statistics. Dissertation)*. MTA, Budapest.

MAGYAR STATISZTIKAI TÁRSASÁG HONLAPJA (THE WEBSITE OF THE HUNGARIAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION) (www.mstnet.hu)