

**University of National Public Service**  
**Doctoral School of Military Science**

**Árpád Gerencsér**

**Security geographical analysis of the Caucasus Area**

Doctoral (PhD) thesis

Abstract

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## **DEFINITION OF THE SCIENTIFIC THEME**

In my dissertation I apply the methods of security geography for deeper analysis of the questions I pose. One of the most important outcomes of my research is the creation of the definition of security geography and the revision of its theoretical background.

One limitation in my dissertation is geographical as my research utilizes a clear definition of the Caucasus area. This limitation includes the area's geographical as well as administrative borders (see I. chapter).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union new security circumstances emerged and those had impact all over the World- for instance instability in certain countries. The research focuses on the period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more specifically it starts with the 1988 Sumgayit demonstration, which was the first moment of the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

I present the history of the previously defined region by focusing on the clan system as well as social and ethnic context as most causes of crisis emerge from historical background. Furthermore I analyze those processes which have not yet been analyzed but are crucial in terms of national security. One of the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union is a democratization process which allowed the freedom of religion.

Today, the ongoing events in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State ideology backstopped by the Caucasian Emirate ideology is a much larger problem than previously thought. We must recognize the Caucasus region processes and causes of the crisis, because of their effects and influence on allied nations or on individual nation states security.

In the military science such complex analysis about the Caucasus area security-geographic analysis is not made yet. One of the most important smuggling route leads through the Caucasus between Central Asian countries and Europe. Instability in the Caucasus area has major impact on European security. We must prepare for the challenges and the fact that in the settlement of the conflicts of the region our country will continue to play an active role. Because of the organized crime and terrorism in the region special attention is assigned to the region during the examination of the factors.

The economic strength of the region, natural resources, especially energy resources (water reserves, oil, and gas) are significant, highlighting the importance of it. The territory of the Caucasus region were also affected by the planned Nabucco and the Blue Stream pipeline route, each of Europe's energy supply could play a significant role, if in the future the projects become important again. During the development of routes Hungary's territory was involved in these projects, therefore the security geographic analysis of the area was justifiable.

I consider an important element of the research that I present terrorism and organized crime issue deeper drawing attention to their security risks. Azerbaijan and al-Qaeda connection, the Armenian terrorist organizations activities are all factors involved which put the Caucasus into an entirely different perspective.

One of the most important elements is the international relations of the Caucasus terrorist organizations, and in many cases current politicians role in support of extremist organizations. In the analysis I place the emphasis on crisis. The concept of crisis is determined as follows; "serious situation, a crucial turn of events, the outcome of which can be good or bad." Ferenc Gazdag formulates the concept of crisis and conflict, which I use throughout the dissertation. The causes of the Caucasus region crises, conflicts and examine I examine on the basis of security geographical criteria. In doing so, I analyze the causes of social, economic, political and military crises .I examine all factors that affect the security environment, as well as that affect and determine international relations in the region.

In my dissertation I consistently use the term **region**, which covers not only the area but also the political life and physical evolution of the state, but also people living here relation with the environment, too.

## **HYPOTHESES**

In my dissertation regarding the topic the following hypotheses were set up:

1. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union a power vacuum was created in the Caucasus area, which Russia was not able to fill, and over the Caucasus region no other geopolitical player and power state could control it, filled the role of power. Due to its strategic position and natural wealth (energy, land) powers (United States, European Union, Russia, Iran, China, India) seek to take bigger influence.
2. The complex ethnic structure of the Caucasus region could have caused numerous crises, conflicts in the past. The location and historical development of the Caucasus area could develop specific cultural characteristics. In addition to specific features of the Caucasus region besides conflicts within the Islam culture (Sunni-Shiite) there is the tension between traditional Caucasian faith and legislation (**adat**) and followers of extremist views. As a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the ethnic structure of the Caucasus region a significant change could have happened.

3. In the framework of the independent Caucasian states, nationalism, strengthening and retention of the Russian power interests, as well as the efforts of Western countries to acquire influence in the region resulted explosive atmosphere and an unstable security environment. The Caucasus area is unstable, armed conflicts can break out at any time. The instability could increase regional and great powers' competition over the
4. Complex and multi-level crises and conflicts in the Caucasus area have global importance. These are collectively influence by social, natural and economic factors.
5. The Caucasus Emirate organization and its relationship to the global world crisis areas can be challenging. It could affect the spirit of one of today's most dangerous terrorist organization, the Islamic State of philosophy.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives are:

- Defining place of security geography in the system science and its analytical methods;
- Introducing strategic location of the Caucasus area and its importance on energy resources, transportation and organized crime;
- Analysis of the Caucasus region's security environment, threats exploration of their relationship;
- Examination of the Caucasus region's role in terrorism, analyzes of the actions of armed forces against them;
- Effects of migration processes of ethnic and religious communities living in the area in the crisis;
- The differences between cultures and within cultures impact on the development of the conflicts.

The research period starts with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and lasts until today. Security geographic analysis facilitates a better understanding of the region's history, on the one hand because today's conflicts in the region, the development of a crisis cannot be understood without history, on the other hand reasons of today's conflicts and crises can be sought in this.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

I made an interdisciplinary analysis of the area that shows and explores the possible risk factors. Based on security geographical analytical methodology, I present security environment and challenges in the Caucasus region.

I compared, sorted information and data available in national and international literature and draw conclusions. I checked and compared information published only of official agencies and organizations, compared and analyzed databases. The available information and data are checked for authenticity and I use authentic data. I make a second analysis in order to draw conclusions and achieve new scientific results.

I analyzed foreign literature, printed and electronic materials (primarily English and Soviet/Russian) about the area. I studied and compared Hungarian literature as well, studies, essays and PhD dissertations published at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University. I compared information published in these documents.

I used major research institutions and universities documents and sources (Harvard University, University of Uppsala, UK Defense Academy), Russian Statistical Office, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as the individual states military resources, and the Military Balance.

The research method is unique, because such kind of interdisciplinary study was not made. In the dissertation I analyzed how influential were the facts of classic military geography (natural, social, economic and military) and aspects of security (military, political, economic, social and environmental) what was the impact on armed struggle, and listed the elements of a potential crisis. . I analyzed military and non-military challenges and their relationship. During the research I analyzed local, regional and global crises in related to the Caucasus area.

The research took into account at the Caucasus area the security dimensions defined by Barry Buzan:

1. military,
2. political,
3. economic,
4. social,
5. environmental.

Of course, certain sectors are not isolated from each other, although the security problem of focusing on one dimension, but still function as an interconnected system. During my research I also take into account that security appears at individual, national and international level in the region. In my analysis classical aspects of military geography are taken into account, during which the Buzan's dimensions also play a role, since there is some overlapping between the two analytical aspects.

It should be noted that the dimensions of the classical military geographic factors and security show considerable overlap, however, the environmental sector is discussed in the military geography as an economic factors.

## **DEFINITION OF SECURITY GEOGRAPHY**

Due to the essential theme of the dissertation it is necessary to determine the concept of security geography, its methodology, and place in the system of sciences. During the existence of the Warsaw Pact, military geography sought to answer how certain geographical factors could influence armed struggle. It was mainstream idea on that time. During the existence of the Warsaw Treaty, this approach was decisive.

Military geography has undergone significant changes after the 1990<sup>th</sup>. The history of Hungarian military geography on one hand is an inseparable part of the Hungarian geography, on the other hand, part of the national development of military science. Traditional basic problem - relations between the war, the armed struggle and geographical space - remained unchanged, but due to the development of military science has been considerably expanded.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union there was a paradigm shift, the security environment has changed, too, because of that the new analytical criteria have also enlarged. The studies have to deal with both military and non-military threats (challenges). The former area of military geography - war and armed struggle examination - has been replaced by the complex research of the risk factors.

Thus, factors come to the fore as international refugee wave, ecological threats, economic threats, a national, ethnic conflicts and religious intolerance. These factors, however, are geographical problems. Accordingly, the military geography has undertaken an examination of these factors.

In my view, security geography includes the elements of applied (sectoral) and regional geography, and is a common area of the two interdependent approaches.

The way I see security geography is a joint sphere of regional and applied geography. Security geography is one of the methods of the applied geography within military geography. Security geography is part of complex (modern) regional military geography that analyzes all factors of military geography which influence and determine security system and international relations of a given area. In my view the complex military geography associated with the name of István Gőcze, due to recent new types of threats, challenges requires new analytical approach from us.

That is why I suggested the definition of *modern military geography* instead of complex military geography.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH**

The dissertation is divided into six separate chapters. Each chapter ends with a conclusion that summarizes the main results of the chapters. In the chapters I examine factors, the root causes of crises and conflicts.

In the **first chapter** I analyze the Caucasus region's location, its internal and external borders, as well as how the West, Russian, Turkish and Iranian strategic thinking came forward to the region.

The **second chapter** is devoted to the Caucasus region's physical geographical factors, climate, climate change, soils, hydrology, topography, vegetation, and natural hazards are analyzed.

In the **third chapter** I analyze social relations in the Caucasus region. I examined in the analysis the history of the region, demographic conditions, settlements, education, health status, administrative system, religion, cultural affiliation and migration. In order to understand the crises and conflicts in the Caucasus it is essential to grasp the complexity of social relations, this analysis is one of the most important chapters of the dissertation. The tensions within cultures are especially important, and this is not pointed out in previous analyzes.

In the **fourth chapter**, I analyze economic conditions in the Caucasus region. The region's agriculture, industrial background, transport system, the energy sector and natural resources and wealth, drinking water, communications system and international political and economic system was investigated in the analysis. The distorted economic structure cause considerable tensions, and enhance social extremes. The slow process of economic transition hinders significantly the stabilization in the region.

In the **fifth chapter** I studied military relations of the Caucasus region. In the analysis examined doctrines, personnel, international relations, dislocation, arm trade, child soldiers, role of the Russian army, and the international military-political cooperation with organizations. The proportion of paramilitary organizations and a large amount of weaponry in the region is one of the bases of the instability.

In the **sixth chapter** I analyze the crises and conflicts in the Caucasus region. I analyzed the causes of crises and conflicts, manifestations of the interests of powers, the situation of terrorism and counter-terrorism and the importance of organized crime. The study revealed significant information that shows the political division of the region and also demonstrates the global significance of the Caucasus region terrorism.

## **SUMMARIZED CONCLUSIONS**

The geographical situation of the Caucasus region on southern border of the Russian Federation, the relief, the natural maritime border, ethnic diversity, religious fault line (Islamic and Christian), the explored Caspian Sea basin oil and gas resources are the factors that have changed the Caucasus into political games, armed conflicts arena.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia was unable to respond to the challenges of the region, and aspirations for independence. Since the early 2000s, Russia has strengthened economically and became stable. Russia has the ability and determination to defend the borders of the region, its influence, it is ready to defend and support Russian citizens living in the independent States (Near Abroad) and communities striving for autonomy.

The Caucasus region has always been a buffer zone, a fault line between empires, people coming from different directions with conquering aspirations. The rights of the peoples living there were ignored by the occupying powers that intervene. Nations extermination, expulsion or assimilation was the destiny of people living there more or less peacefully. It was not different during the last twenty years. Injuries suffered during the centuries, so deeply rooted in the people that not only the occupying powers, but the juxtaposition stranded nationalities among themselves, and even groups representing various religious denominations are trying to enforce their perceived or real rights.

The world's leading power (United States) after the dissolution of the Soviet Union through NATO sought to strengthen his influence in the Transcaucasus countries, offering political, economic and military support for these countries to separate them from Russia. Russia was able to prevent the invitation of Georgia, along with other successor states, at the



2006 Riga Summit. This was the case in Bucharest, Lisbon and the subsequent Summit (Washington, Wales, and Warsaw) as well.

The West has acknowledged that maintaining good security, political and economic relations with Russia, is more important than Georgia's membership in NATO, taking into account Western Europe oil and gas supply security. The crisis in the Caucasus region cannot be solved by military force. The situation only in the long term can be solved by a negotiated settlement of the conflicts between the great powers and the people who live there, raising the standard of living, education and improvement of the health situation. Questions about NATO in the area have always been keen controversial. Does it make sense that conflict-ridden countries of the region are recruited to NATO and expose the Alliance for a possible armed conflict with Russia?

Russia wants to maintain its presence in the Caucasus region. The power struggle intensified to obtain power over the region. This contributes to the crisis of today. This "fight" is not only taking place between the US and Russia. In the Caucasus region, China, Iran, Turkey also wants to extend its influence.

The causes of the Caucasus region massacres can be explained by "global geopolitical game", religious or cultural affiliation, or ancient ethnic divisions, as a result of vendetta, but the end it is always the same: the world ignores what's going on there. The local population ask the same as the big policy leaders: what's next? World leaders took note of the Caucasus atrocities and massacres and insert onto the long list of similar massacres in other parts of the world. In the Islamic culture conflicts regions of the world North Caucasus Muslim mercenaries, fighters, mainly Chechens appear. In the Caucasus region due to the strong action of the Russian army mercenaries had to leave their former places, and intertwined with organized crime, they appear in other crises regions of the world. Interestingly, in Ukraine both fighting sides were strengthened by Chechen groups, so today not only cultural identity is the most important aspect of the support.

Organized crime and groups fighting for independence are intertwined, and a unique phenomenon was created, the narco-terrorism. The other important aspect is that the Caucasus Emirate spirit is recognizable in the Islamic State philosophy, very dangerous, unknown processes started. The Caucasus Emirate organization and relationship with the world's crisis areas assumes global security challenge.

The Caucasus area is a fault line between Christian and Islamic culture. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union ethnic structure of the Caucasus area has changed. The mixed ethnic structure remained, but due to a significant population movement ethnically homoge-

neous areas were formed (e.g. Armenians left Azerbaijan in significant numbers). One of the root causes of the conflict are based on cultural differences and associated with multi-colored ethnic structure.

Stabilization of the region would be very important for both security and economic reasons. Many problems in the world (though not all, only the most important ones) can be solved, which represent a global challenge today. The Caucasus area has global importance, the research was extended to organized crime, and terrorism in order to understand the significance of the region.

## SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF DISSERTATION

1) I determined place of the security geography in the system of sciences and defined its analytical methods.

2) I proved that after the collapse of Soviet Union the existing power vacuum in the Caucasus area has not been filled. Furthermore, it has been proved that the acquisition of control over the region, and raw material resources, many players compete: on the cultural background Iran, Turkey, on economic level India and China is making significant efforts - in addition to the United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation - to strengthen the regional status. All this, and within the framework of the Caucasian independent states rising nationalism created explosive atmosphere and resulted in an unstable security environment.

3) During my research I have proven tensions within the Islamic culture; in the Caucasus region not only Shiite-Sunni conflict is present, but also the tension between the **adat** (Caucasian traditional beliefs and legislation) and followers of extremist views. I proved that the complex ethnic composition and proportion of the region has undergone a significant change in the last decade of the twentieth century, as a result of the population movements, immigration and other reasons, but also because of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and due to tensions within the Islamic culture. The Caucasus region is a buffer zone between the Islamic and Christian culture, which is the reason for the outbreak of new crises.

4) I presented the Caucasus region's instability, the causes of the complex and multi-level crises and conflicts and their global significance and implications. Furthermore, it has been proved that the roots of conflicts in the Caucasus region are very complex and have historical background. The whole region is suffering from the crisis, the conflicts, economic

backwardness, terrorism and organized crime. Natural, social, economic and great power reasons together make up the causes of the crises in the region.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Caucasus region is a forgotten part of the world where people has suffered much in the history. Multiculturalism and history make an unique system what can be characterized just with one word: the Caucasus. It comprised the geographical location, people, history, grievances, wars, energy resources and Stalin.

The situation in the Caucasus is very hard to understand .The research of the Caucasus region, which is a very complicated area, continues. I recommend everyone to follow me on this path. The region is very important in the global policy and any event in the Caucasus region has global importance and impact on the international security system (i.e. four-day war in 2016 April in Nagorno-Karabakh). Why happened this? The research of the Caucasus region and my dissertation can help national political decision makers.

## **PRACTICAL AND POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH RESULTS**

The Caucasus is one of the world's region both researchers and policy-makers has to pay continued attention to. The thesis provides a good basis for understanding the Caucasus region and for further research. Each chapter can be an object of special investigations,(e.g. ties between the Islamic State and separatists group in the Caucasus area).

Today, there is a significant deterioration in the security environment, this appears in the Caucasus region appears stronger; this justifies a thorough analysis of the crisis zones.

In the decision preparation and decision making phases knowledge of the Caucasus is essential. One direction of Hungary's Eastern opening policy is directed towards the Caucasus region. To implement the policy, it is important that the Caucasus region is sufficiently familiar to the decision-makers.

The dissertation can serve as the initial analysis of the crisis, the consequences of the failed interventions and frozen conflicts scenarios to be prepared for future crises, and for the conflict management.

It is very important to track and to analyze how the Caucasian states handle new challenges of national security and what answers they can give on these problems? As we know the Transcaucasus countries are only able to follow the event, but preventive measures are taken hard. The current research serves a good base how in a rather hostile environment for

the security challenges what kind of bilateral co-operations are between countries against terrorism/organized crime that override nation-states (Turkish-Armenian, Azerbaijani-Armenian) historical grievances.

The research topic covers a large area, actual questions and topics are discussed which are currently top priorities in political decision-making and national security organizations. It might be important for the specialist and desk officers of the Prime Minister's Office, and for certain committees of the Hungarian Parliament (Defence and Law Enforcement, Economic and Foreign Affairs). Security geographical analysis of the Caucasus region can be used as background material for the experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Military National Security Service, MoD Defence Policy and International Cooperation Departments, and General Staff. The thesis can be used as a teaching material in international relations, international studies and the Security and Defence Policy faculties in BA, MA education, at the general staff course of the University of National Public Service, Károly Kratochvil Military Secondary School. The dissertation can be source of information on workshops and conferences dealing with the Caucasus area.

## PUBLICATIONS

### *Book chapter:*

Himmer Péter (szerk.): *Válsággócok kultúrtörténeti háttere*, Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem, 2009. 4. fejezet, *A kaukázusi feszültségek kultúrtörténeti háttere*, p.108-137.

### *Publications in periodicals:*

1. *A Kaukázus térség katonaföldrajzi elemzése az ott zajló válságok tükrében*, IV. Hadtudományi Doktorandusz Fórum, 2011. október 27.

### *Publications in scientific journals:*

1. *A kaukázusi konfliktus földrajzi vonatkozásai*, Nemzetvédelmi Egyetemi Közlemények, 2005/5, pp. 54-64.
2. *Afrika és az angolai konfliktus*, Nemzetvédelmi Egyetemi Közlemények, 2006/1, pp. 16-29.
3. *Kelet-afrikai népesedési folyamatok napjainkban*, Nemzetvédelmi Egyetemi Közlemények, 2006/2, pp. 156-163.
4. *A Dél-Kaukázus térségének népesedési és migrációs viszonyai*, Társadalom és Honvédelem, XIII. évf. I. szám, 2009, pp. 162-177.
5. *A földrajzi környezet hatása a katonai tevékenységre a Kaukázus térségében*, Nemzetvédelmi Egyetemi Közlemények, XI. évf. 3. szám, 2007, pp. 144-160.
6. *A keresztény és iszlám kultúrkör találkozásának konfliktusai a Kaukázus régióban*, Hallgatói Közlemények, XI. évf., 4. szám, 2007, pp. 107-123.
7. *A Kaukázus térség szerepe a nemzetközi szervezett bűnözés területén*, Szakmai Szemle, 2014. 2. szám, pp.177-187.

### *Publications on foreign language:*

Árpád Gerencsér: *Conflicts of Christian and Islam culture zone in the Caucasusregion*, AARMS, Vol. 8., Issue 2, 2009, pp. 315-327.

### *Publications on the internet:*

1. *Kaukázus - a terrorizmus globalizálódása - Kevés figyelmet fordítanak a Kaukázus térségére?*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=4003](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=4003), 2013-04-30;
2. *A kaukázusi válságok mozgatórugói - Konfliktusok hálózzák be a kaukázusi régiót*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=3607](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3607), 2012-10-20;
3. *A Kaukázus katonai viszonyai - Eurázsia puskaporos hordójának katonai helyzete*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=3606](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3606)[http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=3606](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3606), 2012-10-19;
4. *A Kaukázus társadalmi viszonyainak elemzése- A KAUKÁZUS TÉRSÉG TÁRSADALMI VISZONYAINAK ELEMZÉSE VÁLSÁGELEMZÉSI SZEMPONTBÓL*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=3585](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3585), 2012-10-09;
5. *A Kaukázus és a drogkereskedelem- Eurázsia puskaporos hordója*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=3577](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3577), 2012-10-05;
6. *Adalék a kaukázusi terrorizmushoz- Klánrendszer és terrorizmus*, [http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek\\_interjuk&hid=4684](http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=4684), 2014-02-13;

*Other scientific activity:*

1. *A Kaukázusi feszültségek kultúrtörténeti háttere*, Hadtudományi Konferencia, 2009. november 12.
2. *A Kaukázusi feszültségek kultúrtörténeti háttere*, Vezérkari Képzés, 2009. szeptember 23.
3. *A Kaukázus és Grúzia*, Vezérkari Képzés, 2010. november 18.
4. *Kaukázusi Emirátus – A terrorizmus új korszaka*, ÁROP-2.2.21 Tudásalapú közszolgálati előmenetel, 2014. június 20.
5. *Nemzetközi migráció – és ami mögötte van*, Marcali Kulturális Központ, 2015. december 3.
6. *Kaukázus – a „gazdag” puskaporos hordó*, Marcali Kulturális Központ, 2016. február 18.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Name: Árpád József, GERENCSÉR  
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### STUDIES

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**1999 - 2004** **ELTE Natural Science Faculty, Budapest**  
**Rural and settlement development**

**2014-** **University of National Public Service, Budapest**  
**Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training**  
**Doctoral School of Military Science**  
**Phd study**

### Scientific Activity

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**2016** Title of PhD Graduate; *Security geographical analysis of the Caucasus Area*

**2005 -** In frame of National Defense University making interpretations and studies from the Caucasus Region.

**2004** Title of Graduate: *Geopolitical Quandries of Ukraine*, ELTE

**2003** Professional exercised by Municipality of Marcali. Leader: István Virányi, city civil engineer.

**2001** Professional exercised by MTA FKI; changing of city functions in „rusty belt” of Budapest.

### JOBS

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**2008-04 -** **Municipality of Marcali**  
**Status:** referent responsible for rural and settlement developing

**2007-03 – 2008-03** **Municipality and Rural development Of Ministry**  
**Status:** rural development coordinator

**2005-10 – 2006-07** **Multilevel Association Of Microregion Marcali**  
**Status:** rural development manager

**2005-03 – 2005-10** **TABÁN-BAU Bt.**  
**Status:** technology construction leader  
**Place of job:** Kővágóörs, sewage system's construction

### LANGUAGUE SKILLS

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**Hungarian** native  
**English** intermediate, level „C”  
**German** intermediate, level „C”